

# Not a good month for Justin Trudeau, but ultimately a good one for the planet

*More to the Story*

By Ben Bennett

A few months ago it seemed pretty clear that Justin Trudeau was headed for the big chair, Stephen Harper for the history books, and Thomas Mulcair for the booby prize. (Despite the recent polls, I am still working on the assumption that Mr. Harper's time is done, and it's between the orange and the red.)

It's not that the Liberal leader is a better boss than Mr. Mulcair. It is not that he has better policies. Other than doing something to loosen the laws on pot and a vague opposition to sending our troops into harm's way, we have yet to see what his policies are. He is certainly not a better parliamentarian.

But Mr. Trudeau is a handsome devil and after so many years of ugliness in the nation's capital, his smiling countenance makes such a pleasant change, and it appears many voters will forgive a few missteps.

Up until a couple of weeks ago, it appeared the Boy Wonder was succeeding in persuading us that he was a different politician, unwilling to play the games that add to our cynicism and contribute to the "a pox on all their houses" mentality that permeates the land.

I would argue that Greens leader Elizabeth May has shown the same refreshing tendencies but being a party of one (plus one more since a former NDP member changed sides) there is no way she will form a government anytime soon.

In Mr. Trudeau's case, this is a real possibility, with voting Liberal seen as the best bet to unseat the Tories. If you add that hopeful outcome to a change of tone in Ottawa there is reason to believe in the system after all.

Then the many faces of Eve appeared on our television screens and we are back in cynicism mode.

Ironically, this could ultimately be good news for the environment, given our electoral system.

Mr. Harper's strong conservative base means he is always good for 30% of the vote. The trick then is to move about 7-10% more to get a majority, as he did in 2011. Recent

tax breaks and tough talk on terror are part of that effort and we can expect more goodies as the year progresses.

If you take climate change seriously and the other tree-hugger issues that invariably get forgotten during elections, then replacing Mr. Harper with a Harper-light government is not going to help matters. Our best bet is likely a minority administration where the Liberals need the NDP. Whatever denials we may hear about any coalition thinking before an election, the prospect of another Tory-led government if they cannot get along might just focus their minds.

And the first thing Mr. Mulcair should do is insist that proportional representation be put squarely on the table before any NDP cooperation is offered.

Despite Mr. Trudeau's support for the concept in speeches, Canada's "natural governing party" is unlikely to bring in legislation that would inevitably weaken the Liberal brand, even if it did the same thing to the Tories.

So while some of us may like nothing more than to see this current government sent into oblivion, I am not sure we would be a whole lot better served under an unencumbered red banner. Here's why.

Mr. Trudeau's open-arms acceptance of the petulant Eve Adams into his caucus is a real mystery and probably the best example yet of his questionable judgment.

While the Tories have made much of his off-the-cuff comments in the past, many folks put it down to youth and inexperience (while privately relishing his refreshing candour.)

But the Eve Adams case is different. He had lots of time to fully appreciate the impact of welcoming the spurned Tory candidate after she crossed the floor and to make matters worse his comments about her principled stand were frankly laughable.

Other than hear someone say very publicly what a nasty piece of work the Tory leader can be (this is hardly news), I have yet to find anyone anywhere, whatever stripe, who finds any value in having her on the red team.

If his welcome of the disgraced Ms Adams is indeed enough to make some question the famous son and vote for the NDP, we may yet get the coalition government we need this fall.

(Ben Bennett's past columns can be found at [www.bbc.guelph.org](http://www.bbc.guelph.org).)