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Stephane Dion at the Royal York: one speech, two opposing views

Posted: October 08, 2008, 3:00 PM by Kelly McParland

[Yoni Goldstein](#), [Full Comment](#), [canadian election](#), [Stephen Taylor](#)

Stephane Dion spoke Wednesday in Toronto, renewing the attack on Stephen Harper that has seen the Conservative party's lead dwindle to a few percentage points. Bloggers Yoni Goldstein and Stephen Taylor both watched Mr. Dion, and came away with sharply differing impressions.

Yoni Goldstein:

I'm sitting at home watching Stéphane Dion address a joint meeting of the Empire Club and the Canadian Club, and -- surprise, surprise -- the man's English isn't that bad.

He's speaking with passion, with conviction ... in English. Just a minute ago, he said the following: "Stephen Harper may speak better English than me, but I speak the truth better -- in both official language." And it sounded good.

This is a major change from his performance during the leaders' debate just a few days ago. That night, his English was garbled, mangled. I had to concentrate and listen closely just to understand what he was trying to say. Some have suggested that Dion was specifically speaking poorly at the debate, perhaps to prove his previous revelation that a hearing problem negatively affected his speech.

There's none of that today. Maybe that's because there's no one to debate -- the audience is fully behind him, complete with umpteen standing ovations. Or maybe his poor English at the debate was a ploy. It's even possible that the latest polls -- with the Liberals gaining significantly on the Tories -- has given him a boost of energy (and somehow that's helping his auditory abilities and English elocution). Who knows?

In any case, the Dion I'm watching right now is a totally different one from just a few days ago. He sounds convinced, convincing and powerful.

Wow. This election might actually get interesting in the last few days.

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Stephen Taylor:

Recent polls would indicate that the Conservative campaign has experienced a steady softening in support since both federal leader's debates. When polls go well partisans treat them like gospel and when they go poorly, the methodology is questioned. Supporters will point to a good poll, frame it, put it in the window well past the time it fades with age and relevance. And for

bad polls, well, polls are for dogs aren't they?

With respect to one's worldview, in recent weeks that of many Canadians -- not to mention others around the world -- has been shaken by the global economic crisis. Up is down and then up again before it goes back down, and while Canadians are captivated by their investment portfolios, they find as much uncertainty with the future of politics as they do the economy and thus politics captivates us all as well.



As the stock markets take dips and dives affected by factors outside of our borders it is understandable that Canadians are in a state of uncertainty on how they would shape the future political landscape of this country.

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In the next week, Canadians will be forced to make a choice, before all of the dust has settled. These 6 days before the election are critical for the leaders to make their case and to shape perceptions of their ability to lead, to show stability and convince Canadians their vision would allow the Canadian ship to weather the global storm.

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I write this as I watch Stéphane Dion address a joint meeting of the Empire Club and the Canadian Club of Toronto. The Prime Minister addressed the same organizations the day before at the Royal York and such speeches at this junction of the campaign can shape perceptions, firm up expectations and bring stability to uncertain political times.

Yet such hallmark opportunities to address Canadian business and economic leaders can be an early political indicator for the final result on election day. Declining campaigns show declining momentum: in the last days of the 2006 federal election, as John Tory's bid for Ontario Premier came to a close last year, and as Ernie Eves came to the end of his days as Ontario Premier, reports indicated dwindling numbers at rallies, diminished interest in speeches and rooms left half-full. As an indicator of campaign viability, the Prime Minister's campaign has positive momentum during these final days of the campaign. As suggested by Steve Paikin's [tweet](#) just one hour ago from the Royal York, the same cannot be said for Stéphane Dion: "the Royal York is starting to fill up. Dion is en route. Harper had 1000 yesterday. Only 300 for Dion today."

So, what of these polls that suggest a tightening between the Harper and Dion campaigns? Unlike financial markets that show volatility in real-time where investors can gain or lose their fiscal security in one single day, Canadians are fortunately not faced with the same demands as they make political decisions. As the economic world spikes and plunges before them, Canadians are taking stock of the political landscape and are doing their research before they lock in their investment on election day. The question is, when they vote, will they be bullish and choose high risk with uncertain yield or will they go with a stable investment which has shown a stable modest return?

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Mr. Taylor, the real question is this:

"If your financial advisor has told you to stick with your investment strategy, even in the face of global credit tightening and plunging asset values across the world, wouldn't you expect just a little more acknowledgement and consideration from them?"

I think you would. Nobody will be comforted by an advisor saying "don't worry, be happy". These are

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