

TODAY'S WEATHER
 A FEW CLOUDS
 6 °C
 4 Day Forecast | Traffic

Hey Snowbirds! Spent the day on "The Big Zipper"
 Save up to 20%
Travel Guard
 TRAVEL INSURANCE

Tuesday, October 21, 2008 | Today's Toronto Star | Login

PHOTOS VIDEO COLUMNISTS BLOGS PODCASTS RSS MOBILE NEWSLETTERS ALERTS

thestar.com

thestar.com Web find a Business
 Advanced Search | Full Text Article Archive

- DEATH NOTICES
- CAREERS
- CLASSIFIEDS

HOME NEWS OPINION BUSINESS SPORTS ENTERTAINMENT LIVING TRAVEL WHEELS HEALTHZONE YOURHOME PARENTCENTRAL

Election Main | Parties | Ridings/Candidates | Issues | Opinion | Voter Guide | The Lighter Side | Results

Voters pleasantly surprised by Dion

Oct 09, 2008 04:30 AM

Comments on this story (86)

THOMAS WALKOM
 NATIONAL AFFAIRS COLUMNIST

It was when the waiter started clapping that I realized Stéphane Dion might – just might – pull off a coup in Tuesday's election.

The waiter was standing at the back of the Toronto hotel banquet hall, listening to the Liberal leader wind up his address to an audience of well-heeled business people and smartly dressed party supporters.

Dion sounded more comfortable than he has in a long while. He led off with a direct appeal – in French and through the television cameras – to Quebecers, reminding them that the Liberals had stood by that province before, during hard times, and were prepared to do so again.

He finished, in English, with a paean to Canada as a place where people coming from different places, speaking different languages (and in different accents, he noted wryly) could work together to create something great.

That sounds trite when written down, but delivered with passion – as it was yesterday – it's effective, rather like former prime minister Jean Chrétien's I-love-these-Rockies line.

Dion credits debates for boost

Stéphane Dion, his image battered by months of harsh Conservative advertising, says he misjudged how effective negative advertising could be in an election campaign.

party."

Political scientists would call this an example of effective Liberal branding. Whatever it is, something is going on out there and Dion is catching the wave.

Polls indicate the race between Prime Minister Stephen Harper's Conservatives and Dion's Liberals is tightening. Yesterday's CPAC-Nanos survey shows the two parties in a statistical tie.

More indicative, perhaps, is the mood among rank-and-file Liberals. There is less gallows humour, fewer rolled eyes whenever Dion's name comes up.

The idea that Dion might actually eke out a win – dismissed two weeks ago as ludicrous – is now being quietly whispered.



RICK MADONIK/TORONTO STAR

A relaxed-looking Stéphane Dion appears on Much on Demand at Much Music studios on Queen St. W. on Oct. 8, 2008. The Liberal leader also spoke at a joint meeting of the Canadian and Empire clubs and to the Star's editorial board.

- Email story
- Print
- Choose text size
- Report typo or correction
- Email the author
- License this article

BOOKMARK

MAPS: HOW THE GTA VOTED

FINAL RESULTS

WHO WON YOUR RIDING?

VIDEO: ELECTION IN 60 SECONDS

FULL ELECTION COVERAGE

PHOTOS: ELECTION DAY

BLOGS: NOTEBOOK

CAMPAIGN 2.0

DIEBEL: POLITICAL DECODER

VINAY MENON'S ELECTION FEVER

DAVID OLIVE'S BIG PICTURE

Advertisement
 Travel Guard
 TRAVEL INSURANCE

MORE IN THE NEWS
 How Harper let it slip away

From conscience to contention
 Inside the Grit circle or, for Dion, Hell

The campaign trail, like summer camp
 Harper won't rule out deficit in 'future years'

Dion ready to call it quits

Dion ignored Green Shift warnings

Nervous Liberals wait on Dion

CTV defends airing Dion tape

Recount in B.C. riding won by Liberal Dosanjh

Edmonton Tory Jaffer concedes to NDP candidate

Vote swapping swayed some margins of victory

Volpe calls on Dion to step aside

High MP pensions lead to low voter confidence: ...

Liberals leaned too far left: Manley

RECENT SPECIAL SECTIONS

- Vital Signs 2008 Insurance
- 2008 Federal Election
- Guide to Colleges & Universities
- Desi Life Sept. issue
- Golf 2008
- HDTV
- Diabetes

More Specials

Advertisement
 Deal of the Day.
 DAY 5
 Deal of the Day: Guitar Hero III
 Offer valid on Tuesday, October 21, 2008 only.
FUTURE SHOP

Two things happened to cause this shift. The first has to do with the televised debates.

After watching months of Conservative ads attacking the Liberal leader as weak, Canadians were able to judge Dion themselves. Many were pleasantly surprised.

The second is the global financial crisis. As long as this was confined to obscure portions of the North American credit markets, it played into Harper's steady-as-she-goes plan. Voters were worried, but not too much so. Except for those directly savaged by the manufacturing downturn, few were hurting.


But when stock markets across the world began to blow up, the level of anxiety rose. As a result, the fundamental question of the campaign has switched. It had been: Which leader looks more leaderly? It's now: Which party do you trust to get you through the lean times?

Harper muffed his answer to that question on Monday when he noted that market collapses provide good opportunities for those wanting to buy stocks cheaply.

Given that most people fretting about their pensions don't have the cash to purchase stock bargains, his statement – while technically correct – played to the stereotype of Conservatives as out-of-touch fat cats. Dion's answer is simpler and plays to a different stereotype: The Liberals have gotten you through hard days before; we can do it again.

"History shows us that in tough economic times, it is progressive governments that put economies back on track," he said yesterday.

The waiter liked that line too.

Comments on this story are now closed | [Commenting Guidelines](#) 

[MORE FEATURES:
FIND YOUR RIDING](#)

[VOTER GUIDE](#)

WHAT THEY SAID

"I use my mother as an obvious example because ... she's the person closest to me who's most worried about the stock market these days. And believe me, I get quicker updates from her on the stock market than I do from the Department of Finance"

Prime Minister Stephen Harper on why he has suddenly started mentioning his mother in response to questions about the economy

WHERE THEY ARE

Harper — Vancouver, Winnipeg

Dion — Halifax, Laval

Layton — Sudbury, Espanola

May — Sherbrooke, NS., Liscombe Lodge, Spanish Ship Bay, Ecum Secum, Moser River, Antigonish

Duceppe — Alma, Montreal

SPECIAL



Election in 60 seconds
Who won each of the 308 ridings and which seats changed hands?



Political Decoder blog
National Affairs writer Linda Diebel looks at how national issues are playing out in the federal election campaign in her Political ...



Election Fever blog
Vinay Menon dishes up humour on the election campaign in his Election Fever blog.



The seat exchange
What happened to each seat in the Canada 2008 election shuffle.



Campaign 2.0 blog
Multimedia editor Chris Carter watches the mobile, online and digital battle for voters' hearts and minds.

[More Specials](#)

I, too, have recently connected with Mr. Dion. The very thing that held him back at first is now assisting him in getting more support. He may not be as loud, or as attack as much but he is passionate, real and respectful. I am excited by his platform and plans. For all of you who say we don't need more taxes, take a look at the green shift - it introduces income tax REDUCTIONS and tax credits for families and puts taxes on pollution and industries that degrade the environment. Although some may not be excited about some of these taxes at first, he is right when he says, it is necessary and what we must do to move into the 21st century, participate in the responsible, sustainable green revolution that is occurring and lift us up as world leaders once again. I bet Stephen Harper is wishing he did not call an election now.

Posted By Cdn voice at 11:38 AM Thursday, October 09 2008

[Agree 60](#) | [Disagree 26](#) | [Offensive](#)

Short memory

It amazes me how short the memories of Canadians are when it comes to politics, and what party did what. I think a lot of these commentators should do a bit of boning up on our political history before spouting out their diatribes. On voting day try making an informed decision by maybe researching each candidates' platform on-line (even Harper's...if you can find it)...you might be surprised what you learn. Or take the Star's quiz. You might find that the best party for you is a tie between the Bloc and the Green Party...who knew...

Posted By my2centsworth at 11:18 AM Thursday, October 09 2008

[Agree 34](#) | [Disagree 12](#) | [Offensive 4](#)

Missed the boat