

The Empire Club Presents



VASSY KAPELOS

HOST OF CBC'S POWER AND POLITICS, MODERATES
A PANEL OF POLITICAL STRATEGISTS:

COUNTDOWN TO FEDERAL ELECTION 2019

Welcome Address, by Mr. Kent Emerson, Associate Vice
President at the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation
and President of the Empire Club of Canada

June 10, 2019

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. From the Shangri-La Hotel in downtown Toronto, welcome, to the Empire Club of Canada. For those of you just joining us through either our webcast or podcast, welcome, to the meeting.

Today, we present the second event in our series looking at the upcoming federal election. Today's topic is "Count-down Election 2019," with Vassy Kapelos, host of CBC's Power in Politics, and political strategists, Amanda Alvaro, Kathleen Monk and Tim Powers.

HEAD TABLE

Distinguished Guest Speakers:

Ms. Amanda Alvaro, Founder and President, Pomp & Circumstance

Ms. Vassy Kapelos, Host, Power & Politics

Ms. Kathleen Monk, Principal, Earncliffe Strategy Group

Mr. Tim Powers, Vice Chairman, Summa Strategies Canada Inc.; Managing Director, Abacus Data

Guests:

Mr. Giancarlo Drennan, Principal, Maple Leaf Strategies Inc.

Dr. Gordon McIvor, Past President, Empire Club of Canada

Mr. Mike Van Soelen, Managing Principal, Navigator Ltd.; Third Vice President, Empire Club of Canada

Mr. Greg Stanford, Consul General, U.S. Consulate General in Toronto

Ms. Rebecca Yu, Vice President, Market Access and External Affairs, Takeda Canada Inc.

Mr. Gamze Yüceland, General Manager, Takeda Canada Inc.

It is not the first time this season that the Empire Club of Canada has worked with CBC personalities. A few weeks ago, we presented Peter Mansbridge and British historian,

Dan Snow, with a look at Canadian history, at a fantastic event. This season is also not the first time in our long history where we have had individuals from CBC. In a 1991 speech to the Empire Club of Canada, president of CBC at the time, Gérard Veilleux, described the role of the CBC with Canada as the following: “We at the CBC know our first task. We have to clean and clear and reopen our windows on each other. We must help Canadians to hear as well as to listen, to see as well as to watch. That is the basic service we can and must provide.

This is an immense task, to allow us to see each other not as we fear but as we hope, and to help re-open a future founded in the tolerance and understanding that springs from hope rather than the debilitating sense of grievance and alienation that springs from fear and intolerance.”

In that vein, Vassy, through her work on *Power in Politics*, has done this by tackling Canadian issues head on through employing the perspective of individuals from across the country and across many political spectrums and providing a national forum for reasonable and respectful debate. Since taking over the show in 2018, Vassy has brought her own style, competence and brand of authenticity. Vassy is both respectful and persistent.

She is known to get the answers to questions that Canadians want to know. If you do not want to give them to her right away, she will wait you out.

With the Canadians’ next election coming up, it is a perfect time to have a great panel of experts with Vassy at the

Empire Club of Canada. Let us get started. Before I get started I just want to prepare everyone. There is going to be a Q&A today. Vassy will take the Q&A questions.

If you think of questions while the presentation is going on, you will be ready for the time at the end. In writing my remarks I was reflecting on the fact that I met our first panelist during the 2007 election campaign. At the time, I was new to politics. Amanda was a senior political advisor and spokesperson in the provincial government. The most notable incident was, of course, that I mis-navigated the media bus with Amanda on it and, of course, all the media.

The campaign itself was called “Moving Forward Together,” so you can imagine the amount of jokes that I received at the time because the bus was not moving forward; it was going the wrong way, but Amanda was very nice about it. I do remember that. It was a bad day, but everyone recovered. Amanda went on to serve as Senior Communications Advisor for both Justin Trudeau’s leadership bid and his party’s election campaign. She is also the Founder of Artbound, a Canadian charity responsible for building arts schools and programs in developing countries.

Ladies and gentlemen, please, welcome Senior Political Strategist and President of Toronto-based public relations agency Pomp & Circumstance, Amanda Alvaro. Our next panelist is a senior communications and campaign strategist with over 15 years of experience in media, politics and the not-for-profit sector. A principal at Earnsccliffe, Kathleen previously served as Director of Communications for NDP

leader, Jack Layton, serving as the campaign spokesperson and media director during the NDP's 2011 federal election.

She is also Founding Executive Director and catalyst for the Broadbent Institute. Kathleen previously worked in newsrooms in Toronto, Ottawa and Washington. She holds an MSc in politics and communication from the London School of Economics, so no degrees at all, and remains an active volunteer with Equal Voice. Please, welcome Political Strategist and Principal at Earncliffe, Kathleen Monk.

A columnist and commentator, our next guest has worked on numerous Canadian federal political campaigns for conservatives and conservative parties dating back to the early 1990s. Working as an advisor and political operative, Tim has advised party leaders and cabinet ministers.

He has also fundraised for federal and provincial parties across the country. Tim is also the current Chairman of Rugby Canada. Please, welcome Vice-Chairman of Summa Strategies and Managing Director of Abacus Data, Tim Powers. Today's moderator, prior to working at CBC, was Ottawa Bureau Chief and Host of The West Block on Global News. While covering federal politics, she interviewed everyone from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg. She has covered and anchored multiple elections, both federally and provincially. She also reports on stories and events all over the world.

Before working in Ottawa, Vassy covered provincial politics in Alberta and Saskatchewan. She is the recipient of an Edward R. Murrow Award for her work on a series

called Code Red, which exposed the shortcomings of Edmonton's emergency response system. That has nothing to do with the movie with Jack Nicholson in it.

During her downtime, Vassy loves to bake, read, avoid exercise—that is what her bio says; I like that one—and spend time with family, friends and her PVR. Please, welcome the Host of CBC's Power in Politics, Vassy Kapelos.

Countdown to Federal Election 2019

VK: Hi, everybody. So nice to see you. Thanks for ripping that straight from the bio, appreciate it. I do like to avoid exercise and spend time with my family, which are all here. Thanks. I want to thank everyone so much for coming this afternoon. It is such a pleasure to do this in real life. Normally, I am just staring into a black box talking to them from various parts of the country.

Just in case you do not know the way that we are doing this is on our show, Power in Politics, 5 o'clock Monday to Friday, CBC News Network—we have three segments of the show. A big chunk, the primary chunk of the show, the highest rated part of the show, is the Power Panel and this is my Wednesday Power Panel. Every Wednesday, we get together, and, for about 40 minutes, we debate the political topics du jour, how they relate to the election, whatever it is from the day.

Essentially, the setup is we have a journalist plus me and then somebody that represents in the vein of the three major parties. Sometimes we have the Green Party now, lately, because they are on the up, which I am sure we will talk about, but this is the set up, and so that is what we are going to try to accomplish today.

As Kent mentioned, we will be taking questions from the audience, so get your questions ready in about 20, 25 minutes' time. You can throw anything you want at these guys, and they will ably answer it, I am sure. First, we are going to gear this whole thing towards the election, because we are about 130 or 125 days away, not that I am counting. I am super-excited.

We want to talk about some of the issues involved in it, about the leaders, their weaknesses, their good qualities and what we think is going to happen. Tim, I am going to start with you. What is the defining issue of this election going to be?

TP: Affordability. How is that? Do you want more?

VK: Yes, explain why.

TP: I think though the economy is doing exceptionally well, and the government was looking to Trump, but that as they should, on Friday, I think we have had the lowest unemployment since 1976.

KM: Do you want to say that again?

AA: Lowest unemployment since 1976.

TP: One compliment you will get, but people across the country feel hard pressed to live and survive and to get forward. I have seen it from Newfoundland and Labrador, where I am from, all the way out to the west coast. Parties are seeing that anxious nature, and you are seeing it in the distemper of the times in what is happening across the country in recent provincial elections. The established political order, rightly or wrongly, is being questioned. One quick example of that: Look at PEI. I am sure you do not all look at PEI. You may vacation in PEI. Best economy in the country. They just kicked their premier out. Normally, that premier would be sailing home, so it is going to be affordability.

VK: Amanda, if it is going to be affordability, how do the Liberals handle that? A million new jobs since Justin Trudeau was elected. Yet, even on Friday when he was in France, he was acknowledging that there is that anxiety out there. I get tweets all the time: “He keeps talking about how good the economy is, but my life does not feel any better.” How do the Liberals address that?

AA: The economy only matters as it matters to your own pocketbook, as it matters to how you feel when you wake up in the morning, what you can afford, how you

can afford it. Can you get to the hockey practice?

Can you get your kids in dance classes? I think despite the fact that the Liberals can trumpet and should continue to trumpet the idea that the economy is strong, the unemployment rate is at an all-time low, the problem is if people do not feel it, if that anxiety lingers underneath, they are going to make that a reality at the polls. I think that there is another thing that is happening. I agree. I think affordability is going to be one of the defining issues of the campaign. I think the Liberals would like climate to be another defining issue of the campaign, but I do not think it will be.

TP: I agree with you.

AA: There are some other issues, though, that are percolating underneath, and those are value issues, things like women's reproductive rights. You hear me?

Women's reproductive rights. I think that is—you can feel it just under the surface: Immigration and some of the issues related to that, the kind of country I want to live in, what it looks like, what it will look like for my kids and their grandkids. I think those issues may play a bigger role than we think. I think they may play a bigger role than we have seen in the last number of elections. That would be my prediction.

VK: I want to circle back and then get your response to that, but, Kathleen, what do you think the big issue is?

KM: I am going to say a bunch of things that are important, but I do not think are going to be the issue.

Climate has already been mentioned. We know that for millennials, it is one of the top two issues.

For the general population, it generally comes in the top five for about 40% of the population. Then, there are issues that Amanda just pointed out, the values, the identity-based issues. We saw a campaign recently in Alberta run largely on those identity issues. It was not successful, unfortunately. Listen that was my team.

I was rooting for Rachel Notley. When we brought out some of those real issues around identity politics, LGBTQ issues, white nationalism, it did not resonate with the wider population. Why was that? I think the election debrief still has to happen in that province, but I would argue it goes back to that hierarchy of needs, back to the economy. I think Tim and Amanda are right in terms of it will be an affordability issue. I want to broaden it. Tim has mentioned the economy is on fire. Certainly, we have seen some of the lowest unemployment rates. The Liberals, frankly, have not done a great job, probably because they do not have Amanda on their team working permanently in Ottawa, but selling that narrative, telling people about what they have done for the economy, and that means that people do not know that information, and they do not feel that information. I want to point to one study.

It was out a couple of weeks ago. The CEOs currently, in 2018, made a 7% raise. An average worker has to work 158 years to make the same salary as a CEO makes in one year. It is that disparity that is causing so much anxiety that they do not feel that their children are going to do as well as they are.

Listen, I know the audience I am speaking to. I am speaking to the Empire Club. I know this is not necessarily going to be a popular message that I am coming in with by saying that CEOs need to take a pay cut, and we need to give workers more, but I think it is really important that we start talking about that income and equality issue and talking about ways, in public policy, that we can try to solve it.

VK: I want to circle back to what Amanda brought up, and that is values. We have seen a lot of that. Is abortion, is Michael Cooper and what he said going to sink Andrew Scheer in this election?

TP: It is a winning proposition for the only male on the panel, is it not? Thank you. As a pro-choice male, I had better claim all of that. I do not know if it will sink them, but things like the Michael Cooper incident—for those of you who do not know, Michael Cooper, a Conservative MP was at the justice committee a week or two ago. He read from the manifesto of the New Zealand shooter while interrogating. That would be

the right word, a Muslim witness. It was dumb. It was really stupid.

VK: He apologized.

TP: He did apologize. He was trying to be too cute by half.

The Conservatives cannot make those mistakes on an ongoing basis because, unlike the other two parties who have different troubles when it comes to identity and values, the Conservatives are more vulnerable in that area. I do not think the forced-upon abortion debate is going to sink the Conservatives. I think it is a deliberate strategy. Maybe it is not an ill-conceived strategy. It is not borne out fact based on what Scheer said, but it certainly is designed to make women uncomfortable with the Conservative leader. I think he has to be more forceful in constantly recognizing that this is not an issue that should be pursued or will ever be pursued. Frankly, I just wish the Conservatives—and I am speaking personally here—would put this issue to bed and would put the whole issue of marching in Pride parades to bed. We live in 2019, so stop playing footsie with some of the SoCon crap that is out there.

AA: The fact that they cannot put it to bed, the fact that they will not put it to bed will be the reason why people will have to think twice about voting for them, in my mind.

VK: Do you think they will like what Kathleen said?

Do you think that what happened in Alberta can be extrapolated to the rest of the country? If the Liberals push it too much, are people just going to tune out to that stuff and be, like, “Hey, it still matters if life is affordable or not.”

AA: No, because I think that there are different issues that happen in our Prairie Provinces, and there are different ways of expressing those issues and a different point of view on those issues. I think one of the habits that we fall into—and we get into some of these Twitter exchanges, which have been really fun lately, but we get into them. I hear a lot from women who say it will not happen here, not in our country; it might be happening south of the border; it might happen to them.

Then, you look at the cover of the Sunday New York Times and 10 of 25 are YouTube stars. Right-wing YouTube stars that are reflected on that cover are Canadian, not American. It is happening here, and it is borderless. It is happening across borders, but I think the messages that resonate in Alberta are very different than messages that resonate elsewhere, particularly, in Ontario and Quebec but also around the country as well. I think that is the reason why we are seeing this debate percolate the way it is. I do not think that it is on fire, but I think it is close. I think when you have 12

Conservative MPs attending an anti-choice rally and the leader not condemning that, women in this country have reason to be hella mad.

TP: You can be mad, and I get not condemning it, but, come on, what happens on YouTube is not a reflection of what is happening in the Conservative Party.

AA: Really?

TP: Really, we are going to start talking about what happens on YouTube is a reflection of that? Scheer has said, Harper has said, and I think what people do not understand, and Mike Van Soelen and others here who have worked in the government would tell you, is if the Conservative Party ever moved to change the current status quo—because we actually should codify the law to allow for abortion—half the Conservative Party would walk away or more.

AA: But 15% of the party shows up at an anti-choice rally—15%.

KM: To be fair, are they not allowed to believe what they believe? If the leader insists that they are not going to legislate on it—I mean, there are people in this country who have different views.

AA: But not as representatives of ridings.

KM: The reality is that Andrew Scheer was elected on the

13th ballot of his leadership ballot. He did not win a resounding majority.

AA: He just beat out Maxime Bernier.

KM: He just squeaked through. He has no coalition of the willing that is behind him. As a result, it is really hard to keep all these people together. He wants to keep on mobilizing his more socially conservative base to volunteer, to donate. He has to keep on feeding red meat to those masses so he has to allow the 12 Conservative MPs to go to those rallies. I think the bigger point here from a strategic point of view is these series of events, and let us roll back the clock a little bit; let us go back to Lynn Beyak. Do we all remember who Lynn Beyak is?

The former Conservative senator who had to be kicked out of caucus. It took about a year for her to be kicked out of caucus for publishing some really heinous letters on her website. That took Andrew Scheer a really long time to do that. Now, we have seen another example where he has not in any way disciplined these MPs who have gone to these rallies. We have seen another example with Michael Cooper where—okay, Michael Cooper, you do not get your seat on the justice committee for another couple of weeks while the House is still sitting, but no real discipline, no ejection out of caucus.

What that shows to me, these series of examples, is a weak leader, someone who is not strong, someone who

does not have a command of their caucus or their party.

I think that is the pattern that we have to watch for—that he is not willing to stand up.

VK: Tim wants to jump in, and I am going to move on to a different one.

TP: It was a good one to start with. Look, I will go back and agree with Amanda and Kathleen that these are issues Conservatives have to be careful with, but it is outright farcical. And let me use that word again, ‘farcical’, to suggest that any of the leadership of the Conservative Party is going to re-open the abortion debate. It is not going to happen in my lifetime or your lifetime.

That is a very, very good thing. However, yes, in the Conservative Party and, hopefully, in other political parties, there are people who do not have one homogenous view on everything. I am not the social conservative.

I think my friends would grant me that. I do not understand social conservatism, and I went to an all-boys Christian Brothers School, so I really should have a good understanding of it. I do not get it. I do not get what they believe in, but I do believe they should have a place and a space to express themselves. I do not believe they have the ability to influence legislation. That is my view, and that is what a Conservative Party will welcome people of different views. Total uniformity on issues is not always a good thing, and shutting down the dialogue or

labeling people, or whole parties, because of the view of 12 people is also not helpful in advancing the rational arguments that can be made.

KM: On human rights, I think it is okay, actually. On the matter of human rights and women's rights, I think it is okay.

VK: Speaking of 'big tent', Amanda, was the damage done to the Liberals and the prime minister, specifically through SNC self-inflicted, do you think?

AA: I think, in part, it was, because I think that there was, when we were headed into week 11 talking about it on the show and every major newspaper and broadcaster in the country, it was very evident that the party had had an opportunity, I think, earlier on, to stop the bleed, to stem the bleed, and we did not do that. I think that there was this feeling that a lot of goodwill that had been sewn over many years would prevail and that he would not take the hit that he ultimately ended up taking. I think we relied on that too much, and I certainly think we relied on time too much. What should have happened, in my opinion, is that very early on, there should have been an apology. It should have been quick. It should have come from the heart, which, I think, this leader, in particular, Trudeau can do very well.

I think that he has that capability. I think had he have done that, Canadians would have been open to forgiving some of the things that they found to be an issue as it

related to SNC. Damage that was inflicted day after day, week over week, ultimately led to what is now a big slide in the polls and time for us to rally and have to get behind other issues and remind Canadians why they fell for him in the first place.

VK: I will move over to Kathleen. What do you think would need to happen—put yourself in their shoes for a second—in order for him to recapture, for the prime minister to recapture the sentiment that existed prior to that?

KM: First of all, I think that it is natural in a four-year cycle that they would have that dip. They really did not have that dip until 2019, which was amazing, really, largely because, for most of his tenure, he was not facing real leaders. Jagmeet was not elected. It took a while for Scheer to get elected. He is only facing an opposition now. I think there were technical mistakes, like Amanda alluded to. I think they should have gotten out there and followed the comms plan of apologizing, but what they need to do now is they need to focus on women. Liberals traditionally win when they have a 12-point advantage among women, so it is a gender split. Same thing for Obama. Obama, in 2012, I think, won over Romney with about—it was a 12- or 14-point split. They do not have that split now, let me tell you.

AA: Close, close. We are. I think the most recent polls show about 11 points on that front, with women, not with men.

KM: You need a lot more. They need more across the country. The question is, to Vassy's point, was this a hit that was temporary, that some people were upset with what Trudeau and the government did, or actually have people become disillusioned and are now writing them off? The question, in strategic terms, and what we talk about is has their voter universe shrunk from what has happened? Are there less people even willing to consider the Liberals now? That is the biggest question that, if I were in their party, I would be trying to figure out quick.

TP: It was a self-inflicted wound, but here is the equal opportunity or the equal challenge with all of that, as Amanda knows quite well: The Liberals' biggest asset in 2015 was Justin Trudeau. Right now he is their most damaged asset. The different polls showed different things. As we all know, our Abacus poll has the parties tied. Angus Reid has them at a 10-point gap today with the Conservatives ahead. You can guess which one I believe. What the two numbers that really matter are for those who are looking at the prime minister's performance and want a change of direction in the country—there are big gaps there that were not there before. Justin Trudeau, who used to outpace his party is now behind his party. I do not think he is yet a full-on negative to his party, but it puts him in a very different place. That is why you see him, I think—

and, again, Amanda knows him better—potentially overreaching a little bit in his performances: Because he wants to get his fire back in his belly. You have not asked, but, look, I think, and, again, why not throw a hand grenade in here?

VK: Go for it. We are not on air, it is fine.

TP: We are on air, actually. His response to the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women's Inquiry and not saying 'genocide', and then saying 'genocide' was an emotional overreach. There is a whole legitimate debate to be had about that word, but I think that was the prime minister who cares about this issue going too far, and creating the climate now where he is, again, being criticized, even by some of his own people, including very well respected people like Irwin Cotler and Roméo Dallaire.

VK: He interestingly, this morning, actually, on Radio-Canada, had a different response and said 'cultural genocide' would be more appropriate. Tim is referring to the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Inquiry, the finding of which was that what has occurred and is occurring with these women and girls amounts to a genocide. There was a lot of conversation, obviously, as that released, about which leader will call it that. Will the prime minister label it that?

If so, what are the implications? He, at first, did

not, for the first day; then he moved on and did call it a genocide. Then, today, *[he]* qualified that and said maybe ‘cultural genocide’ would be more appropriate.

AA: I think something else to consider when you are thinking about where we are in this timeframe between when SNC kicked off in the election: You will recall that we have been in the House where the opposition has taken as many shots and tried to keep this issue alive for as long as possible, and, frankly, did a good job of doing that. Now, we are heading into home team advantage because we are heading into campaign period. What does Trudeau do really, really well? He campaigns really well. He tours really well. When he is on the ground, when he is with people, when he is meeting people in the big town halls, that is his sweet spot. We do have that. I think that is key.

I am not just saying that. It is not just some Liberal spin for you. I really do think that there are leaders who do very, very well in the House, and there are leaders who do very, very well on the road. He is a leader that does well on the road and that happens to work for us, because we are heading there.

VK: Speaking of leaders, the number one question I have received over the past few weeks is: Is this Green thing real? I want to ask you that, Kathleen.

KM: No, no, no.

TP: Yes, yes, yes.

VK: I also have to ask you about Jagmeet Singh. We need your unfiltered take on what he is like as a leader.

TP: Remember, the camera is on now.

KM: Jagmeet does not and did not grow up at 24 Sussex.

He did not grow up cultured and in the whole realm of politics. He has not been elected, like Andrew Scheer since he was 25, literally, 25 years old.

Andrew Scheer has done nothing but work in elected politics. He has a lot to learn. He has a lot, a lot to learn.

VK: That is a really diplomatic way—

TP: Way to dodge, an artful dodge.

KM: I am coming there. It has been a few years at this; I know how to dodge. He has a couple of things going for him. He is really good at retail. Back to the retail thing. He is really good at retail. I think that the press gallery, rightfully, has given him a hard time over a few of his original forays into the media.

They also kind of chide him for his social media use, which they think is too casual or too social for a leader. They have certain expectations of what a leader should do on Instagram and what they should not.

He is putting forth policies I think that will still connect. The advantage, if I can say anything—and Amanda is right—is that once we get into election time, things change, and people perk up, and they start paying attention. That is, hopefully, where Jagmeet will have the opportunity to get some more attention because networks will be required to cover the parties in a more equal way, and, hopefully, he can punch through, because he has not been. If his weakness is one thing, he has not been able to punch through.

Maxime Bernier has been better at punching through, frankly, than Jagmeet has. Today, hopefully, this is some news: They are going to be going on big telecom and getting better rates for cell phones, something directly to appeal at that affordability message to millennials. You might not go over your data overages in this room, but lots of millennials and Gen Xers do that basically within two weeks of their plan. Dealing with those telecoms, New Democrats are reaching back to Jack Layton's brand of taking the fees off ATM machines.

AA: She always does such a good job of the spin. You all do. That was impressive. He has been a disaster. I was going to throw the real grenade out there. It has been a disaster, an absolute plummet in the polls, a very—it feels like a distracted party that has been here and here, a divided party who cannot get behind the leader.

I think, when I say he has been a ‘disaster’, I do not know that it is all of his own making. I think that the party apparatus has really failed him. I think that they failed putting out a message that is—I do not know if people in this room or people anywhere, frankly, even if you are NDP, know what they stand for, what they are about. While Kathleen is right that we are moving into election time where you can define that and get a little more focused about it, they have given up seated territory, given up so much ground that they needed right now, so that we are headed into a two-party election.

KM: Hurts so much.

AA: I think that is the big challenge is that we are heading into this two-party election.

VK: Let me follow up with Mr. Abacus here. Have they ceded that ground to the Greens, and can the Greens—the big question I keep wondering about and getting asked is—capitalize on what they have seen in an increase in popular support in the polls?

TP: It is a great question because in the past when the Greens have gone up, though they have not been to this level and they have not had—the most interesting part about the Greens right now is not that they are at 12% or 14%; it is that their accessible voter pool is up near 45 or 46, which goes back to this notion of the

distemper of the times. PEI and Atlantic Canada will always be my reference point, because it is the best reach in the country—sorry, Toronto.

AA: Tim always does that because he knows there will be at least one in the audience, at least one.

TP: Exactly. They just elected a Green opposition in PEI, which is strong Liberal territory. Whether that bleeds over provincially, I do not know. In Fredericton, there could be a seat that the Greens could win. The Greens' greatest challenge, Vassy, to get to the answer to your question is a matter of do they have the organizational wherewithal? If I were Elizabeth May—and I am not; I am going to stop there; she is a lovely person—I would focus on winning 12 seats, which is a party status in the House. I think if they organized themselves properly, they could. The challenge they have is they still see themselves as a movement. A movement can work at a provincial level focused en masse in a small area as it did in PEI, as it did in New Brunswick.

Yes, I think they could be real this time, but they need to be really strategically smart about where they focus their limited resources.

VK: I want to open up the floor to questions from the audience. There is a microphone, so maybe raise your hand if you have a question.

Questions & Answers

Q: Thank you so much for coming. You have not mentioned anything about international or China or whatever. All your focuses so far have been about the women's issues and so on. Can you give me some idea as to what you think the various parties are able to do in terms of foreign affairs, and, if you have time, I would love, Tim, if you could mention some of the potential candidates for a Conservative cabinet if the party was elected?

TP: Let me start on foreign affairs where you will get the first quick that generally does not tend to dominate federal elections, the one exception, of course, being 1988 in a free trade election. I think where foreign affairs will come in here, and it is a good contrast for the prime minister, will be in terms of whether the prime minister is invoking Donald Trump a lot and, as he will, Doug Ford.

As it relates to China, I think all three parties have a very similar perspective in that nobody really knows what to do, to a significant degree, to move the Chinese off their position. There has been a lot of talk in the last week, with Mr. Mulroney recommending Mr. Chretien, which in and of itself is historically fascinating—two sworn enemies, one advocating for the other. Whether the prime minister will do that or not

is another matter. You have had David Mulroney, the former ambassador say that would be ceding too much to that.

VK: Mr. Chretien did say he is willing to go.

TM: Yes, he is willing to go. I think we all do not know how to deal with China—my last point—but we had better figure it out because China and its ambitions are real, and they are definite, and they are forcing their hand very strategically all over the place. One very quick story, which my team, our team here knows:

We did a panel on China before, and I had offered a small critique of the government. The very next day, Chris Hall was also on with us and offered a similar critique. We got a note from China Global Television.

Will we go on and repeat that? The Chinese are very aggressive. They were going to pay a lot of money, but I would not do that to Vassy. Anyway, that is my quick take on it.

VK: I take your point. I would further this along.

TM: I could have taken the money?

VK: No, you could not. I take your point that the domestic issues dominate, but I think the foreign issues can be significant. Look at the last election with that devastating story of Alan Kurdi and the Syrian refugees.

It actually ended up having a huge impact on voter

sentiment. Events can influence what happens in the election. The China question is one. We know, for example, that Meng Wanzhou, that extradition hearing, will not happen until early 2020. That issue will persist in some capacity.

TM: It will not be about extradition; it will be about economy. Why is the government not too exercised about what is happening now? Because it focuses on pork.

The ban is on pork. That is mostly in the west.

VK: Canola.

TM: And canola. Again, my colleagues have heard me say this. If the Chinese go after fish in the east, it will be a very different story, because the east is dominated by Liberal MPs, including some very powerful Liberal MPs whose very electoral futures will be hanging on what happens with the various fishing industries on the east coast.

VK: A quick comment from you, Amanda.

AA: I agree. I do not think China is going to be a defining issue in this election—like foreign affairs is normally not. But I do agree with something you said right off the top, and that is that there are some natural villains, if you will, that certainly if 2015 was the sunny ways election for the Trudeau Liberals, I think we will see a shift in that. I think.

KM: Or we already have.

AA: Or maybe we have already.

TP: The forces of darkness are at the door.

AA: It is a little bit of an allowance for the Liberals to contrast in ways that they had not in 2015. There are some natural villains or natural opponents to take on, Donald Trump being the most obvious, but certainly using aspects of his personality to weigh in to people like Doug Ford, Jason Kenney works really well for Trudeau in making those contrasts and also making those linkages to Scheer.

How much does Scheer look like, act like those people? What is at risk? What is at stake? I think those contrasts tend to work well for people. If you are an Ontarian and you are watching what is happening with the Conservative cuts, things that you really care about, like education, libraries and breakfast program, God forbid, those are things that people get.

When you talk about affordability being a really important issue, and you are able to contrast it with what is at stake, that can be an extremely powerful combination, especially, if you are sitting in that nice middle like the Liberals do.

KM: On foreign affairs, I do not think that the China stuff gets resolved until Trump decides what he wants to do.

Right now, we have no ambassador there. They have no ambassador, or the ambassador is about to exit from China from Canada. What we have seen the government doing is trying to make deals with Japan, doing the things—they are staying longer in the House, potentially. Actually, the minister is here. We could ask her. Maybe somewhere.

VK: She had to go.

KM: Are they really going to stay until July, to ramp through the NAFTA 2.0 deal because they see that as one of their economic and foreign affairs priorities that they have taken over since 2017, since Trump came in? I think people ultimately vote on that hierarchy of needs, and that is often closer to home.

VK: Really quickly, who is the Minister of Finance?

TP: It will not be Pierre Poilievre. How is that? I do not know.

KM: Let us bet on that. A bottle of wine.

TP: I will bet you a Raptors ticket tonight, if I had one.

I do not. I do not know who will be the minister of finance. It will not be the critic.

AA: Bill Morneau.

VK: Amanda just said Bill Morneau.

TP: Clever, clever.

VK: Let us take another question from the audience.

Q: I want to address three items. One, you talked about the election, and, just to remind you, 30% did not vote; 68% voted; and 61% voted against our current party. On the issue of disparity, I wanted to mention that I am a chief in the un-surrendered Aboriginals and what happens in the un-surrendered Aboriginals is that you have two kinds of Indians. You have Indians that are surrendered, like Perry Bellegarde.

They are ceded, and they are under the Indian Act and want to get out from under it; *[they have]* been on the funding payroll for 150 years, and they only got \$21 billion from this current government.

On the other side, there are the Métis that are 30 million strong all across North America, and they got absolutely nothing.

When Lynn Beyak, the senator, was talking about Natives that made a difference, she was talking about the Métis trying to find examples in the surrendered Nation. Of course, there were none. Whereas, our current parliament buildings are being listed because of a Métis chief that decided that we need to protect our parliament building, and thousands of buildings across the world have

been protected in those areas. My question is when we raise the question, the current government bulldozed our tribal offices, bulldozed our land.

When we took them to court, the court said, “Look, you are charging with terrorism, ten days at court.” The judge said, “I am going to give you a reserved decision. It will be released on October 21st.” When it came on October 21st, at nine o’clock, it was delayed four hours for the AG to get there. They did exactly the opposite to what they did at SNC.

My question is about disparity; I think that is going to be the key in the next election. What do you think? I think the key is going to be to get the people that did not vote last year to do it. I question whether if the government is going to deny certain Canadians water, is that genocide in the current day?

TP: Let me take a crack at that, only because I have an extensive background in Indigenous affairs. I worked in the department. I have done two academic research degrees on it and have done work with the Métis people. Let me start with the current government. I think the intentions of the current government have been good and legitimate. I think where the current government has had challenges—and I think the prime

minister has recognized this himself—is in the expectations that so many of the things you have just alluded to can be dealt with in a four-year period. They cannot be. As it relates to Métis, funding arrangements have changed with the Métis people. As you know, there is now an educational funding arrangement with the Métis that exists in Manitoba and elsewhere. I am familiar with the Labrador Métis. They are in the process of signing an agreement on land claims benefits and the opportunity to take advantage of the resources in the east. I do not think you can call what happened—and again, I have written a lot on this, so I am happy to defend it—a ‘genocide’ to our Indigenous people. It was horrific. It was ill-considered, but a genocide in the truest terms—I would dispute all of that. I think what has happened that is good for all Indigenous people, Métis included, is that for good or for bad, no resource development in this country—and I think it is actually good—happens without the consideration, input and oversight of Indigenous peoples. We are never going to fix the history. We are never going to get it right, but we are doing better, and no one party is good at this. We all need more to do, have more to do here.

AA: Well said.

VK: Do you want to quickly answer? And then we will take some more questions.

KM: I just want to pick up on the thread, because he addressed the Indigenous issue, but I want to pick up the thread on the engagement issue about voter turnout that you raised. I have a friend, Tania Cameron, who does Aboriginal “Rock the Vote” up in Northern Ontario. What we did see in the last election, I think, is important. It was like a 57% turnout between that group, between 18 and 24. That was a record high. Will we see that again? We joked on this panel before that they all came out because they all wanted marijuana to get through. What will drive those people to the polls again? I do think that it is important that we try to raise increased turnout in any way we can, increase civic literacy in our schools among even pre-vote age students.

VK: I want to take another question. We have time for a few more.

Q: Hi, thank you. With the rise in social media, advertising is driving election messaging. And with the recent Facebook announcement on how they are going to implement the new regulations and all that, do you think these regulations or these online databases for election ads will make a difference, or is this just a drop in the bucket in terms of controlling and bringing visibility to the way that social media is being used to push political messaging?

VK: Good strategy.

AA: I missed that.

KM: Good question.

VK: Basically, is what Facebook announcing actually going to mitigate any of the concerns around what they use the data for, or is this just a drop in the bucket?

KM: I have just studied C-76 pretty extensively, which is the new election law that came in December.

What I would say is this: Certainly Facebook, the whole fan group, needs to be regulated more so.

I think that some of the things that Facebook is moving towards is good, but there is so much more that needs to be done because, frankly, we can always figure out a way around it. Right now, there are two regulatory periods pre-election. There is one that begins on June 30th and one that begins when the writ is dropped. While it certainly lowers the amount of money that can be spent during those times, it does not do anything in between electoral periods, and there are ways that people can work around that. I think that—and going back to the last answer to the gentleman before you—it all depends on civic literacy and actually understanding and teaching our students and adults, for that matter, what disinformation is and how to look through that.

I sit on the board of a group called CIVIX, which does the Student Vote project and does democracy boot camps for teachers all across Canada.

One of the things they are trying to do is how to teach people how to understand what misinformation is and how to go through a website and understand if it is true or not. That is a literacy skill, frankly, that we can all use.

VK: Amanda, do you want to weigh in?

AA: I agree. I do not think it is enough. I think that we will be bombarded with third-party messages. I think that it is very difficult to delineate between what is an actual paid message by a party and what is the third party. How is the third party connected, especially, when we see—I am sorry to call out the Conservative Party, again—the Conservative Party putting so much effort and emphasis into their own channels and their own ability to disseminate news their way? I think that that is a massive challenge for the voter, for a, frankly, somewhat uneducated voter who may only be paying attention when it is election period. I think that because of Donald Trump, we have gotten into this place where there is the idea of fake news. Our real news agencies and broadcasters somehow broadcasting fake news is also a problem because people really do not know what to believe, where the source of real and good information is. I think it is really important for

people to go back to the sites of each of these parties to understand what these platforms are because we will be hurling and throwing so many balls, and a lot of it is going to be BS, and people have to find a way to sift through that to get to the core.

TP: Yes, you are never going to regulate at mean-spiritedness or moronic behaviour. Turn Twitter on at any moment of the day, and you get plenty of that no matter what the regulations are.

AA: Totally.

TP: The other challenge you have is less the vehicle and more the political culture. We now have a more refined political culture where all parties engage in very demarcated attacks, and you are training young people to do this, so they do not have the ability to impose a little bit of humanity in the conversation. It is, “You are right, or you are wrong.” There is nothing in between. All politicians—last point I will make—are encouraged by their political leadership to use social media because, whether it is true or not, they assume they can have direct voter contact. I am a big fan of hers—Catherine McKenna. Catherine got herself in trouble most recently for doing a video in a bar in Newfoundland with Mark Critch, where she said, “What I learned is if you talk the loudest, you get heard.”

She is actually right in saying that, but that became a

condemnation of “Look, what a twisted way of doing politics.” Just shut down your social media and turn off your Twitter.

AA: I think we also all predict the ugliest and nastiest election campaign.

KM: We can do something. People have been saying that every election.

AA: We can.

TP: Yes, we can.

KM: I have been on this for the last six months, and it is going to be the worst, ugliest campaign ever in the history of Canada.

AA: It will be. It is going to be.

KM: Let us try to change that. Everybody raise your hand right now. Raise your hand.

KM: Let us just commit. Let us just commit.

VK: I have time for one more really quick question, if there is another one.

Q: No one has mentioned anything about health policy, national pharmacare, drug pricing, rare disease, all this stuff happening on policy. Is any of this resonating at all with the electorate?

VK: Your question is music to Kathleen's ears.

KM: Yes, there is my lifeline.

TP: Set aside an hour for the answer.

VK: We have two minutes to answer this.

KM: Yes, there is effort to build a pharmacare plan for Canadians for a number of years. Free birth control in 2020 if you vote for a New Democratic government, for every woman. That will help our economy; it will help half of the population.

VK: Not to interrupt, though, but his question is also does it resonate? Are people going to be voting on health care?

KM: It is the same like childcare. Childcare is an infrastructure program. It is an economic program. People have been railing in social democratic circles for affordable, accessible, public childcare for years. Do we have it?

No. Every time someone comes forward with it, it becomes the pox on the party and does not work. I am not sure. I think people do crave it. Pharmacare has shown to not only save money for governments, but help increase productivity and also help people who cannot afford their meds in terms of an affordability issue. It does not look like the Liberals are going to bring something in.

They have got their blue-ribbon panel that has made some recommendations.

AA: Oh, just wait.

VK: They have Eric Hoskins, the former health minister, here in Ontario, who is about to, any moment now, deliver his final report, but, like Kathleen says, we do not know if that will be an actual pharmacare program or a hybrid. They have certainly been telegraphing that it will not be the full deal. Amanda, quick answer on health issues? What is it going to be?

AA: Well, news right here. No. I think, to Kathleen's point, it is an issue. It is always an issue. It is never the number one issue. I think the Liberals will unveil something that is bigger than maybe what people are expecting. Will it go all the way? Will it satisfy New Democrats' desires on that front? No, I do not think so. I think it is unfortunate because, when you take your federal lens and look provincially at what is happening and the erosion of some of our health care institutions, provincially, there are concerns that should actually be lifted up, so that federally we are taking a more responsive approach to how we are addressing health care and how we are guiding and leading it.

To be honest, I do not see it being even in the top three or four issues.

TP: I was just going to say railing on health care is a social democratic breakfast theme, a breakfast issue.

We would hear it all day, but it is an important issue, I would say.

KM: Tommy, health care, would not be without a New Democrat.

TP: I know, MCP. I actually did a presentation to a health care group yesterday with fresh data that we had.

Health care is number eight in terms of ranking of issues, way behind the economy. When people are asked what they think should be the focus of investment in health care, it will not surprise you that first it is more doctors; second, it is more nurses; third, it is wait time. There is not a lot of sophistication or easy politics there for political leaders.

VK: Thanks, guys.

KE: Our lead sponsor today, Takeda, I would like to thank you for sponsoring. Again, I would like to welcome Rebecca Yu, Vice President of Market Access and External Affairs from Takeda to give our thank you, today.

**Note of Appreciation, by Ms. Rebecca Yu,
Vice President, Market Access and
External Affairs, Takeda**

Thank you, Kent. On behalf of Takeda Canada, I want to thank the panel for a really lively, exciting discussion. I really enjoyed it. I will remember to tune in at 5 to 7 p.m. daily on CBC News Network—Wednesdays, especially. As the Canadian affiliate of a top-ten innovative biopharmaceutical company, Takeda Canada appreciates the opportunity to sponsor today's event. Founded in Japan 238 years ago, Takeda's mission is to deliver better health and brighter futures for patients through life-changing medicines. Health care almost always ranks as a top issue for Canadian voters at election time, but, as we discussed, it often does not get a lot of attention in the actual campaigns. It will be interesting to see if national pharmacare emerges as an important campaign issue this October. Takeda believes that any move toward national pharmacare should be made with the goal of expanding access to medicines and reducing coverage gaps for all Canadian patients, not by rationing care or achieving equity by offering less coverage for medicines that patients need.

Thanks, again, to the Empire Club of Canada for the opportunity for Takeda Canada to support this forum. Special thanks to Vassy and the panel for a thought-provoking and entertaining discussion. I just want to end to say regardless of what party and what colour you are in, we are going to say one thing, tonight, which is "Go Raptors!"

Concluding Remarks, by Kent Emerson

A few quick announcements. I want to recognize a gentleman here who will be the next president of the Empire Club starting in July: Mr. Mike Van Soelen. He is going to take over and succeed me in all kinds of ways. Thank you.

A couple more recognitions. I know Minister Ng was here. I think she might have departed, but the Minister of Small Business and Export was here. Gordon McIvor—I just want to thank a gentleman here who has helped me very much through this season. We are about to launch our 39th event, so it has been very busy, but he has been there as a sounding board, and it has been very helpful. I want to thank you, Gordon for that. Thank you.

I also want to recognize the gentleman who has spoken here, but Tony van Straubensee of all the presidents of the Empire Club in the last 115 years—and no, we are not as old as Takeda—probably had the most prestigious year, because he had both Audrey Hepburn and Ronald Reagan in the same year, amongst other people. He was known for bringing the most prestigious folks here for all the years.

Then, something came up in the talk today. We are having a discussion on hate this Thursday, for any of you who can come out. There are a few tickets left. It is an important discussion to have with all of the things that have been happening in Toronto over the last couple of years on the Internet. It is a difficult discussion, and we are going to have it here. We have an academic; we have Bernie Far-

ber from the Anti-Hate Network; we have Mohamad Fakhri, who just won a lawsuit against a gentleman who had been victimizing him online, for \$2.5 million. I am not going to be giving the introduction. I am asking Mohamad to give the introduction. It is going to be a great event on Thursday, for any of you who could attend.

We will also have an event on June 13th with Minister Ng. It is an evening event. It is called “Women Who Build.” It will be a tremendous event. Finally, we will have the Health Minister of Canada on June 24th. Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen.

Meeting adjourned.