

TRUDEAU MUST CROSS THE NATION'S DIVIDES

You don't need a crystal ball to know Justin Trudeau's second term as prime minister will be more grueling than his first.

Burdened by a minority instead of buoyed by a majority, he faces daunting environmental, economic and Indigenous-relations challenges at home in addition to the sobering uncertainty of a world order upended by an increasingly unreliable America and an ever-more assertive China.

So many and varied are the problems, threats and troubles pressuring Trudeau, it may be difficult for him to know where to start in confronting them. But we have no hesitation in saying what should top his to-do list.

It should be managing divisions - the ones deepening through the House of Commons as well as the ones weakening Canada. And, to achieve this, he should keep his promises to do more to fight climate change while expanding the Trans Mountain pipeline out west. These issues are all intertwined.

No one can deny the nation is more seriously split on regional lines today than after Trudeau's 2015 election triumph and the "sunny ways" it briefly ushered in.

Incensed by the roadblocks to getting their oil to market and the reality they're without a single MP representing them in Ottawa, Albertans are suddenly musing, however impractically, about "Wexit." Meanwhile, a less obstreperous Quebec has renewed its push for greater autonomy.

Only by finding a way to make the 43rd Parliament function productively can Trudeau bring Canadians and Canada back together again. Working in his favour is the size of his minority government. With 157 MPs, the Liberals are just over a dozen votes short of a majority in the House of Commons.

As the most centrist party in this polarized House, the Liberals share common ground with the New Democrats on the left and the Conservatives on the right. With some heartfelt goodwill, Trudeau should be able to garner the support he needs to create a stable, effective government for at least a year or two.

Trudeau need not be lured into forming a coalition with the NDP or anyone else. And it was heartening to hear Trudeau reject this option at an Ottawa news conference last week. The Liberals should be able to govern on an issue-by-issue basis - without making costly and major concessions to another party.

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PACKSACKS FOR THE HOMELESS

'SWEET' COMMENT
MADE MY DAY,
WRITES STEPHEN
ILOTT



STEPHEN
ILOTT
Column

On any given day I collect a lot of stuff. You name it I've decluttered it out and away from basements, attics, closets, garages, storage units, under the stairs, from rafters, trunks, boxes, bins and bags and found a myriad of ways to get it all gone and used as opposed to contributing to landfills.

One avenue is what I call packsacks for the homeless. Each morning I drive my wife to work in Toronto from Oakville to relieve her of a relentless commute. She buys me a coffee and I'm usually back in time for my morning client booking.

This is where the packsacks come in. Once off the

Gardiner at Spadina I am greeted by the many homeless who strive to survive in a completely different world - one most of us can never imagine. For the most part they are polite and thankful for any small offering. But instead of just a jingle of nickels and dimes I love to surprise them with, "How about a packsack full of great stuff you can use?"

I asked myself what I would need if I had to live on the streets. I think like a camper or traveller. I stuff in power bars, water, a flashlight, a paperback of short stories, reading glasses, a portable medical kit with bandages and such, an airline gift bag of soaps, shavers, sewing kits, a baggie of change, maybe a Tim's gift card, gloves, a sleeping bag

rolled up and tied on, camping utensils and cups, a thermos, a hat, a scarf, clean socks, a sweat-shirt, something funny to lighten their lives, something they could sell - anything I've collected in the packsack until I'm happy with it.

One young woman, head shaved and plastered with tattoos, had one word for the packsack I handed out to her, "Sweet." That made my day.

Declutter something for the homeless. It'll bring a little therapy to your home.

Stephen Ilott is a home organizer and author of The Domestic Archeologist. Visit www.decluttering.ca or contact him at info@decluttering.ca or 416-460-8098.

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newsroom@theifp.ca
IndependentAndFreePress
@IFP_11

WHO WE ARE

Publisher
Kelly Montague
Regional General Manager
Steve Foreman
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CONTACT US

The Independent & Free Press
280 Guelph Street, Unit 77
Georgetown, ON L7G 4B1
Phone: 905-873-0301
Classifieds: 1-800-263-6480
Fax: 905-873-0398

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