

Beyond Question Period: Leadership, Party Complexity, and Governance in Canada

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Since the election of the Liberal Party of Canada in 2019, leadership at the federal level has faced unprecedented challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the government's capacity to enact new legislation at speeds not observed during the day-to-day bureaucracy of federal parliament. The crisis revealed the potential for a sitting government to collaborate with opposition parties and take immediate steps to support Canadian citizens. However, even before 2019, Members of Parliament (MPs) openly criticized the lack of decorum during the daily Question Period. This issue has seemingly worsened since the Liberal Party's reelection in 2021 and the election of Pierre Poilievre as the leader of the official opposition, contributing to what has been described as "false polarization" (Greg Fergus quoted in Aiello, 2023)—a misrepresentation of the work MPs accomplish in committee meetings, overshadowed by public displays of partisanship.

This dichotomy complicates voters' ability to assess whether their elected officials are effectively serving their interests, fueling voter volatility and intensifying polarization. If party leaders increasingly rely on strongman or populist tactics to manipulate voters, the consequences for Canadian democracy could be dire. Against this backdrop, the evolving dynamics of Canadian federal politics necessitate a critical examination of leadership practices and their broader implications.

Through a synthesis of theoretical frameworks and empirical examples, this paper reviews the literature on party complexity, it examines leadership competencies required across other sectors. and it highlights examples of strong political leadership as well as recent failures. Ultimately, this paper argues that effective political leadership in Canada transcends mere electoral success; it requires mastering the complexities of party structures, embodying cross-sectoral leadership competencies, and adapting to a rapidly evolving political and societal landscape.

Background: The complex nature of party politics and leadership across sectors

To identify leadership in Canadian federal politics one must first review party structure and individual responsibilities beyond formal party Leaders, review leadership models across other domains to identify competencies, and compare the competencies with electoral results. This initial groundwork sets the stage for developing a robust political leadership framework, which in turn facilitates an assessment of whether Members of Parliament (MPs) exhibit leadership competencies and how these competencies influence their effectiveness as leaders. Canada's MPs are elected representatives serving geographical constituencies and advocating for their constituents in the House of Commons. They function as intermediaries between their constituents and the federal government, contributing to legislation, committee reviews, and policies while maintaining accountability within the democratic system (Parliament of Canada, n.d.).

Complexity of Party Structure

Canadian federal political parties are complex, multilayered entities characterized by interdependent yet frequently contested authority structures. While the party leader is often the most visible and influential figure, the overall structure includes a spectrum of actors and institutions whose roles and interactions are pivotal for party functionality (Cross et al., 2022). This stratified arrangement reflects the tension between centralized authority and grassroots activism, as well as the overlapping responsibilities that define modern party dynamics.

Parties operate within a framework that includes members, sub-leaders (for example local activists, or riding association or regional leaders), and formal leaders (candidates, Members of Parliament, and the party leader). The theoretical model of stratararchy posits that Canadian political parties function as decentralized networks with distinct levels of authority and autonomy (Cross et al., 2022). Electoral District Associations (EDAs) serve as the grassroots foundation, handling local

organizing, candidate nominations, and fundraising, while central party offices set legislative priorities and national campaign strategies (Cross et al., 2022). For instance, the Conservative Party of Canada demonstrates this interplay with its EDAs actively selecting candidates while the central office drives the party's legislative agenda (Gagnon & Tanguay, 2024). However, this model oversimplifies the interconnectedness and shared responsibilities between various levels. The interaction between local, regional, and national levels often involves mutual interdependence and cooperation, as well as conflict. Instances of discord, such as the dismissal of the Conservative Party's executive director by the Conservative Fund (Connolly & Stephenson, 2019), or internal disputes within the Green Party under Annamie Paul's leadership (Cross et al., 2022; Gagnon & Tanguay, 2024), underscore the inherent conflicts in delineating authority.

The central office of Canadian parties, composed of governing bodies, committees, and chief agents, serves as the hub of party operations. However, its authority is limited by its reliance on local organizations and MPs. For example, EDAs are critical for candidate nomination, fundraising, and mobilization efforts. Local involvement, including volunteer activities and financial contributions, often shapes an individual's trajectory within the party (Cross et al., 2022). The centralized leadership of Canadian parties wields significant power over policymaking, candidate vetting for high-priority ridings, and election strategies, often overshadowing grassroots organizations. Party leaders and their staff dominate policy development, candidate selection for critical ridings, and legislative decision-making. The resulting duality—a centralized leadership balanced against grassroots involvement—defines much of the operational dynamic within Canadian parties (Cross et al., 2022).

Cross et al. (2022) identify six factors contributing to the structural and operational complexity of Canadian parties:

1. **Diverse Components and Priorities:** Parties encompass multiple components—EDAs, central offices, MPs—each with distinct goals. These priorities often diverge, leading to tensions in governance.
2. **Central Governance Conflicts:** Internal power struggles, particularly during leadership disputes, illustrate the fluid nature of authority within central organizations.
3. **Non-Static Nature of Parties:** High turnover among party members, staff, and MPs results in operational flux, complicating long-term strategic planning.
4. **Impact of External Shocks:** Transitions between government and opposition status, or sudden electoral losses, shift internal power dynamics and may spur reform to rebuild the party's relevance.
5. **Multilevel Governance:** Federal parties overlap with provincial counterparts, creating opportunities for collaboration but also tensions when priorities conflict. For example, party members often belong to both federal and provincial organizations, further complicating authority lines.
6. **Representation Challenges:** Despite their structural sophistication, Canadian parties often fail to reflect the demographic diversity of Canadian society. Disproportionate representation of older, affluent, and highly educated individuals reinforces barriers to inclusive participation and leadership.

The concept of power permeates these complexities. Power struggles within parties not only reflect their internal dynamics but also shape public perceptions and electoral outcomes (Marland & Giasson, 2024). Centralized authority, while enabling cohesive decision-making, risks alienating local constituencies, and internal conflicts often result in visible fractures, as demonstrated by leadership disputes and candidate selection controversies (Choi-Fitzpatrick, 2015).

Understanding the complexities of Canadian political party structures is essential for both scholars and practitioners. While the stratarchical model emphasizes autonomy and division of responsibilities, the reality involves constant negotiation between competing priorities at the local, regional, and national levels. Balancing these tensions effectively requires acknowledging the interplay between grassroots mobilization and centralized decision-making, as well as addressing the broader challenges of inclusivity and representation.

Leadership Competencies: Private Sector

Several leadership attributes remain relevant across every sector but vary by importance (see Table 1). Leadership in the private sector is inherently focused on achieving performance excellence and maximizing shareholder value. Central to this is strategic thinking, which involves synthesizing market trends, identifying profitable opportunities, and designing long-term plans that align with organizational goals (Thach & Thompson, 2007, p. 357). Leaders must exhibit financial acumen, enabling them to allocate resources efficiently, manage budgets, and maximize returns while addressing operational risks (Choi-Fitzpatrick, 2015).

In addition, marketing expertise is vital for fostering customer relationships and driving revenue generation. Leaders who leverage innovative approaches to branding and customer engagement can sustain competitive advantages. However, balancing the promise of innovation with the realities of risk management is critical, as market volatility demands prudent decision-making under pressure (Siemiatycki, 2015).

Private-sector leaders also face intense time management pressures, requiring them to streamline processes, prioritize tasks, and deliver results within tight deadlines. The ability to align innovation with operational efficiency ensures that private-sector organizations not only meet financial targets but also maintain a sustainable trajectory. For example, Theresa Jang, CFO of Stantec since 2018, has demonstrated exceptional leadership in transforming the company during a challenging period.

Jang's leadership has been praised for her strategic insights, relationship-building skills, and ability to set and deliver ambitious targets for investors (Agrba et al., 2024).

Leadership Competencies: Public Sector

Public sector leadership diverges significantly from private sector leadership in its focus on public value creation rather than profit maximization. Leaders in this domain are tasked with ethical decision-making and maintaining transparency, ensuring public trust is upheld in their actions and decisions (Spano, 2009). For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Canadian public health leaders demonstrated ethical accountability through regular updates, transparency in policy changes, and public engagement to foster trust (Farhan, 2021).

Analytical skills and political acumen are indispensable in navigating complex systems and reconciling competing interests. Leaders must build consensus among diverse stakeholders, often operating within resource-constrained and politically charged environments (Galley et al., 2016). For example, managing climate action plans requires collaboration between government departments, non-governmental organizations, and local communities to ensure policies address ecological, economic, and social priorities (Marland & Giasson, 2024).

Innovation is vital for overcoming bureaucratic inertia, where leaders confront routine processes and champion continuous improvement (Galley et al., 2016). Behavioural insights—such as nudges to encourage public compliance with environmental regulations—are increasingly used to design policies that enhance social outcomes (John, 2014). Furthermore, resilience and adaptability are critical, given the uncertainty and volatility inherent in public sector leadership.

Leadership Competencies: Not-for-profit Sector

Not-for-profit leadership emphasizes mission-driven values balanced with pragmatic management. Unlike hierarchical private sector organizations, not-for-profits often operate with shared leadership models that prioritize inclusivity, open discussion, and collective decision-making (Gibson &

Macklem, 2008). Leaders must align their actions with the ethical values of the organization, demonstrating integrity in decision-making while ensuring compliance with external regulations and funding requirements (Rothschild & Milofsky, 2006).

In this sector, strategic partnerships are essential for resource mobilization. Gibson and Macklem (2008) emphasize the importance of “partnerships with [United Way Toronto’s] peer sector champions and other interested alliances to achieve more effective capacity building sectorally and organizationally through leadership development” (Gibson & Macklem, 2008, p. 6). Additionally, leaders must foster fair employment practices to motivate staff and ensure operational effectiveness (Van Ymeren, 2015). Thus, a critical competency for not-for-profit leaders is the ability to articulate measurable outcomes that demonstrate the organization's social impact. This involves managing diverse funding streams, balancing program delivery with organizational capacity, and ensuring long-term sustainability (Cause Leadership, 2023).

Ultimately, understanding the nuanced requirements of leadership in each sector enables organizations and individuals to foster more effective and contextually relevant approaches to achieving their missions.

Competencies in political leadership

Political leadership presents a distinctive set of challenges shaped by its unique accountability structures, goals, and contextual pressures. Unlike leadership in other sectors, political leadership is marked by the interplay of personality, policy, and the evolving processes of public selection. This complexity underscores the need for a nuanced understanding of the competencies that define effective political leaders.

Personal characteristics of political leaders often wield significant influence over electoral outcomes. Direct influence arises from traits such as charisma, communication style, and perceived integrity, which resonate with voters on an emotional level and shape individual voting decisions (King,

2002, p. 6). For example, Justin Trudeau's leadership during the 2015 federal election demonstrated how personal attributes such as eloquence, relatability, and optimism can captivate and mobilize the electorate (Roy & Alcantara, 2020, p. 36).

Indirect influence, on the other hand, is exerted through actions and decisions that redefine a party's ideological stance or strategic priorities (King, 2002, pp. 4–5). This type of influence often occurs over time, as leaders implement policy changes that resonate with shifting public expectations or position their parties to better align with emerging societal values. An example of this can be seen in Justin Trudeau's emphasis on social justice issues, which reframed the Liberal Party's priorities in 2015 and attracted new voter demographics (Mathieu & Brie, 2024, p. 105).

A critical distinction exists between a leader's personality traits and policy positions. While policy stances are fluid and may evolve in response to shifting public opinion or political expediency, personality traits tend to remain consistent over time. This stability makes personality a more enduring factor in shaping voter perceptions, as it provides a continuous reference point for evaluating a leader's authenticity and trustworthiness (King, 2002). Therefore, this dual evaluation lens—assessing leaders as both policy advocates and individual personalities—reveals the complex criteria voters use to make political judgments. While a leader's policy expertise may appeal to pragmatic voters seeking solutions to specific issues, their personality often plays a larger role in fostering emotional connections and cultivating trust (King, 2002).

Despite the significance of leadership competencies, isolating their impact on electoral outcomes is inherently difficult. Voting decisions are influenced by a myriad of factors, including party platforms, economic conditions, and societal trends (Gagnon & Tanguay, 2024; Roy & Alcantara, 2020). Leaders' personalities form just one component of this complex equation. Moreover, parties select

candidates through differing sets of criteria but despite some efforts to identify diverse candidates¹ they still tend to be well-educated white men with high profiles in their communities. Lack of representation narrows the range of choice between candidates during elections and diminishes the likelihood of stark contrasts in leadership impact.

Implications for Political Leadership

The competencies required for effective political leadership thus encompass a blend of personal traits and strategic capabilities. Leaders must develop and maintain trust through consistent, authentic personal interactions and communication. They must navigate shifting political landscapes with flexibility, ensuring that policies align with public expectations without compromising core values. Finally, political leaders must balance traditional political processes with the demands of digital-age campaigning, building cohesive narratives across platforms.

Modern elections increasingly resemble personality contests, where public image often takes precedence over substantive policy debates. A leader's ability to appear relatable or credible on media platforms can overshadow their legislative achievements or policy failures (Marland & Giasson, 2024). This focus on personality reflects broader trends in political communication, where visual and emotional resonance often outweigh rational analysis. This dynamic can be observed in the case of political scandals: Roy and Alcantara (2020) conclude that while scandals may dominate media narratives, their actual impact on voter behavior is often muted. Instead, scandals tend to provoke stronger reactions within parties than among the electorate.

A growing focus on whether leaders are "good" or "bad" people detracts from substantive evaluations of policy. This moral framing, while appealing to voters' sense of trust and integrity, can

¹ While some parties set targets for the number of diverse candidates and have a number of affinity groups or committees within the party to help identify candidates from traditionally underrepresented groups, the Conservative Party of Canada explicitly prohibits the formation of such groups (Cross et al., 2022).

obscure the practical implications of governance. Voters may prioritize leaders' personalities over their ability to deliver on critical issues, such as economic reform or healthcare policy. For example, while Justin Trudeau's 2015 image as a progressive and inclusive leader garnered widespread attention, critiques of his government's policy on climate change or Indigenous relations often received less public scrutiny during his first several years as Prime Minister (Roy & Alcantara, 2020). Similarly, leader of the Conservative Party of Canada, Pierre Poilievre, has relied on his strongman² tactics – nostalgic nationalism, oversimplification of complex issues, contempt for traditional journalism - to dominate political narratives, diverting attention from specific policy implications if his party successfully forms government in 2025.

Challenges in Political Leadership

As evidenced particularly in the public and not-for-profit sectors, effective leadership is underpinned by principles of accountability, transparency, and a commitment to collective well-being. However, modern political environments present substantial challenges that test these principles, including the rising prominence of image-based campaigning (King, 2002), the use of manipulative tactics such as staging and scripting (Choi-Fitzpatrick, 2015), and the exploitation of systemic weaknesses by populist movements (Medeiros, 2021).

Accountability and the Rise of Image-Based Campaigning

Accountability to voters remains a cornerstone of democratic leadership. Leaders are expected to align their actions with constitutional norms and the electorate's expectations (Cattapan, 2024; Rivard & Lockhart, 2022). However, the "presidentialization" (King, 2002, p. 1) of campaigns has shifted the focus from policy to personality, amplifying the influence of leaders' images and conduct on electoral outcomes. This shift in focus fosters an environment where rhetorical skill and media presence

² For more information on strongman "leadership" see Rachman (2022).

often overshadow substantive leadership qualities. Manipulative rather than substantive messaging is not only a political norm, but also the work of political strategists to develop campaigns based on the following tactics.

Manipulative Tactics: Staging, Scripting, and Strategic Information Use

Modern political leaders employ a range of tactics to shape public perceptions and consolidate control, often at the expense of genuine democratic participation. Staging involves manipulating procedural appearances to project an image of inclusivity or transparency while retaining centralized control (Choi-Fitzpatrick, 2015). For instance, populist rhetoric often leverages staged events to create the illusion of grassroots support while suppressing internal dissent and stifling debate (Gidengil et al., 2022). These tactics not only mislead voters but also undermine democratic processes by marginalizing alternative viewpoints.

Scripting involves carefully crafting public narratives enables leaders to align voter sentiments with their agendas (Choi-Fitzpatrick, 2015). By framing issues selectively, leaders can redirect attention away from contentious policies and bolster support for initiatives that bypass traditional accountability mechanisms (Kerby & Blidook, 2011). For example, emphasizing economic growth while downplaying environmental concerns allows leaders to deflect criticism and present a one-sided view of policy outcomes.

Leaders often manipulate public opinion by emphasizing specific aspects of crises while minimizing others. This selective use of information enables governments to secure support for controversial measures. For example, governments may emphasize national security concerns to justify surveillance policies, diverting attention from potential infringements on civil liberties (Gidengil et al., 2022). Research also highlights the strategic use of apologies; expressions of regret, when paired with promises of corrective action, are particularly effective in maintaining public trust (Roy & Alcantara, 2020).

These tactics not only erode authentic leadership but also impose emotional labor on those involved in navigating these dynamics. Public servants, political advisors, and even voters are left to reconcile the tension between the ideal of accountability and the reality of manipulation (Kerby & Blidook, 2011).

The Exploitation of Structural Weaknesses by Populist Leaders

The erosion of traditional leadership accountability creates fertile ground for populist rhetoric that thrives on the narrative of challenging "elite" governance. Populist leaders often exploit the systemic weaknesses created by their political predecessors, presenting themselves as the antidote to institutional failures (Rachman, 2022). For instance, populist rhetoric often emphasizes stark contrasts between the "corrupt elite" and the "virtuous people," leveraging public disillusionment with established parties to consolidate their own power (Medeiros, 2021).

Populist leaders use staging and scripting to amplify their appeal, portraying themselves as champions of the marginalized while retaining tight control over their narratives. This manipulation exacerbates the very structural issues they claim to address, creating a cycle of disillusionment and reactionary politics. By exploiting voter dissatisfaction, populists often gain support for policies that further erode democratic institutions and transparency.

The Role of Technology and Political Marketing

The rise of advanced voter analytics and social media platforms has significantly redefined political campaigning in Canada, creating fertile ground for populist strategies. Parties increasingly employ microtargeting to deliver tailored messages to specific voter groups. This approach not only amplifies populist narratives but also enables leaders to bypass traditional institutional constraints and engage directly with their constituents (Marland & Giasson, 2024). By fragmenting political discourse into individualized appeals, microtargeting supports the populist goal of circumventing conventional deliberative processes, fostering a more personalized connection between leaders and voters.

For example, social media platforms allow populist leaders to craft and disseminate unfiltered narratives, reinforcing their image as authentic and relatable. This direct engagement bypasses traditional media gatekeeping, providing leaders with greater control over their public personas while simultaneously deepening polarization by targeting specific voter blocs with highly curated content.

Implications for Democratic Governance

The challenges posed by staging, scripting, and strategic information use, as well as the rise of populist rhetoric, highlight critical vulnerabilities in modern political leadership. Manipulative tactics undermine public trust in political institutions, fostering cynicism and disengagement among voters. Staging and scripting contribute to polarized political environments, where nuanced discussions are replaced by simplistic, emotionally charged narratives. The emphasis on image and rhetoric diverts attention from substantive policy debates, reducing opportunities for meaningful public scrutiny. Populist leaders, while presenting themselves as reformers, often exacerbate institutional weaknesses, undermining long-term democratic stability.

Towards Better Political Leadership

Effective political leadership is characterized by the ability to bridge the gap between party policies and public expectations while fostering trust and democratic accountability. This requires not only structural reforms within political parties and federal government, but also a commitment to ethical, inclusive, and transparent governance practices. The following principles and strategies outline pathways toward improving political leadership in Canada.

One of the most critical challenges in political leadership is enabling Members of Parliament (MPs) to authentically represent their constituents, free from the constraints of rigid party lines. Empowering MPs involves reducing centralized control and promoting greater autonomy in decision-making processes (Scarrow, 2013). By aligning party structures with the diverse needs of local constituencies, leaders can ensure that policies reflect the priorities of the broader electorate.

Transparent and open communication is key to building trust and mitigating the negative impacts of manipulation and staging (Kerby & Blidook, 2011). Leaders must prioritize fostering open dialogue with constituents and stakeholders, particularly during crises, to maintain democratic norms and encourage public engagement.

The Role of Intra-Party Democracy

Intra-party democracy provides a viable solution to the centralization problem in Canadian politics. By incorporating inclusive decision-making processes and encouraging diverse perspectives within party structures, political organizations can become more accountable and representative (Marland & Giasson, 2024). For example, opening policy discussions to party members can diversify input and strengthen internal legitimacy.

Moreover, fostering intra-party democracy can help reduce polarization by creating spaces for constructive dialogue among differing viewpoints (Scarrow, 2013). This approach strengthens parties as democratic institutions and enhances their capacity to represent a broader spectrum of society.

Managing Emotional Labor in Leadership

The emotional demands of political leadership are significant. Leaders and MPs must often suppress personal feelings to align with organizational or societal expectations. Research suggests that individuals with high political skill—those who are adept at understanding and influencing others—experience less emotional dissonance and are better equipped to navigate these challenges (Gidengil et al., 2022; Roy & Alcantara, 2020). For instance, political leaders who demonstrate emotional intelligence can better manage the pressures of public life, fostering resilience and maintaining public confidence. Providing training and support to develop these skills across all levels of political organizations can enhance the overall effectiveness of political leadership (Allen et al., 2021; Cattapan, 2024).

Ethical and Authentic Leadership

Ethical leadership is a cornerstone of effective governance. Leaders who emphasize morality, trust, and the well-being of others set a standard for their teams and broader society. Moreover, authentic leadership, characterized by integrity, openness, and consistency, ensures that actions align with ethical principles, creating a culture of honesty and accountability within political organizations (Gidengil et al., 2022).

Through their behavior, ethical leaders inspire others to act with integrity. This was evident during Justin Trudeau's crisis leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic, where a commitment to fairness, transparency, and collaboration helped foster societal trust and resilience (Farhan, 2021). By prioritizing moral behavior, fairness, and humility, leaders can advance long-term societal welfare.

Learning from Indigenous Leadership

Indigenous leaders offer critical insights into the challenges and opportunities of leadership within colonial political systems, where they must navigate competing demands of representation, advocacy, and institutional constraints. Despite systemic barriers, these leaders bring transformative potential to Canadian governance by fostering equity, inclusion, and reconciliation.

Indigenous leaders encounter significant challenges rooted in systemic inequities. Underrepresentation is a pervasive issue, stemming from biased party selection processes and electoral systems that disadvantage geographically dispersed populations (Carrière & Koop, 2023; Goodyear-Grant & Croskill, 2011). This underrepresentation limits the ability of Indigenous leaders to fully advocate for their communities within decision-making processes. Additionally, Indigenous leaders must balance competing priorities: advocating for their communities while adhering to party discipline and navigating the demands of re-election campaigns. The need to represent diverse and sometimes conflicting Indigenous interests further complicates their roles, as these leaders must bridge divides between varying cultural, geographic, and political perspectives (Carrière & Koop, 2023).

Despite these challenges, Indigenous leaders have made significant contributions to advancing reconciliation and fostering structural reforms. Drawing on lived experiences and cultural insights, Indigenous leaders enrich policymaking by challenging colonial narratives and integrating holistic perspectives into governance (Carrière & Koop, 2023). Their efforts highlight the value of inclusive leadership in creating equitable and effective policies.

Through legislative tools, party advocacy, and cross-party collaboration, Indigenous leaders push forward initiatives that benefit their communities and promote broader equity. Examples include advocating for resource-sharing agreements, championing Indigenous language preservation, and working to address systemic injustices in health, education, and housing (Goodyear-Grant & Croskill, 2011). These leaders are instrumental in decolonizing institutions by fostering reforms such as equity mandates and more inclusive candidate selection processes.

Pathways to Greater Representation and Inclusion

To foster the transformative potential of Indigenous leadership, systemic reforms are essential. Political parties and institutions must implement equitable candidate selection processes to address biases in party selection to ensure Indigenous candidates have equal opportunities to run for office. Equity mandates and targeted recruitment efforts can help rectify historical underrepresentation (Carrière & Koop, 2023; Cross et al., 2022). Parties will need to decolonize governance structures and adopt frameworks that prioritize Indigenous voices and perspectives in policymaking. This includes creating mechanisms for meaningful consultation and participation in legislative processes (Carrière & Koop, 2023). Parties must prioritize Indigenous perspectives in policymaking to ensure Indigenous leaders and communities play a vital role in shaping policies that impact their lives. Policymaking should reflect Indigenous values, such as collective well-being, interconnectedness, and sustainability. Lastly, parties must encourage partnerships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous leaders to build mutual understanding and shared commitments to equity and reconciliation.

The experiences and contributions of Indigenous leaders illuminate the transformative potential of inclusive leadership. By advocating for systemic reforms and prioritizing Indigenous perspectives, Canada can move toward a more equitable and decolonized political system. Indigenous leadership not only enriches policymaking but also serves as a model for ethical, community-focused governance that can benefit society. Through continued support and institutional change, the barriers faced by Indigenous leaders can be dismantled, paving the way for a more inclusive and representative democracy.

Conclusion

To advance better political leadership, Canadian politicians should focus on several strategies. First, reducing the concentration of authority within party structures to empower MPs and diversify representation. Second, promoting open communication and ensuring that government actions are subject to public scrutiny. Third, providing training for political leaders and representatives to build resilience and manage the emotional demands of leadership effectively. Fourth, embedding ethical leadership practices into party and government operations to build trust and accountability. Lastly, encouraging inclusive decision-making processes to foster diversity and counteract centralization.

Better political leadership requires a concerted effort to align governance practices with democratic values and public expectations. By empowering representatives, fostering intra-party democracy, and emphasizing ethical and authentic leadership, Canadian politics can strengthen accountability and representation. These reforms, combined with a focus on transparency and emotional intelligence, will not only enhance leadership effectiveness but also build the trust and resilience necessary for navigating contemporary challenges.

By understanding the interplay between individual agency and structural factors, scholars and practitioners can better appreciate the complexities of political leadership. The enduring significance of personality, the fluidity of policy priorities, and the evolving mechanisms of selection collectively

illuminate the dynamic role of leadership in shaping democratic systems. These insights not only inform electoral strategies but also deepen our understanding of how leaders influence governance and societal outcomes.

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Tables and Figures

Table 1 Leadership competencies across the private, public, and not-for-profit sectors

Leadership Competency	Private Sector	Public Sector	Not-for-Profit Sector
Strategic Thinking	Essential	Essential	Essential
Financial Acumen	Essential	Important	Important
Collaboration	Important	Essential	Essential
Ethical Behaviour	Important	Essential	Essential
Accountability & Transparency	Important	Essential	Essential
Innovation & Creativity	Essential	Important	Important
Risk Management	Essential	Important	Important
Time Management	Essential	Important	Important
Political/Policy Acumen	Important	Essential	Important
Shared Leadership	Less Emphasis	Important	Essential
Mission-Driven Values	Less Emphasis	Essential	Essential
Stakeholder Engagement	Important	Essential	Essential
Talent Development & Empowerment	Important	Essential	Essential