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May 11,  
2000

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## The numbers: Is Tom a long shot?

Tom Long's entry into the Canadian Alliance leadership race has attracted great attention in the national media, but how good are his chances of winning? Simple arithmetic can furnish some answers.

The leader of the Alliance will be elected by a vote of party members in a plurality runoff. If no one gets more than 50 per cent of the first ballot on June 24, the top two finishers will proceed to a second ballot on July 8.

When the race started, there were about 75,000 members. A reasonable guess is that about two-thirds will vote in the leadership race, the same proportion that voted in the recent Reform Party referendum on affiliation with the Alliance.

It seems reasonable to think that Mr. Long, as a recent arrival on the scene, has less support among these founding members of the Alliance than Preston Manning or Stockwell Day, both of whom had a long history as Reformers.

At a guess, Mr. Long may have the support of about 20 per cent of these 75,000 members, which would translate into 10,000 first-ballot votes if two-thirds cast ballots.

Mr. Manning and Mr. Day, between them, may sell about 30,000 new memberships. Both men appeal strongly to people who have voted Reform in the past, and 30,000 sales would bring membership back to the level that Reform achieved during the last federal election.

How many of these new members will actually vote? I estimate about 80 per cent — higher than the turnout rate for existing members, for these new members will be recruited precisely because they evince interest in voting for a leadership candidate.

Adding the 50,000 votes cast by old members to the 24,000 (80 per cent X 30,000) cast by new members recruited by the Day and Manning camps yields 74,000 first-ballot votes, of which only 10,000 are for Mr. Long.

It is now a simple matter to compute how many new members Mr. Long must recruit in order to win.

Given the assumptions described above, his team would have to sell 70,000 memberships to get a first-ballot majority. If 80 per cent of these new members voted, he would have 56,000 votes to add to his original 10,000, for a total of 66,000, as against 64,000 for Mr. Manning and Mr. Day combined.

(In all these calculations, I am ignoring the candidacy of Keith Martin. He is a fine MP, and I applaud his attempt to broaden public discussion of medicare, but I don't believe he will get enough votes to affect the calculations presented here.)

If Mr. Long's support among old members is 30 per cent rather than 20 per cent, or if the other candidates sell only 20,000 new memberships rather than 30,000, his magic number falls to 60,000. If both these conditions obtain, his number falls further, to 50,000.

These admittedly rough calculations suggest that Mr. Long is very unlikely to win on the first ballot.

To sell 50,000 to 70,000 new memberships in seven weeks would be an extraordinary achievement. If Mr. Long can do it, he will, indeed, have a strong claim to be the new leader, but I have to be skeptical.

The bad news for Mr. Long is that a first-ballot victory is highly unlikely; the good news, however, is that he has a decent chance of becoming one of the two candidates to proceed to the second ballot.

Go back to the original estimate that the two other main candidates will garner 64,000 votes between them. The worst case for Mr. Long is that these votes would be evenly divided between Mr. Manning and Mr. Day, with each getting about 32,000.

In that case, he would have to get more than 32,000 to reach the second round. With 10,000 votes from old members, he would have to add, say, 23,000 new members' votes, which means selling 29,000 memberships (23,000/80 per cent) — certainly within the realm of possibility.

If Mr. Manning and Mr. Day split the vote unevenly, it becomes even easier for Mr. Long to succeed, because he then only has to finish ahead of the lower one.

If, for example, Mr. Day or Mr. Manning gets only 40 per cent of the 64,000 votes (25,600), Mr. Long will have to sell only 20,000 memberships to win the 16,000 additional votes needed to finish second and proceed to the second ballot. Selling 20,000 memberships should not be too difficult for him to do.

For any plausible set of assumptions about turnout rates, existing support, and membership sales, the results are the same: Mr. Long has little chance of winning on the first ballot, but a good chance of getting to the second ballot.

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