

NEW ERA: PAUL MARTIN TAKES OVER


Introduction

Focus

This CBC *News in Review* story turns the spotlight on Paul Martin, Canada's new Prime Minister, as he assumes power and prepares for his first federal election as Leader of the Liberal Party. It examines his new cabinet, his main political priorities, and the views of his critics as he begins his term in office.

Quote

"We are going to have to change the way things work in Ottawa." — Prime Minister Paul Martin (*Toronto Star*, December 13, 2003)

 Sections marked with this symbol indicate content suitable for younger viewers.

A new page was turned in Canada's political life on December 12, 2003, when Paul Martin took the oath of office as Canada's 21st prime minister. For Martin, it represented the summit of a political career spanning more than a decade. At the swearing-in ceremony, Martin carried with him the flag that had flown at half-staff on Parliament Hill when his father died in 1992. Paul Martin Sr., a prominent cabinet minister in the Pearson and Trudeau governments, had never achieved his goal of becoming prime minister. For his son, assuming the post symbolized a major accomplishment and the culminating point of a family dream. Shortly after taking office, Martin laid out his main plans and priorities to the media, and revealed the names of those he had selected to serve in his cabinet. He was quick to place his own unique stamp on the new administration, and signaled that it would be very different from that of his predecessor and long-time Liberal rival, Jean Chrétien.

To begin, a number of Chrétien loyalists who had held cabinet posts for some time were no longer in cabinet. In their place, Martin named MPs who had backed his long leadership challenge to Chrétien and had proved their loyalty to him and their commitment to his political initiatives. He pledged himself to pursue his major priorities, including parliamentary reform, reductions in government spending, a new deal for Canada's cities, moves to foster greater national unity and security, an improved relationship with the United States, and a stronger Canadian military. He appealed to Canadians to join him in pursuing this dynamic new

vision for the country, and indicated that he would be seeking their endorsement in a federal election, probably in the spring of 2004.

Martin's political opponents on both the left and the right were quick to present their initial critical responses to his new administration. Canadian Alliance Leader Stephen Harper challenged Martin's promise to increase the role of backbench MPs in government, charging that a small group of unelected aides to the new Prime Minister would hold the real power. For the NDP's Jack Layton, Martin's decision to pursue a multi-billion-dollar tax cut to corporations was proof that the new PM was moving in a rightward, business-friendly direction. And Martin's statement to the press that he saw nothing wrong with accompanying his corporate executive friends on their private jets did seem to strengthen the image some Canadians have of him as a friend of big business.

For the moment, however, Martin's Liberals continued to hold a big lead over their opponents in all the main opinion polls. Despite the attacks of his political rivals, Martin appeared to be enjoying what is known as a "political honeymoon" with the public in his first weeks in office. How long the honeymoon would last, and whether the newly founded Conservative Party and its still-to-be-chosen leader or the reinvigorated NDP would succeed in scoring major political points against his administration and leadership remained to be seen as Canadians prepared for a federal election campaign in early 2004.

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Viewing Activity

The swearing-in of Paul Martin as the new PM on December 12, 2003, was a significant event in Canada's political history. Martin succeeds Jean Chrétien, who held the post for the past decade, and his elevation to leadership of the government points to a new direction in Canadian political life.

Viewing, Forming an Opinion, and Responding

Watch the video, and while doing so take brief notes stating your first impressions of or reactions to Paul Martin. Give your opinions on how he presents himself as a leader, what his main ideas and policies are, and how successful you think he is likely to be with Canadian voters. When finished viewing, form groups with your classmates to discuss your reactions to Martin, both positive and negative. Make a summary of your group's views and choose one person to present it to the class as a whole. Following a discussion of each group's summaries, decide as a class whether or not you think Paul Martin will be a successful political leader for Canada.

Viewing for Information

Watch the video, this time recording the following information:

1. Identify the following members of Paul Martin's new cabinet:

a) Minister of Finance _____

b) Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness _____

c) Minister of Revenue _____

d) Minister of the Environment _____

e) Minister of Foreign Affairs _____

f) Minister of Health _____

2. a) What cabinet post did Paul Martin hold in the Chrétien government?

b) What was his main achievement while in this position?

3. Who was Paul Martin's father and why was he politically important?

4. What are the three main factors that Paul Martin believes contribute to a high quality of life for Canadians?

5. What is the most important issue defining Canada's relationship with the United States?

Quote

"The vibes were very, very good."
— Paul Martin on recent meetings with President Bush
(*Toronto Star*, January 14, 2004)

6. Who does Paul Martin consider one of the most terrible despots of all time?

7. What two countries does Paul Martin consider to be rising and important forces on the international scene today?

_____ and _____

8. Where did Paul Martin hold his first talks with U.S. President George Bush?

9. On what three major issues concerning Canada and the United States did the two leaders reach an understanding?

Viewing and Formulating Conclusions

Watch the video again, this time recording and expressing your views on the following questions that arise from it:

1. How would you summarize Paul Martin's vision for Canada in the 21st century, as he expresses it in interviews in this video? How do you respond to it?
2. To what extent do you think Paul Martin's choices for cabinet ministers will strengthen his political position before the next federal election?
3. How would you summarize Paul Martin's views on a) Canada's role in the world, and b) Canada's relationship with the United States, as he expresses them in interviews in this video? Do you agree with his views on these issues? Why or why not?
4. Do you think that it is fair to characterize Paul Martin as a right-wing or small-c conservative Liberal when he is contrasted to Jean Chrétien? Why or why not?
5. Do you think Paul Martin will achieve his goal of serving as PM for the next decade? Why or why not?
6. How would you evaluate Paul Martin's performance as PM so far?
7. If you could vote in the next election, would you support Paul Martin and the Liberal Party? Explain.

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The New Cabinet

Further Research

In order to keep up with the changing nature of the new government's work, consider visiting the official Web site of the Government of Canada at www.canada.gc.ca. There you can visit all of the departments and agencies of the federal government.

Forming a cabinet is one of the most important and difficult tasks an incoming prime minister faces when he or she assumes office. The cabinet, which with the prime minister constitutes the executive branch of the government in Canada's parliamentary system, is arguably the most powerful political body at the federal level. Each minister is responsible for a specific portfolio, or area of responsibility—finance, foreign affairs, health, and justice, for example—and is expected to be able to state and defend government policies and initiatives in his or her ministry. Cabinet ministers are also required to give unqualified support to government policies as a whole. However much they may question or disagree with particular proposals in secret cabinet meetings, once a final decision is taken they must publicly endorse it or else resign. Paul Martin is personally familiar with the strains and tensions that can arise when a cabinet minister has serious disagreements with a prime minister. In 2002 Prime Minister Chrétien fired him from his job as finance minister over a number of major policy and personal differences.

Martin had to make a number of important choices when he drew up his new federal cabinet. Like all prime ministers, he had to be careful that it was balanced according to regions, linguistic and cultural groups, and gender. People from all parts of the country had to be given the impression that the cabinet would contain at least one representative that could express their views and concerns. In addition,

Martin's new cabinet was expected to reflect his own political positions and friendships. While he retained some trusted members of the former Chrétien cabinet, a number of prominent figures in that government no longer found themselves welcome on his team. At the same time, he promoted a group of former backbench MPs to his cabinet in recognition of their personal loyalty to and support for him during his leadership challenge to Chrétien.

Policy analysts and opposition political leaders closely scrutinized the Martin cabinet for indications of the likely policy drift its appointments might indicate. Some noted that the departure of progressive, or left-wing, Liberals such as Sheila Copps and Herb Dhaliwal pointed to a rightward tilt in Martin's cabinet, while the naming of David Pratt as Minister of Defence suggested that Martin wanted to send a signal to Washington that Canada might in future be more sympathetic to U.S. military actions around the world. As a backbench MP, Pratt had publicly disagreed with Chrétien's decision not to participate in the invasion of Iraq. The Martin cabinet is composed of 39 ministers, of whom 23 will be new faces around the table. A record 11 women were named to the cabinet.

Here are brief profiles of some of the most significant appointments to Paul Martin's cabinet, along with a snapshot of prominent ex-cabinet members of the Chrétien administration who were not selected to serve with the new Prime Minister.

Who's In?

Ralph Goodale, Minister of Finance

Ralph Goodale, MP for the Saskatchewan riding of Wascana, has a long record of political experience at both the federal and provincial levels, along with a background in the insurance business. He held a number of cabinet posts in the Chrétien government, and has now been appointed to one of the most powerful and important positions in Martin's administration. It will be up to him to find ways to cut at least \$2-billion in federal program spending in order to increase Ottawa's financial support to the provinces, especially for health care. Like Martin, Goodale is viewed as a right-wing Liberal, friendly to business and committed to reducing the size of government, along with the level of federal spending.

Bill Graham, Minister of Foreign Affairs

Bill Graham represents the Toronto riding of Toronto Centre-Rosedale in Parliament. He was named Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2002, replacing retiring Lloyd Axworthy. While Graham is widely viewed as a Chrétien-style Liberal, Martin's decision to keep him in this key position indicates he is anxious to convince supporters of the former prime minister that their views will continue to be heard at the cabinet table. Graham defended the government's decision not to participate in the war in Iraq and is strongly committed to raising Canada's international profile, especially in the developing world. Graham's impressive grasp of international affairs, along with his fluency in three languages, makes him an imposing senior member of the Martin team.

Anne McLellan, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness

Anne McLellan, MP for Edmonton West in Alberta, held a number of important cabinet posts in the Chrétien government. She has now risen to the position of Deputy Prime Minister, technically the number-two position in the Martin administration. In addition, she assumes a new portfolio, responsible for national security in the wake of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Her new department will also assume direction of national emergencies such as last year's SARS epidemic, and the power blackout that affected Ontario and Quebec. As one of the few Liberals from Alberta, her appointment indicates Martin's concern that the West be included in the government. McLellan is also widely touted as a possible Liberal leadership contender once Martin retires from the scene.

David Pratt, Minister of National Defence

David Pratt is an Ontario MP, representing the Ottawa-area riding of Carleton-Nepean. He has no previous cabinet experience, but did chair the parliamentary standing committee on national defence and veterans affairs in the Chrétien government. Pratt is viewed as a right-wing Liberal and a strong advocate of a closer relationship between Canada and the U.S., especially in the area of defence. During the debate over whether or not Canada should participate in the U.S. invasion of Iraq, Pratt took issue with Chrétien's decision to stay out of the conflict. He argued that Canada could have a much greater role in international affairs if it was part of the "coalition of the willing" including Great Britain, Spain, and

Did you know . . .

Every 10 years the boundaries of Canada's federal ridings are amended to reflect new demographic information revealed in the most recent census? This sometimes means that entire ridings are wiped out or sitting members are forced to compete with their fellow MPs (even within the same party) to represent the newly designed riding.

Italy that gave their support to President Bush's decision to overthrow Saddam Hussein's government as part of its war on terrorism. Pratt is also a strong advocate of Canada's participation in Bush's proposed missile defence program, an idea to which many Canadians remain skeptical.

Tony Valeri, Minister of Transport

Tony Valeri, who represents the Ontario riding of Stony Creek, has never before held a cabinet position. He has served as parliamentary secretary to the minister of finance, as vice-chair of the industry committee, and as chair of the government caucus economics committee. A right-wing Liberal and strong Martin supporter during this leadership campaign, he replaces Chrétien loyalist David Collenette in the transport post. Valeri's elevation to cabinet is also expected to assist him in a bitter renomination battle with former cabinet member Sheila Copps. Both find themselves seeking the Liberal nod in a new Hamilton-area federal riding whose boundaries have been changed as a result of redistribution.

Who's Out?**Sheila Copps, Former Heritage Minister**

Sheila Copps, MP for Hamilton East, was a long-term member of the Chrétien cabinet. Her decision to remain in the Liberal leadership race against Martin, even when it was clear she could not win, did not endear her to the new Prime Minister. A champion of left-wing Liberal positions, her views were also unlikely to fit with the general policy direction of the new team. Copps has held discussions with NDP leader Jack Layton about possibly

switching to that party, if she fails to win renomination against Tony Valeri. If she joins the NDP, it might signal the beginning of a large-scale left-wing-Liberal desertion of the party.

Alan Rock, Former Minister of Industry

Alan Rock, MP for Etobicoke Centre in Toronto, was another long-serving member of the Chrétien government, holding many important cabinet posts. He was also viewed as a potential replacement once Chrétien retired, but decided against contesting the party leadership when it became clear he could not raise enough money to campaign seriously against Paul Martin. Like Sheila Copps, Rock was a spokesperson for the left wing of the Liberal party. He has been named Canada's new ambassador to the United Nations.

John Manley, Former Minister of Finance

John Manley, who represented Ottawa South in the House of Commons, served in a number of important cabinet positions during his tenure as an MP in the Chrétien government, including such high-level portfolios as finance and foreign affairs. Manley became a candidate for the Liberal leadership after Chrétien indicated his intention to retire but dropped out of the race in July 2003 when it became clear to him that he had little chance of defeating Paul Martin. In order to avoid the embarrassment of being passed over for a position in the new cabinet, Manley announced he was leaving politics. He gave few hints about his possible future career but was expected to serve in some capacity in newly elected Premier Dalton McGuinty's Ontario Liberal administration.

Jane Stewart, Former Human Resources Minister

Jane Stewart, MP for Brant-Haldimand in Ontario, was a loyal member of the Chrétien administration and served in a number of cabinet posts, including a tumultuous stint as human resources minister, where she faced a serious controversy over misappropriation of funds. Throughout her difficulties, Chrétien's unwavering support allowed her to hold on to her position, despite furious opposition demands that she resign. Unlike Copps and Manley, she hoped that Martin would retain her in some cabinet capacity, but was disappointed when she received no phone call from the Prime Minister's office. It was unclear whether she would continue to sit in the House of Commons as a backbench Liberal MP.

Maurizio Bevilacqua, Former Secretary of State for International Institutions

Maurizio Bevilacqua, who represents the greater Toronto area riding of York North, was the first MP to endorse Paul Martin's leadership bid. A strong and loyal supporter of the new Prime Minister throughout his conflicts with Jean Chrétien, Bevilacqua was convinced that his dedication would pay off in the end with a plum cabinet post. However, when Martin instead offered him a mere parliamentary secretary's position, he rejected it in disgust. Martin may have felt that the requirements of regional representation in the cabinet prevented him from adding another Toronto-area MP, but Bevilacqua regarded his being passed over as a personal betrayal on Martin's part. It remains to be seen whether he will stand for re-election as a Liberal MP.

Responding

In your notebook answer the following questions.

1. Why is forming a cabinet such an important and difficult task for an incoming prime minister? Do you think Paul Martin has chosen his cabinet wisely? Why or why not?
2. What similarities can you note among the new members of Martin's cabinet, and also among those former Chrétien cabinet ministers who were not selected as part of the new Prime Minister's team?
3. Do you think Martin's cabinet will be an advantage or a drawback to him as he prepares to fight the next federal election? Explain.

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Martin's Critics

Further Research

To stay informed about how Canada's other political parties view Paul Martin and his government, consider visiting their official Web sites, such as: Conservative Party at www.conservative.ca, New Democratic Party at www.ndp.ca or the Bloc Québécois at www.bloc.quebecois.org.

As Paul Martin becomes a more familiar political face to Canadians, opinions on the country's new Prime Minister vary. Some welcome him as a fresh new leader on the federal scene, with a proven record in both business and government. Others are critical of what they view as the pro-business, right-wing direction in which he appears to be steering the Liberal Party. Here is a selection of comments about Paul Martin and his government, from both public spokespersons and ordinary Canadians, representing opinions both pro and con:

1. "As we witness a change in Canada's leadership, it's timely to remember our collective responsibility to protect and promote the health of our democracy. Paul Martin's message on the need to address the democratic deficit has resonated with Canadians. We are tired of the backroom decision-making that comes when power is concentrated among the few. People want openness and transparency. We want to understand the rationale behind key government decisions on how to allocate and spend our tax dollars. We want government contracts to be awarded on the basis of merit, not who you know. We want assurances that we'll get a return on our investment in the democratic process. Mr. Martin must recognize that these are more than just campaign promises. They are the foundation on which a healthy and vital democracy is built." — Anne Kothawala, president and CEO of the Canadian Newspaper Association, quoted in *The Globe and Mail*, December 10, 2003

2. "In the world that Gerry Schwartz [CEO of Onyx Corp.] inhabits, organizing a \$2.7-million Liberal fundraiser to launch Paul Martin on his career as prime minister ranks as a good deed. In the world that most voters inhabit, a \$700-a-plate gathering of the corporate elite to pad the coffers of an incoming government amounts to an unseemly spectacle. Martin will have to decide which world he wants to live in. He has the wealth, background, and connections to remain in the upper stratum of Canadian society, where multi-millionaires such as Schwartz, his wife Heather Reisman, and their friends trade favours and engage in acts of *noblesse oblige*. But he has the instincts of a democrat. He mixes easily with ordinary people. He cares about their views. He is as comfortable in a church basement as a five-star restaurant. Until about a year ago, it looked as if Martin could straddle both worlds. But lately, some of the choices he has made—or allowed others to make in his name—have cast doubt on his ability to mix privilege and populism. Canadians want to believe Martin's vision is big enough to include everyone. But nagging questions keep coming up. . . . Martin remains an extremely wealthy man with friends in nearly every major boardroom and backers who have poured hundreds of thousands of dollars into his quest for the leadership. No one expects him to snub his friends or change his lifestyle. . . . But he can't be prime minister for all Canadians, while keeping one foot in a world where affluence is assumed and insensitivity to the *hoi polloi* is allowed." — *Toronto Star* columnist Carol Goar, December 12, 2003

3. “Thanks in part to [Paul] Martin, Canada’s unemployment insurance system no longer serves those who lose their jobs. Its federally funded welfare system has been taken apart, making a joke of Parliament’s commitment to end child poverty. Thanks in part to Martin, the country’s health system has been battered—not only by lack of federal money but by the mistrust created among provinces when Ottawa reneged on its funding commitments. Cities have been complaining that they don’t have enough cash to handle the responsibilities dumped on them. Guess which transfer-cutting Chrétien finance minister contributed to that state of affairs? Toronto economist Armine Yalnizyan calls Martin’s careful demolition of the welfare state during his time as finance minister his ‘permanent revolution.’ But she also points out . . . that Martin the revolutionary finance minister ended up creating contradictions that promise to bedevil Martin the prime minister. As she puts it: ‘An unprecedented string of budgetary surpluses continues side by side with a struggling health system and crumbling infrastructure for water, roads, electricity, schools, and hospitals.’ Yet, Martin’s still insisting that

his primary goal is to keep generating these surpluses.” — *Toronto Star* columnist Thomas Walkom, December 13, 2003

4. “Absolute power corrupts absolutely. Given Canada’s parliamentary system of government has evolved into a gerrymandered benevolent dictatorship, I do not have high hopes for a Martin government. As Chrétien’s long-time finance minister he did nothing to curb the misuse of power and taxpayers’ money. Further, Martin managed his business affairs to ensure he is largely exempt from Canadian laws and taxation.” — Ken Weiss, Toronto, quoted in the *Toronto Star*, December 13, 2003

5. “A born-with-a-silver-spoon-in-his-mouth PM is not what this country needs, nor does it need a PM poised to support U.S. foreign policy in the interests of big business. In an era of perpetuated globalization, we need a PM that represents Canada’s interests and relationships internationally, not just with our so-called ‘friends.’” — John Boettger, Duncan BC, quoted in the *Toronto Star*, December 13, 2003

Activities

1. Read each of the above statements and indicate whether or not you agree with them and why.
2. Note any references to political personalities, terminology, etc. in the quotes that may be unfamiliar to you and ask your teacher or a fellow student for assistance in understanding them and their significance.
3. Identify some common threads in the criticisms of Paul Martin and his policies that are made in the quotes presented above. Do you think these critical views of Martin are indicative of Canadians’ opinions of him in general? Give reasons for your answer.
4. Do you have the “thick skin” that politicians need in order to handle the biting criticism that they must face? Explain.

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Your Priorities for the Martin Government

After reviewing the video and the information contained in this part of the guide, form groups to brainstorm what you think should be the main priorities of Paul Martin's government and why you think they are important to Canadians. You should clearly distinguish between domestic (Canadian) and foreign (international) policy priorities.

1) Domestic Priorities — reduction in government spending, greater financial support to provinces for health care and education, new programs for cities, increased national security, efforts to promote national unity and an end to "Western alienation," tax cuts, parliamentary reform and democratization of the political process, social programs, and poverty reduction

2) Foreign Policy Priorities — Canada-U.S. relations, the missile defence program, national security and the war on terrorism, involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan, peacekeeping, foreign aid to developing nations, increased military spending

Students should consult the December 2003 issue of the *News in Review* resource guide for a summary of what are likely to be the main priorities of the Martin government. Each group should discuss the range of policies Martin's government is likely to face and select at least two priorities from the domestic and foreign-policy lists as those the group considers are most important to Canadians and why. Use the following questions to help focus your discussion:

1. What are the main things Canadians are concerned about today in the areas of both domestic and foreign policy?
2. To what degree should the incoming Paul Martin government continue the policies of the previous Chrétien administration or initiate new policies?
3. Should the focus of the new government in domestic policy be more on reducing government programs, spending, and taxes, or should it pursue a more active, interventionist approach to dealing with economic and social problems?
4. What steps should the government take to promote national unity and reduce regional conflicts and tensions in Canada (e.g. Quebec, Western Canada, etc.)?
5. Should the new government foster a closer relationship with the United States and increase support for its military actions in the war on terrorism, or should it maintain a friendly but independent foreign policy vis-a-vis our powerful southern neighbour?
6. Should Canada become a more active player on the international stage, through increased peacekeeping, closer relations with the Third World, or other initiatives?

Once the groups have finished discussing their assignment and have completed their lists of priorities they would recommend to the Martin government, each group should present its ideas to the class in the form of an oral report. As the groups present, the teacher or a student recorder should make a summary of the main priorities each group has identified on the board. Once the group reports are completed, the teacher could hold an in-class debriefing discussion activity. Students could be asked to note the main similarities and/or differences in the priority lists each group offered to the Martin government and suggest the reasons for them.