



## LIBERAL LEADERSHIP CONVENTION

### Bettin' man puts dough on Iggy

The odds always favour the frontrunner in any leadership campaign no matter how much my friend on the right side of the political fence may disagree.

And that means if you foolishly insist on betting who will be the next Liberal leader – a risky proposition – put your money on MP Michael Ignatieff. But realize that Iggy is far from a sure thing.

Ignatieff has run a poor campaign since finishing first in the initial vote of Liberal members – making a series of rookie mistakes.

But he still has to be considered the favourite despite a pack of pundits claiming either former NDP Ontario Premier Bob Rae is the sure thing or that Stephane Dion can't lose.

Political observer Will McMartin analyzed 27 recent federal and B.C. contested leadership battles and found that in 22 of them the front runner on the first ballot won – that's an impressive 81 per cent success rate.

At this convention Ignatieff has 29 per



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NEWS, VIEWS  
AND ATTITUDE

cent of the first ballot support locked up, plus more than anyone else of about 870 "ex-officio" votes – MPs, Senators and party officials who make up another 15 per cent of delegates – which should put him in the mid 30 per cent range. His closest rival, Rae, has 20 per cent, while Gerard Kennedy at 17.5

per cent and Dion at 16 per cent trail.

So Ignatieff has the easiest route to win, while Kennedy Dion and Rae all need to put together complicated combinations of second, third and fourth choice votes.

Remember too that Iggy has more Liberal MPs and senators behind him – and that influences delegates. If Kennedy is smart – and he is – and ambitiously ruthless – which I'm not sure about – he could go to Ignatieff after the first ballot, along with Brison, and make Ignatieff the leader.

That would give Kennedy kingmaker and second-in-command status. But only the reckless are making big bets on this fascinating competition.

### Crap shoot for Liberal top dog

On the left side of this page, my friend Comrade Tieleman will attempt to regale you with his knowledge of a Michael Ignatieff win come this weekend's Liberal leadership convention.

But emperor Iggy ain't happening.

Here's why. By Sunday morning Kennedy, Dion, Rae or Ignatieff will be leader of the hapless Libranos. Iggy has the least capacity for last ballot growth, and the largest number of delegates who will never vote for him, besting by the slimmest of margins the justifiably dreaded Bob Rae.

It was easy for Iggy to garner the first 30 per cent, but it will be almost impossible for him, the way the delegate landscape sits, to lift the last 20 per cent. Most glaringly, Iggy single-handedly raised the constitutional idiocy that has gripped us, with his 'Quebec as a nation' comment and now he's going to pay for it – big time.

Look for the gap between Kennedy and Dion powerhouses after the first



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GUEST SHOT

ballot. If Kennedy is too far ahead, Dion will move all his delegates to him, except for his Quebec delegation, which may scatter. And the reverse will hold true if Dion is too far ahead, although Kennedy's principled stance this week against the sophomoric 'Nation of Quebec' motion, will sure-

ly provide him with a bump in support.

Rae, ultimately feared by the common-sense Liberals as leader and by Canadians as Prime Minister, presents a different scenario altogether, and a much more likely chance of winning for only one reason: the ideologues in the Sliperal left wing, having downed multiple tubs of their own bathwater, think that as part of providing a grand *mea culpa* during a general election, Rae's unmatched ability to shovel the fertilizer will lull hinterland and young urban Ontarian dimwits back to sleep.

Unfortunately, they're right. If Rae is on the last ballot though, it will be his opponent who will win, because even the Liberals can't be that nuts. Or can they?