

Harper aims to unite Canada's right-wing vote



CTV.ca News Staff

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Canadian Alliance leader Stephen Harper plans to push ahead with a campaign to unite the right-wing vote in Canada.

In an interview with CTV's Question Period Sunday, Harper said cooperation between Canada's two right-of-centre parties -- the Alliance and the Progressive Conservatives -- is the only way to unseat the powerhouse Liberal government.

Acknowledging the "complicated" issues that still separate the two parties, Harper said they are not insurmountable.

"There are loyalties to brand name and history and there are differences over some policy matters, but I think there are less differences among us than we have with the Liberal party.

"The lesson is it's going to be awfully tough to take on the Liberals alone and we should look at a bigger tent."

But new PC party leader Peter MacKay appears to have ruled out the option. In a fourth-ballot deal to win the Conservative leadership, MacKay made a deal with rival David Orchard -- opposing a merger with the Alliance.

The Opposition leader discounted the influence of the PC party's "silent leader," adding that the deal has created "new options" for the political right.

"Before, it was a matter of just rebuilding the old party. Now the option is to work in a Canadian Alliance or work in a coalition with David Orchard," Harper said.

"I don't think David Orchard necessarily has a veto in this country on the future of conservatism."

However, Harper's latest strategy doesn't involve uniting the two parties.

"That's never been our suggestion... We're not suggesting one party fold its tent and go away, but that we get some kind of synergy and cooperation."

Instead, the aim is to present voters with a single slate of right-wing candidates.

"So right now, we're talking in people of that party who are interested in proceeding with some kind of alternative. We'll have those discussions and at some point, Peter and I will sit down and see if we can make any progress."

If the talks fail to establish common ground, Harper says his party will be prepared to fight the next election alone.

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