

CANADA

Trudeau Rules Out Pacts With Other Parties in Canada

The move would ensure leader's Liberal Party remains in power in a minority government



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau addressed the news media Wednesday in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. PHOTO: STEPHANE MAHE/REUTERS

By Paul Vieira

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OTTAWA—Canada Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has ruled out any formal or informal coalition pact with rival parties to ensure his Liberal Party remains in power in a minority government.

The newly re-elected leader said on Wednesday he was prepared to work with other political parties on pressing issues related to climate change and alleviating households' financial stress. He plans to name a cabinet on Nov. 20 but didn't say when the new Parliament would be seated.

"I intend to sit down with all party leaders in the coming weeks to talk about their priorities, and how we can work together to respond to the preoccupations that Canadians have," he said in his first press conference since the Monday election. "But I can tell you it is not in our plans at all to form any sort of formal or informal coalition."

Mr. Trudeau said he accepted the verdict delivered by voters in Monday's election after his party fell below the 170-seat majority level. Mr. Trudeau's Liberal Party won 157 seats in the national legislature, versus 177 seats before the vote. The Conservative Party, led by Andrew Scheer, came in second place with 121 seats.

The Liberal Party will require support from other parties to get legislation passed and remain in power. By rejecting formal arrangements, like a power-sharing pact, Mr. Trudeau signaled he would craft legislation on a case-by-case basis to ensure it can get at least one other party on board to pass.

Support from either the Bloc Quebecois, with 32 seats, or the New Democratic Party, with 25 seats, would give Mr. Trudeau the votes to pass laws in the Canadian legislature. Both parties tend to share common interests with the Liberals on the environment and social policy. The NDP said during the election campaign it wouldn't back the Conservative Party because of its views on environment policy and Tory leader Andrew Scheer's conservative positions on abortion and same-sex marriage.

The election results "gave me a lot of food for thought," Mr. Trudeau said. "I have committed to think carefully and in-depth on the best way to move forward. I will be saying more about this as my thinking evolves."

On policy matters, the Canadian leader said an immediate government priority would be to cut taxes for middle-class families. During the campaign, Mr. Trudeau promised to deliver C\$5.6 billion (\$4.2 billion) in tax relief to households by raising the amount of annual income exempt from tax, saying households were feeling pinched because rising costs and stagnant income growth.

Mr. Trudeau also said he'd push ahead with the expansion of a pipeline to carry crude-oil from landlocked Alberta to the Pacific Coast, destined for faster-growing markets in Asia.

Still, Mr. Trudeau was on the defensive on Wednesday about how his victory, with limited support from western Canada, has exacerbated a regional divide. Government leaders in the resource-rich Western provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan warned that their livelihoods were threatened by a Liberal minority government propped up by left-leaning parties that have championed efforts to scale back oil production. No Liberal candidates won a legislative seat in either of those provinces, with four Liberal incumbents defeated; the party's share of the vote there substantially lagged behind the Conservatives.

"We need to work together, listen to each other and figure out the right path forward for every part of the country," said Mr. Trudeau, who during the election campaign vowed to fight efforts by "oil barons" to thwart tougher environmental policy. "I very much want to hear the concerns

that folks are experiencing and the solutions they want to put forward for a part of the country that has faced some very difficult times.”

Canada is the world’s fourth-largest producer of crude oil. However, the country’s energy sector has struggled due to lower commodity prices, and a lack of pipelines to move oil to non-U.S. markets. A Bank of Canada survey of firms this week found that businesses in central Canada were increasingly optimistic while the sentiment in the West remained relatively pessimistic.

The lack of Liberal lawmakers from western Canada also marks a challenge for Mr. Trudeau in naming a cabinet. Traditionally, the cabinet—Canada’s executive branch of government—consists of representation from every province.

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