Ignatieff and Budget 2009

Ending weeks of speculation regarding whether or not the Liberal Party would support the Conservative government's 2009-10 budget, Liberal leader Michael Ignatieff announced today that he will propose an amendment to the budget motion that, if passed in the House of Commons on Monday, will avoid a vote of no confidence in the government ... for now.

The Liberal's proposed amendment keeps the possibility of a budget-related vote of no confidence in the government on life support. In Ignatieff's words, the proposed amendment will require of the government, "regular reports to Parliament on the budget's implementation and its cost – one in March, one in June and one in December." In turn, Ignatieff declared today that "Each of these reports will be an opportunity to withdraw our confidence should the government fail Canadians."[1]

Opposition parties are not obliged to secure amendments to government budget motions before introducing confidence motions in the House of Commons; however, Ignatieff's proposal, if passed, would determine specific times at which Canadians can expect oppositions parties to reconsider their willingness to maintain confidence in the government. If the budget motion amendment is passed, the Liberal Party will vote in favour of the government's budget, which is a confidence vote. If this occurs, there will no longer be a Liberal-NDP coalition alternative to the Conservative government.

Should the government lose a vote of confidence as a result of one of the budget progress reports required by the Liberal amendment, enough House business would be concluded that the Governor General would likely grant a request from the Prime Minister for dissolution, thus ending the 40th Parliament and leading to a general election.

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[1]"Transcript of Ignatieff's Budget Response" *The Globe and Mail* (28 January 2009). The Liberal's proposed amendment to the government's budget motion may be found in the *House of Commons Journals*, No. 3, 2nd sess. 40th. parl. (28 January 2009) at 55.