

The Black Hole of Government: Empowering Astronomers for Stronger Advocacy

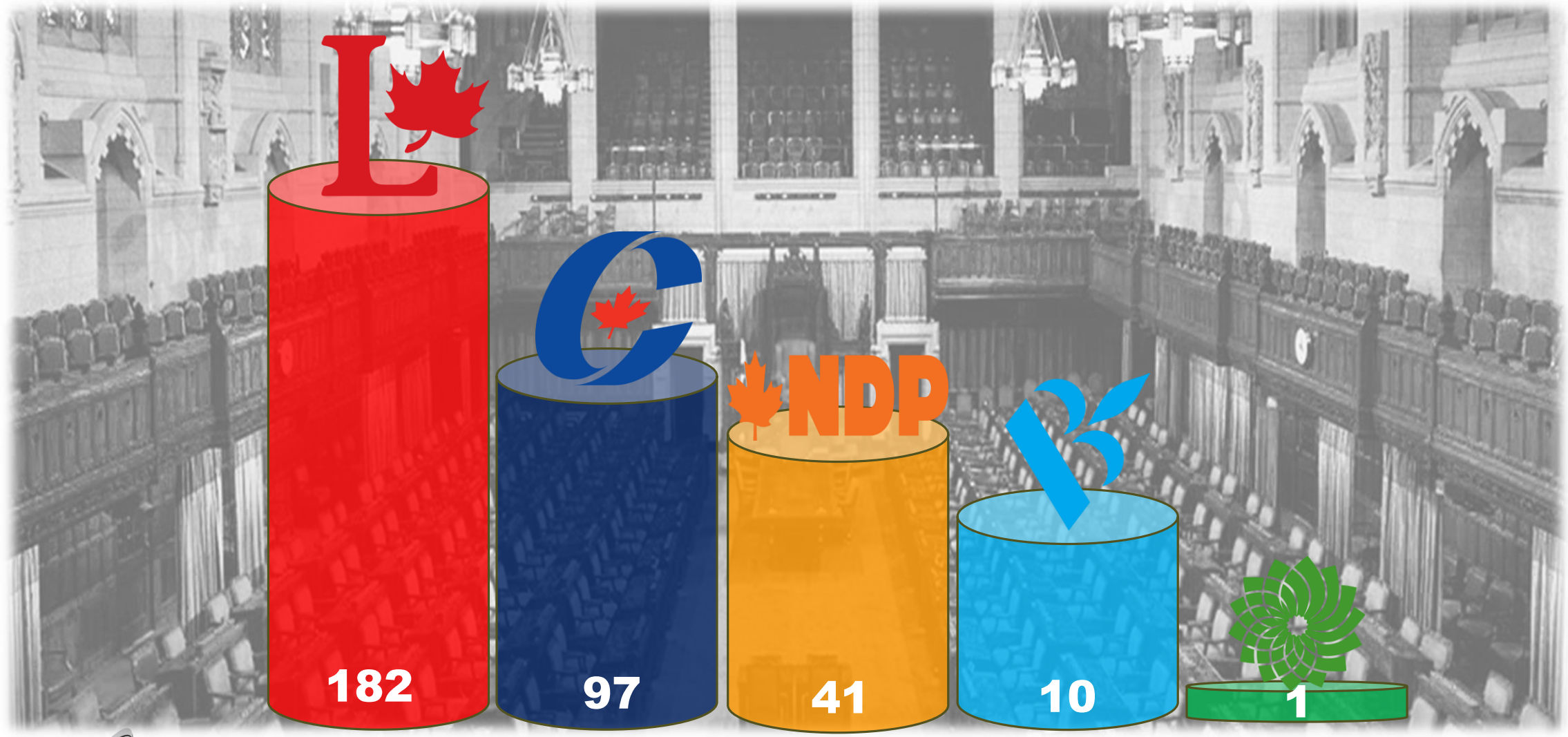
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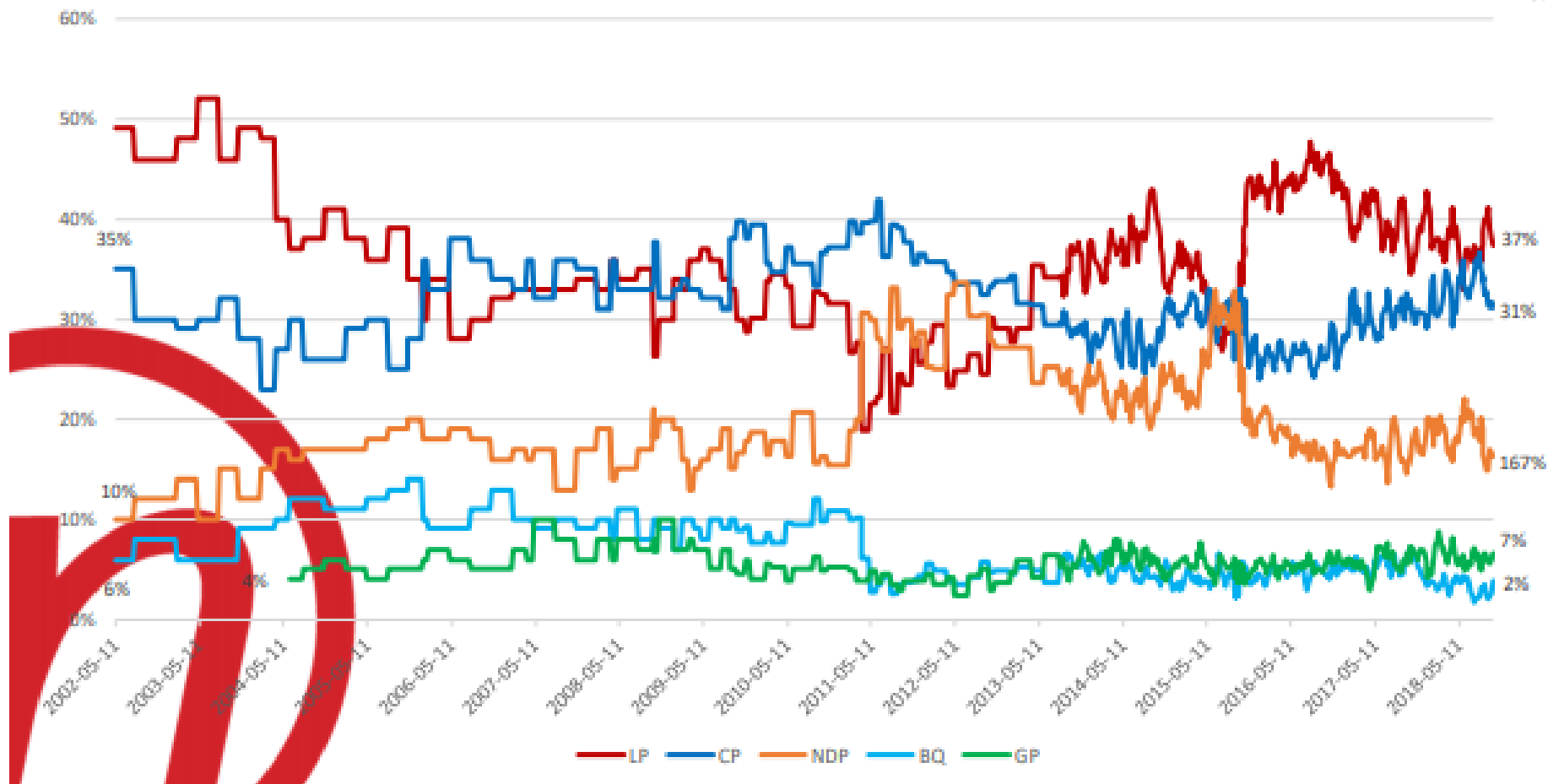
Political Context

Parliamentary Overview – House of Commons Seat Standings

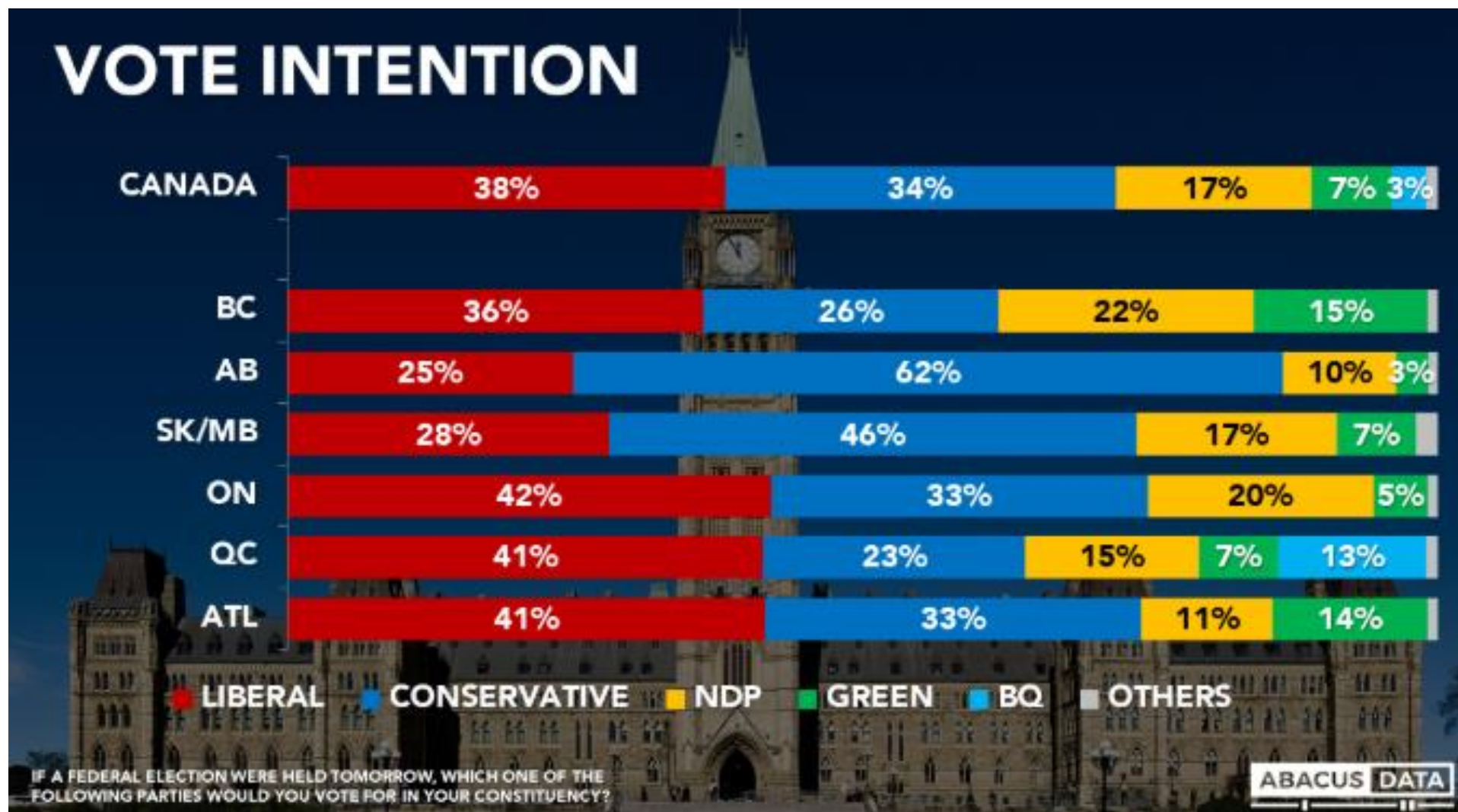




Nanos Weekly Tracking - ending October 5, 2018



Provincial Electoral Voting Intentions



Quiz:
What are two of the most effective lobbies in
Ottawa?

Success Factors

Local connection.

- Does an MP see a local connection?
- Is there a personal connection?
- Critical factor in an election year.

Consistent message.

- Do people know where you stand?
- What do you want people to think of when they hear Canadian astronomy?
- Is the industry aligned?

Electoral implications.

- Is the community fully engaged?
- Is there political and media awareness of the issue?
- Is there a political price for not acting on your priorities?

Economic considerations.

- What is the cost of action, or inaction?
- Are there competing priorities?



Canadian Astronomy: What has worked?

Consistent message.

- LRP – decision-makers know this is what the community supports.
- Consistent message on priority projects builds credibility.
- Coalition approach – all stakeholders support the LRP.
- Decision-makers have repeatedly praised this approach and suggested it should be a model for other disciplines.
- Warning: divisions in a community give decision-makers an excuse to set your priorities aside.

Economic considerations.

- Astronomy has told an effective story about the return on investment: #1 science in Canada, a global leader, successful spinoffs.
- Decision-makers were aware of consequences of inaction.
- Having Canadian industry at the table has been critical.
- Showing long-term anticipated investments also helps greatly.
- People hate surprises.
- Warning: Government is facing many competing funding requests – and even supporters are cautioning that astronomy requests need to be weighed against those.



Canadian Astronomy: What could be strengthened?

Local connection.

- This is less apparent for MPs.
- Do they know an astronomer?
- Are they aware of implications for universities in their riding?
- Are they aware of impacted industries in their riding?

Electoral implications.

- It is not clear MPs see a political price in not acting.
- Little evidence of grassroots support for priorities.
- However, other electoral considerations can be exploited (e.g. mandate letters, public perceptions, etc).
- Need to explore whether regional priorities for political parties could be exploited.
- Media awareness is modest at best for Canadian astronomy, but regularly reports on astronomy developments.



Implications



Political parties need to see a united, mobilized stakeholder community with a clear ask and local implications, particularly in an election year.



The current Liberal Government portrays itself as a defender of science and research, but does astronomy factor into that? That is ultimately up to the community.

