

Date set to do the right thing

Dec. 6 vote on merger proposal

By [KATHLEEN HARRIS](#), Parliamentary Bureau

DESPITE angry efforts to kill the process, federal Tories will vote Dec. 6 to scrap or support a proposal to merge with the Canadian Alliance. Pre-selected PC Party delegates will vote at 20 hubs across the country -- at least one in each province and territory -- in a national convention linked up by audio. The party's 37-member management committee agreed on the process after a day-long meeting yesterday.

"It's constitutional, it's legal and it's fair," declared PC Leader Peter MacKay. "It's extremely democratic and inclusive in its presentation and it's in the hands of our membership, which of course was always the intent."

MOB OF PROTESTERS

Earlier in the day, MacKay was greeted by a mob of anti-merger protesters who labelled him a traitor and demanded he resign. Gathering outside the Ottawa hotel where the management committee met to hash out the ratification process, the demonstrators engaged in a heated shouting and sign-waving match with MacKay supporters.

"Bring back Joe!" chanted some protesters, waving a copy of a legal opinion released Friday that says the merger would breach the party's constitution.

Calling the anonymously commissioned legal opinion a "tactic," MacKay insisted other legal experts have debunked the contents. There should be no worries the party will be sued, he said.

But Marjaleena Repo, a David Orchard supporter and the only management committee member to oppose the ratification process, called it a "coup d'etat" by the Canadian Alliance. She promised that opponents would launch a legal challenge to halt the merger.

Chris Thompson, a former party executive from Aurora, said a flood of Tories will join the Liberals after the PC Party is "destroyed" in the deal.

"This is a democracy run amok. This is a joke, this is democracy tarnished at its worst."

But Adam Taylor, a pro-MacKay Tory, said a merger is the only way to defeat the Grits.

"They're winning by default," said the PC youth organizer. "We're all like-minded, we have a lot of the same ideas."

The management committee did not come up with a way to prevent a stacked vote by Alliance members buying up PC memberships, but MacKay said he has seen no evidence of "swamping" so far.

"There's nothing we can do to prevent it, but it would be my strong advice that

"they didn't do so, because that does skew the result and it isn't in my view fair," he said.

Delegate selection meetings will be held Nov. 29-Dec. 2, with membership sales cut off 14 days before.