



What is Stephen Harper doing to Canada? How can we stop him?

Is putting all your eggs in one basket a smart economic strategy?

Stephen Harper has based his entire economic strategy on the oil industry, especially the Alberta tar sands. Energy companies get \$34 billion a year in subsidies. Meanwhile other sectors of the economy, notably manufacturing, have declined dramatically. Manufacturing has been undermined through a series of investor-rights treaties that have resulted in the loss of hundreds of thousands of well-paid manufacturing jobs.

What kind of future?

The tar sands are one of the most environmentally damaging megaprojects on the planet. They drive climate change, devastate indigenous communities, as well as lakes and river, and endanger the health of the people who work there. And they tie Canada's economy to a roller-coaster ride driven by the ups and downs of the international price of oil.

Other countries, such as Germany and Denmark, have been working for years to develop alternative technologies and industries to prepare for the post-oil age. The Harper government, meanwhile, has slashed spending on research and green alternatives.

Where are the jobs? Why is youth unemployment so high?

Under the Harper government, unemployment has increased to 7%. Youth unemployment is much worse: twice as high, in fact. Those figures are bad, but even so they understate the real situation. People who have given up looking for work aren't counted as unemployed. And anyone who has *any* kind of a work, no matter if it's part-time, temporary, precarious, minimum-wage or marginally self-employed, is counted as having a 'job' in government statistics. At the same time, the government has sharply reduced eligibility for Employment Insurance, while raiding the Employment Insurance fund for \$50 billion dollars to use for corporate tax cuts.

Are you better off?

If you are, you're in a small minority. More Canadians are now working for low wages than at any time in decades and the average household debt-to-income ratio has gone up by more than 20% since Harper took office.

Meanwhile, tax cuts for the well-off have translated into significant income gains for the top 10%, whose incomes have increased by 42% since Harper took office. The incomes of most Canadians, however, have stagnated or even gone down during that time. Meanwhile corporations have been handed \$60 billion in tax cuts in the Harper years.

Easing up on wealthy tax cheats

Canada is estimated to lose at least \$10 billion a year to tax evasion by the rich, notably through the illegal use of offshore tax havens to hide taxable income. When it took office, the Harper government laid off or reassigned the staff at the Canada Revenue Agency whose job it was to track down high-income tax evaders, even though they had been responsible for making tax cheats pay an additional \$2.5 billion in taxes they owed.

The end of medicare?

Stephen Harper has always made it clear he wants to get rid of medicare. Because the public overwhelmingly support medicare, he has chosen to undermine it gradually, with year-by-year funding cuts. By 2017, federal funding for health care will have been cut by \$36 billion. Stephen Harper's idea is that if you can no longer get the health care you need, you'll blame medicare, not him.

Is this responsible management?

The previous Liberal government had eight consecutive budget surpluses in the period up to 2006. After taking office, Stephen Harper's government ran seven consecutive deficits. During that period of time, the Harper government has also spent \$750 million of public money on partisan political advertising boasting about what a good job it is doing.

Do we want to live in a police state?

The Harper government has launched an unprecedented attack on civil liberties, privacy rights, and dissent. Bill C-51, also known as the police state bill, shreds the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It gives the security agencies and the police sweeping new powers to spy on anyone and everyone they choose. Individuals can be prosecuted for anything that threatens the 'security of the state', for example, by opposing the tar sands. Though the rhetoric is about 'terrorist threats', it is clear from leaked documents and public statements that the real targets are anyone who disagrees with government policies, especially indigenous communities and environmental groups who are opposed to pipelines and the tar sands.

Contempt for Parliament

The Harper government has used so-called Omnibus Bills to ram through dozens of pieces of legislation at once without allowing discussion and without providing information about what they mean. Independent agencies and Parliamentary officers have been stonewalled, stripped of their powers, or fired. Former auditor general Sheila Fraser, the most respected authority on the functioning of the government, says that "Parliament has become so undermined that it is almost unable to do the job that people expect of it."

Contempt for democracy

In the 2006 election, the Conservatives used the illicit bank transfers – the "in-and-out scandal" -- to massively exceed campaign spending limits. After the election, the party was charged and convicted of breaking the law, but by that time the election was over and Harper was Prime Minister. In the 2011 election, the Conservatives used fake phone calls to send voters believed to support another party to the wrong polling station in dozens of ridings. After Elections Canada laid charges in the case, Harper stripped Elections Canada of many of its powers. Under the new law, Elections Canada no longer has the power to investigate electoral wrongdoing.

Integrity in public life?

Nothing speaks more clearly about Stephen Harper's character than the people he attracts and the people he chooses to surround himself with. Senators like Mike Duffy, Pamela Wallin, and Patrick Brazeau. Parliamentary secretary Dean Del Mastro, jailed for election law violations. Former insiders have described the atmosphere in the Prime Minister's office as rigidly controlling, vindictive, and contemptuous of ordinary standards of ethics and democratic norms.

What can you do?

Inform yourself about the issues and the record of the Harper government. Talk to your friends, family, neighbours, co-workers about what is at stake in this election. Encourage them to vote.

Make sure you are on the voters list. Make sure you know where your polling station is. Make sure you have ID. If you aren't on the voters list, you can still register at the polling station, but the rules have been changed to make it harder to register. Make sure you know in advance what ID will be required. See the Elections Canada website at www.elections.ca.

Don't fall for phone calls telling you your polling station has been moved. The Conservatives used this tactic in dozens of ridings during the last election against people believed to support other parties.

VOTE.

This pamphlet was independently produced by individuals concerned about the future of Canada.