



# Federal Election 2004

## TOP TEN REASONS NOT TO VOTE CONSERVATIVE

### Because the Conservatives want to slash public services

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The Conservative Party is the old Reform-Alliance in disguise. Stephen Harper's Conservatives believe the role of government is to deliver "services that cannot be offered in a more efficient and effective way by the private sector."<sup>1</sup>

Conservatives start from the view that services should be offered by corporations and believe that only when the private sector fails should government step in. The Conservatives would impose a law banning federal deficits, removing one of the key tools governments have to respond when markets fail or the economy slows down.

In the past, Harper counseled a strategy of "calculated ambiguity" so that voters couldn't really tell what the Reform party stood for.<sup>2</sup> Now, like then, the Reform/Conservatives are being cagey about their plans to slash public services and axe social spending.<sup>3</sup>

### Because the Conservatives support private health care

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Conservative leader Stephen Harper congratulated the Liberals on the 2003 Health Accord because it contains "no restrictions on private health care delivery within the public system." Harper sees no problem with provinces using the for-profit sector to deliver CAT scans, MRIs and elective surgery.





Harper's support for private for-profit health services is clear when he says, "it does not matter who delivers health care; it matters who can receive it." The Conservative platform proposes "reasonable" rather than "universal" access to health care.

Harper says his position on private health care is not different from that of the Liberals. "The difference is that we've been honest about this and they've lied about it," he says.<sup>4</sup>

## **Because the Conservatives support the foreign and military policies of George W. Bush**

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When the United States invaded Iraq, Conservative foreign affairs critic Stockwell Day said Canada should send troops to Iraq and expel the last remaining Iraqi diplomat from Canada. Now, the Conservatives say they fully support the "star wars" missile defence plan of George W. Bush.

The Conservative party has pledged to dramatically increase Canadian military spending, increase the number of soldiers to 80,000 and commit to sharing security information with the United States.

## **Because the Conservatives oppose a children's agenda**

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The Conservative party is opposed to an across-Canada public child care program.

Stephen Harper is also on record as opposing "new money for social assistance in the name of 'child poverty'." Harper says, "Our position generally has been to recognize the need for reduction in the area of federal transfers and specifically in the area of welfare."

In 1994, he congratulated the Reform party for its efforts to push the Liberals further to the right. He said there had been many "positive" developments as a result. "Universality has been severely reduced. It is virtually dead as a concept in most areas of public policy. The family allowance program has been eliminated and unemployment insurance has been seriously cut back."

The Conservative platform for this election proposes that children as young as 14 be tried in adult court.



## Because the Conservatives would not work for workers

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Stephen Harper says he would eliminate the Employment Insurance surplus by reducing premiums paid by employers and employees. But he wouldn't improve EI benefits for workers, nor take government action to create jobs.

The Conservatives would increase the retirement age and make workers wait longer for pension benefits.

As well, they would make it easier for employers to intimidate workers who speak up for their rights in the workplace and attack workers' rights to organize collectively and join unions. This past year they voted overwhelmingly against anti-scab legislation introduced by MP Monique Guay.

## Because the Conservatives oppose an agenda for equality

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When Stephen Harper left the Reform party to become president of the National Citizens' Coalition he said it was because the NCC "criticizes, attacks and gives alternatives to such things as official multiculturalism, enforced national bilingualism, a pro-criminal justice system, anti-family social policies, open door immigration...."

Under Harper, Conservative policies would make inequalities between women and men even worse. Harper says he is a "social conservative" which means he refuses to recognize the struggles of women and equality-seeking groups for social justice.

The Conservatives promise to cut social programs even more severely than the Liberals. Vowing to cut corporate taxes even more than Martin, the Conservatives say they want to lower taxes to US levels.<sup>5</sup> This would be very bad news for women, children, new immigrants and the many other Canadians who depend on healthy social programs.



## Because the Conservatives do not support collective property rights for aboriginal people

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Conservative MP Chuck Strahl is on record arguing that individual aboriginal people should have the right to buy and sell ancestral lands that have always been held in common by First Nations.<sup>6</sup> The Conservative platform says it would transfer property rights to aboriginal people on an individual basis.

This means the Conservatives are continuing the Reform aboriginal policy of old. For example, Conservative candidate Gumant Grewal was part of the shameful filibuster of the historic Nisga'a Treaty in December 1999 when the Reform party tried to scuttle passage of the treaty by presenting 471 amendments during an exhausting 42-hour debate.

## Because the Conservatives blame regional inequality on the regions

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The Conservative platform on regional development would focus entirely on deregulation and incentives for business. Harper blames the regions themselves for uneven development. In 2002, he said, "There's unfortunately a view of too many people in Atlantic Canada that it's only through government favours that there's going to be economic progress.... That kind of 'can't do' attitude is a problem in this country but it's obviously more serious in regions that have had have-not status for a long time."<sup>7</sup>

## Because the Conservatives oppose the Kyoto Accord on global warming

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Stephen Harper's Conservatives would do nothing meaningful to reduce Canadian greenhouse gas emissions. The Alliance/Conservatives fought hard against the Kyoto Accord and are big supporters of the oil industry view that Canada can ignore its international obligations to reduce emissions that contribute to global warming.

With Stephen Harper's Conservatives, pollution and smog would increase and Canada would do little to reduce the harmful emissions that are contributing to droughts and damaging human health worldwide.



## Because Stephen Harper's Conservatives care more about private corporations than the public institutions that make Canada unique

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The top priorities for the Conservatives are further cuts to government and an expanded role for the private sector. Harper says, "We do need deeper and broader tax cuts, further reductions in debt, further deregulation and privatization ... the public arguments for doing so have already been won."<sup>8</sup>

The Conservatives would do away with the Canadian Wheat Board, ceding ground to multinational agribusiness. And Stephen Harper recently spoke in favour of "commercializing" CBC radio and television.<sup>9</sup>

Harper says, "I don't worship the marketplace, but it is a proven mechanism for providing the highest opportunities for personal choice and prosperity."<sup>10</sup>

- 1 Pocket Policy: Guide for Federal Conservative Candidates, 2004 p.2
- 2 Murray Dobbin, Preston Manning and the Reform Party (Halifax: Goodread biographies, 1992), xvi
- 3 "Harper taking a moderate approach", Toronto Star May 06, 2004, A6
- 4 Apr. 28, 2004 Toronto Star, Liberals engulfed by furor over health care, Canadian Press, Ottawa [www.tommydouglas.ca/articles/articles-april04.htm](http://www.tommydouglas.ca/articles/articles-april04.htm)
- 5 Heather Scoffield and Brian Laghi, "Liberals slam Harper's tax-cut plan as 'ruthless'", Globe and Mail, May 18, 2004.
- 6 Chuck Strahl, Tuesday November 7, 1995 Hansard, [www.parl.gc.ca/english/hansard/previous/256\\_95-11-07/256GO1E.html](http://www.parl.gc.ca/english/hansard/previous/256_95-11-07/256GO1E.html)
- 7 Stephen Harper, as quoted in the Toronto Sun, May 31, 2002.
- 8 Stephen Harper, "Rediscovering the Right Agenda", Report Magazine, June 2003 [www.ccicinc.org/politicalaffairs/060103.html](http://www.ccicinc.org/politicalaffairs/060103.html)
- 9 [http://www.friends.ca/News/Friends\\_News/archives/articles05190403.asp](http://www.friends.ca/News/Friends_News/archives/articles05190403.asp)
- 10 Stephen Harper, as cited in Kevin Michael Grace, "Getting back on track: The Canadian Alliance's newly elected leader Stephen Harper, says his task now is to turn his party, often viewed as a regional protest movement, into an alternative government." Montreal Gazette, March 22, 2002.

