

Harper's economic record



Canadian Union of Public Employees
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Stephen Harper is trying to convince Canadians that he is a good economic manager and the best leadership choice during turbulent times. Nothing could be further from the truth.

No matter how he tries to dress them up, Harper's economic and fiscal policies are based on narrow ideology and political opportunism. In fact, unless you are a wealthy oil and gas industry executive, Stephen Harper really doesn't have your best interest in mind.

Harper's management of the economy and federal finances has been incompetent, not unlike fellow neoconservative George W. Bush. And as Harper's irresponsible policies push our economy to the brink, more and more facts show ordinary hardworking Canadians are paying the price.

Everything costs more

- The cost of living in Canada has increased by more than 7% since Harper came to power, despite the 2% GST cut - a move that will cost the federal government \$12 billion a year in lost revenue.
- The price of gasoline is up 54%, heating fuel is up 42% and the cost of food up by over 8%. These increased costs alone have added over \$2,000 a year to the expenses of an average household.
- Harper's billion dollar subsidies to his conservative cronies in the ethanol industry have fuelled food price increases, hurting lower and middle-income families the most.

The average Canadian is falling behind...

- Harper pretends to be the everyman, but his policies impoverish ordinary hardworking Canadians while enriching corporations.
- Average wages have only increased by 6.7% since he was elected, less than the increase in the cost of living. This means that most workers have had no increase in real wages for the entire 2 ½ years that Harper has been in power.
- One in ten Canadians continue to live in poverty. Harper has refused to support a national plan to reduce poverty, or to increase the federal minimum wage.

- Progress in reducing the wage gap between men and women has stalled: women working fulltime are paid on average 20% less than men.
- Harper has done nothing to protect pensioners and investors from fraudulent financial scams, such as income trusts and asset-backed commercial paper.

While the rich are getting richer

- In Harper's first two years, CEO salaries increased by more than 50%. Canada's top CEOs now make more for just 10 hours of work than most of us make in a year.
- During the same time, corporate profits have increased by 28%, allowing corporations to amass an extra \$150 billion in surpluses that they haven't even invested back into the Canadian economy.

It's getting harder to find work

- Harper has helped create an increasingly unbalanced economy based on the exploitation and exportation of oil, gas and other raw materials.
- For each day he has been in office, an average of 200 manufacturing jobs have been lost. Harper's response to 500 laid-off Ford workers in Oakville this week? "We can't guarantee your jobs."
- In July, Canada suffered its largest job loss since the recession of 1991, with a drop of 55,000 jobs.
- This week, the NDP announced a plan to invest \$100 million in skills training. Harper has no plan to help laid-off workers find a decent job again.

We're in debt

- The ratio of household debt to income has increased by 15% while Harper has been in power.
- The federal government had a surplus of \$13.2 billion when Harper came to office. But the Conservatives have recklessly squandered it by pushing through expensive tax cuts. The surplus is now expected to shrink to \$1.3 billion or lower in 2009/10. This would be the worst fiscal balance for the federal government in over a decade.

The economy is stalling and our productivity is declining

- When Harper arrived in office, the economy was growing at a healthy rate of 4.2% a year. Economists expect that Canada's economy will grow by only 1.1% this year. This will be the slowest rate of national economic growth in 15 years—since the 1992 recession.
- Harper is the first Canadian Prime Minister in modern history under which economic productivity has actually declined. This demonstrates just how ineffective his neoconservative tax cuts and privatization policies have been.

Although he claims to be frugal, Stephen Harper is actually a big spender—on the things he likes. Spending on defence has increased by more than 16% in just two years. He is spending billions of the public’s money on private contracts, costly public-private partnerships, and partisan advertising. We need a government willing to put money back in the pockets of the average Canadian. We can’t afford any more of Stephen Harper’s economic “management”.