

VOTER'S GUIDE

ELECTION 2008

Authorized by

THE
COUNCIL
OF CANADIANS



LE
CONSEIL
DES CANADIENS

Your vision, your vote

Canada is at a crossroads. Never has the political landscape been so polarized. We are all faced with the crucial questions of what political leader, vision, and party should lead Canada and represent us in the House of Commons.

Canadians are clear about where they stand on current political issues. A recent poll conducted by Environics Research Group on behalf of the Council of Canadians showed that 87 per cent of Canadians agree that Canada should be able to set its own independent environmental, health and safety standards, even if this might reduce cross-border trade opportunities with the United States; 89 per cent felt that Canada should establish an energy policy that provides reliable supplies of oil, gas and electricity at stable prices and protects the environment even if this means placing restrictions on exports and foreign ownership of Canadian supplies; 88 per cent agreed Canada should have a National Water Policy and ban bulk water exports; 48 per cent opposed Canada harmonizing its security policies with the United States even if this affected our trading relationship, and 86 per cent agreed the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (SPP) – a wide-sweeping agreement between Canada, the U.S. and Mexico – should be debated and submitted to a vote in Parliament.

Yet some politicians and corporate lobbyists believe that stronger ties with the United States should continue to set the agenda for our country. Under NAFTA and the SPP, we have seen plans to weaken our health and safety regulations to lower standards, the surrender of control of our energy supplies at the expense of our environment and the health of our citizens, the sell-off of our water in the form of bulk water exports and to profit-thirsty bottling companies, a real threat to the future of public health care by increased privatization and NAFTA challenges, and an increase in our commitment to become a militarized state at home and abroad. These plans are being made away from public scrutiny and without debate or vote in Parliament.

You have the power to make a difference in this federal election campaign with the vote you cast at the ballot box. By asking candidates tough questions and demanding they commit to solid positions on important issues, we can all work to ensure that Parliament reflects the values Canadians support.

THIS FEDERAL ELECTION TELL CANDIDATES YOU WANT THEM TO:

Scrap the SPP and renegotiate NAFTA

The SPP contains more than 300 initiatives aimed at further integrating the economies and security policies of Canada, the United States and Mexico. It was never debated by Parliament, and to date, there has been no public consultation on the SPP's radical new vision for North America. Serious concerns continue to be expressed about some of the SPP's more controversial

initiatives, such as Canada's "Passenger Protect" no-fly list, the harmonization of pesticide residue limits and toxic chemical regulations to match lower U.S. standards, a massive increase in tar sands production for export to the United States, and the possibility of bulk water exports. Only the members of the North American Competitiveness Council (NACC), made up of 30 CEOs from North America's richest corporations, have had any meaningful input into the SPP.

Environmental, labour and progressive groups in both Canada and the United States are also ramping up the pressure to renegotiate NAFTA. Yet the Harper government, and the Liberal opposition, have avoided the issue publicly and instead want to convince their U.S. counterparts to leave the lopsided free-trade agreement as it is.

This federal election demand that candidates scrap the SPP, disband the North American Competitiveness Council and renegotiate NAFTA.

Put Canadians' energy needs first

NAFTA signed away significant control of our energy resources to the market and big oil companies. Canada's obligations under NAFTA include preventing us from cutting back the proportion of energy we produce and sell to the U.S., even to meet Canadians' needs or conserve energy resources. The SPP prioritizes energy

integration, seeing North America as one huge market instead of three independent countries. It also threatens environmental restrictions and First Nations land claims.

Faced with the realities of diminishing energy reserves globally, climate change and a five-fold expansion of the Alberta tar sands as part of the SPP, we are at a critical juncture for energy policy. Now, more than ever, we need strong policy in the form of a Canadian Energy Strategy that provides

security of energy supplies, guarantees access to energy reserves in times of need, and establishes strong policies that protect our environment and focuses on finding alternative, less-harmful energy solutions. This would prioritize the public interest over energy integration driven by market interests.

This federal election, tell candidates to support the creation of a Canadian Energy Strategy.

Stand up for public health care

Canada's health care system is under threat. After years of devastating federal cuts to health care funding, provincial governments are now promoting privatization and "mixed delivery" as the solutions to wait times. The federal government remains silent on rapidly expanding privatization and rarely uses the

enforcement mechanisms of the Canada Health Act (CHA) to penalize private surgical clinics and MRI clinics that allow patients to jump the queue. There are now close to 200 private clinics estimated to be operating in Canada, many in clear violation of the CHA.

While there are challenges within Canada's medicare system, studies continue to show that public health care is more efficient, cost effective, and better for patients' health

than any private model. Private health care is more expensive, it takes doctors and nurses from the public system, grants privileged access to those who can afford to pay, and puts patients at risk by cutting corners in favour of corporate profits.

This federal election demand that candidates stop health care privatization and work to strengthen and improve our public health care system.

Protect water

Canada does not have a National Water Policy to protect fresh water from the threats of contamination, shortages and pressure to export water to the United States and big business is benefiting from this policy gap.

The private sector sees crumbling infrastructure in municipalities and First Nations communities as an opportunity to cash in on essential water and sanitation services. Metal mining corporations are now using lakes and rivers as dump sites for their toxic water. Big oil corporations operating in the Alberta tar

sands are destroying wetlands, withdrawing an unsustainable 359 million cubic metres of water per year and contaminating the Athabasca watershed. Bottled water companies are making colossal profits by draining aquifers and selling ancient glacier water all over the world. These are just a few examples of how big business is profiting from the Canadian government's mismanagement of our fresh water.

A new National Water Policy must include the recognition of water as a human right, a ban on bulk water exports, restrictions on water diversions, national drinking

water standards, public infrastructure upgrades, and enforceable measures to protect source water from contamination and depletion.

Internationally, the Canadian government has repeatedly voted against recognizing the right to water at the United Nations. Water is a human right and shouldn't be sold for profit.

This federal election, tell candidates to support a National Water Policy that protects clean water resources, and support the initiative to declare water a human right, at the UN.

Promote peace at home and abroad

Prime Minister Stephen Harper has told our troops in Afghanistan that they are fighting to "defend our national interests, protect Canada and the world from terror, and help the people of Afghanistan rebuild their country." In reality, none of this is true.

Canada is defending the United States' interests, not our national interests. As

reported by the CBC, former Liberal Defence Minister Bill Graham increased Canada's military presence in Afghanistan from 500 to 2,000 troops in 2003 in order to appease President Bush for not joining his war in Iraq. Canada's participation in the "war on terror" has soaked up 68 per cent of Canada's spending on international missions, and left us with only 56 military personnel for traditional UN peacekeeping missions. And what's worse is that life in Afghanistan is not getting better.

At home, the Conservative government has ignored the long-standing Canadian history of being a country that offers refuge to war resisters. The government has also ignored the will of Parliament, which cast a majority vote in June 2008 in favour of letting U.S. resisters to the Iraq war stay in Canada.

This federal election, tell candidates to bring the troops home now and let war resisters stay.

JOIN THE COUNCIL OF CANADIANS. CALL 1-800-387-7177 OR GO TO WWW.CANADIANS.ORG.



“There has never been a more important time to vote. Canada is truly at a crossroads in terms of our political vision for the future of our country. It is in your power to make a difference by putting pencil to paper for the candidate and party you think will best lead this country. Voter apathy and lack of trust in politicians is understandable, but more people need to participate in the electoral process and work toward its transformation. Your vote does count.”

Maude Barlow
National Chairperson
The Council of Canadians

A VOTER'S GUIDE TO PARTY POLICIES

The Council of Canadians is an independent, non-partisan, public interest organization. We provide a critical voice on key national issues

and do not endorse any specific party or individual candidate. The following information was obtained from a combination of research on

party websites and the public record. It is based on information that was available at the time of publication. The political parties noted below all

received more than two per cent of the popular vote in the last federal election.

ISSUES	CONSERVATIVE www.conservative.ca	LIBERAL www.liberal.ca	BLOC www.bloc.org	NDP www.ndp.ca	GREEN PARTY www.greenparty.ca
SPP and NAFTA	Vocal supporter of the SPP. Allotted \$303 million in public funding explicitly to SPP initiatives. In May, Conservative MP Leon Benoit stormed out of a parliamentary hearing about the SPP he was chairing, ending a discussion on energy integration with the United States. Strongly supports NAFTA.	Agreed to the SPP in March 2005 without consulting Canadians or debating the agreement in Parliament. As an opposition party, they were critical, but not vocal, about the SPP's lack of transparency, the window it opens for bulk water exports, and its lowering of pesticide safety standards. Does not support renegotiating NAFTA.	Used the 2007 Montebello summit to call for more transparency and parliamentary involvement in the SPP. Called for a freeze on all new SPP regulatory measures. Concerned that the SPP's increase in tar sands production will make it impossible to meet Canada's Kyoto commitments on greenhouse gas emissions.	Has been consistently opposed to the SPP and actively campaigned against it in 2007, focusing on its impact on workers and sovereignty. Secured hearings into the agreement at parliamentary committee and launched a national campaign to halt further implementation of the SPP. Supports renegotiating NAFTA.	Promises to scrap the SPP saying the agreement "operates from a hyper-security mentality that involves anti-terrorism legislation, Smart Border Accord, security certificates, harmonizing immigration policies and military integration for homeland security." Called for NAFTA renegotiation in 2006.
Energy	Favours SPP energy integration provisions and market solutions for energy development. Signaling more corporate tax breaks and will continue to subsidize the oil companies. Lobbied against dirty oil legislation in the U.S. Stephen Harper has referred to Kyoto as a "socialist scheme."	Favours market solutions for energy development and plans to lower corporate taxes. Proposals include investment in renewable energy, conservation and energy efficiency. Kyoto protocol was signed under the Liberals, but little progress was made on emission reductions.	Doesn't officially oppose the energy integration provisions in the SPP, but has called for more transparency and parliamentary input. Criticized subsidies and tax breaks for the oil and gas industry and advocates having provinces develop alternative energy sources. Proposed policy to reduce dependency on fossil fuels and promote a transition to clean energy.	Opposes the SPP and wants to stop government subsidies and tax breaks directed at the big oil companies to promote unsustainable energy development. Proposes a greener energy strategy for Canada focusing on wind energy, other renewable sources and energy conservation. Will establish a policy of energy security for Canada.	Opposes the SPP and wants to end corporate subsidies to the oil, gas and nuclear industries. Wants to achieve greater resource and energy efficiency by developing environmentally sustainable technologies. Supports re-negotiating NAFTA with new provision for an energy reserve and control over energy exports.
Public health care	2006 platform proposed a mix of public and private health care delivery. Continues to ignore massive proliferation of private, for-profit clinics, particularly in British Columbia and Quebec and refuses to use the Canada Health Act to penalize provinces that allow privatization.	Promotes wait time guarantees as a way to increase access. Says system should continue to be financed publicly, but is quiet on issue of private, for-profit health delivery. Supports a national pharmacare strategy and expansion of home care services. Responsible for many of current problems with health care system thanks to severe funding cuts in the 90s.	Has been largely silent on health care issues because party believes that health care is strictly a provincial issue. Opposes use of the Canada Health Act as a national tool to crack down on privatization in provinces.	Strongly opposed to health care privatization. Will use CHA to penalize provinces that allow private health care. Recently promised \$1 billion to hire and train more doctors and nurses. Supports the creation of a national pharmacare program.	Opposes any form of privatization, for-profit health care and supports the five principles of the Canada Health Act. Supports a national pharmacare program. Will train more doctors and nurses. Platform also focuses on social determinants of health, and connection between environmental policies and public health.
Water	First announced national water strategy in 2007, but has done little since then to protect Canada's water. Will put public money in the hands of water privateers with new Crown corporation PPP Canada Inc. Has ignored repeated calls to ban bulk water exports and through the SPP, has opened up bulk water export negotiations. Refuses to recognize water as a human right, and actively campaigned against it at the United Nations.	Tabled private member's bill that would prohibit large scale fresh water diversions. Put in motion to Environment Committee to study effects of Alberta tar sands development on water resources. Proposes creation of new Water Minister position to work with provinces on water issues. Opposes human right to water at the UN.	Long called for a federal water policy that mirrors existing policy in Quebec. Policy does not prevent private sector involvement in water delivery services and does not recognize water as a human right. Says water should be removed from all trade deals. Put forward motion in House of Commons to exclude water from the scope of NAFTA. Motion passed with support from all parties except the Conservatives.	Has bill in second reading calling for a "comprehensive water policy based on public trust" that would recognize access to water as a fundamental right, ban bulk water exports and restrict water diversions. Would establish national standards for clean drinking water and provide funding for water infrastructure. Opposes water privatization or water becoming a commodity in trade deals.	Platform commits to passing federal legislation to prohibit bulk water exports and exclude water from future trade agreements. Calls for binding drinking water standards and for water to be enshrined in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.
Peace	Plans to keep troops in Afghanistan until at least 2011. Endorsed the whopping military spending increases brought in by the Liberals, and topped them up by \$5.3 billion over five years. Only party not to support motion to allow Iraq war resisters from the U.S. to stay in Canada.	Gave go-ahead to reshape the military, and wrote a virtual blank cheque for the largest military spending increase in a generation in the 2005 budget: \$12.8 billion over five years. Party has been supportive of Canada's role in Afghanistan war. Many of the elements of military integration happening as part of the SPP were initiated under Liberal governance. Supported motion to let U.S. war resisters stay in Canada.	Does not support extending Canada's mission in Afghanistan. Threatened to topple the Harper government if it didn't "rapidly and profoundly alter the Canadian mission" in Afghanistan and change involvement to "reconstruction" instead of "combat," but later backed off. Put forward motion in House of Commons to let U.S. war resisters stay in Canada.	Does not support extending Canada's mission in Afghanistan and has called for the immediate withdrawal of troops from the country. Rather than engaging the growing insurgency with combat, says Canada should "work for practical solutions to end the violence." Supported motion to let U.S. war resisters stay in Canada.	Does not support continued Canadian participation in the current mission in Afghanistan, but is not calling for a complete withdrawal of troops. Instead, supports a new mission that would "focus on rebuilding critical infrastructure and governance systems that were destroyed through decades of war."

For information on the positions of other political parties, go to:

www.canadianactionparty.ca	Canadian Action Party	www.marijuanaparty.org	Marijuana Party of Canada
www.chp.ca	Christian Heritage Party of Canada	www.cpcml.ca	Marxist-Leninist Party of Canada
www.communist-party.ca	Communist Party of Canada	www.pcparty.org	Progressive Canadian Party
www.libertarian.ca	Libertarian Party of Canada		

For general information about the election, visit the Elections Canada website at www.elections.ca.

