

Liberal Party of Canada

Canadian Council of Churches

Address Poverty in Canada

The recent *Interfaith Forum on Faith and Poverty* on Parliament Hill ended with a commitment by all participants to work toward making ending poverty in Canada the number 1 issue during this election.

What action will your party take to pass an historic Federal Anti-Poverty Act that ensures enduring federal commitment and accountability for results with measurable goals and timelines, publicly comprehensible indicators, and a means for monitoring and evaluating progress to reduce poverty?

<http://www.councilofchurches.ca/en/news-view.cfm?newsID=139>

http://www.councilofchurches.ca/documents/social_justice/Brief_FederalContributionEndingPoverty.pdf

More than 3.5 million Canadians live in poverty, including more than one in ten children. The Liberal Party is tackling this poverty gap head on. A Liberal government will work with partners at all levels to develop a **Poverty Reduction Plan** for Canada worth over \$5 billion over two years. It will set goals, identify practical measures for achieving them and set out who can do what among all the partners. Major commitments include: the Canadian Learning Strategy, particularly Early Childhood Learning and Care, the Learning Passport for post-secondary education access, and Aboriginal learning; Family Care; a renewed focus on volunteerism through the Canada Service Corps; the National Food Policy's nutrition measures; and a new Affordable Housing Framework.

These practical measures to support Canadian families, worth more than \$5 billion, will help reduce poverty and inequality, especially as part of a whole-of-Canada effort to strengthen our communities. They will also contribute to a stronger economy over the long-term.

Address Poverty Globally

Canada's record on meeting the 0.7% target for Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) has been disappointing, and despite some recent gains ODA is currently frozen under 0.3%.

What commitment will your party make to take all necessary steps to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, invest 0.7 % of Gross National Income in development assistance in a transparent and accountable manner, and cancel debts of poor countries without regressive conditions?

<http://www.faithchallengeg8.com/pdfs/2010%20Interfaith%20Statement%20-%20English.pdf>

In the 2010 Budget, the Harper government froze Canada's Official Development Assistance (ODA), removing billions from planned investments. To restore some of the ground that has been lost under the Conservatives, Liberals will re-invest in development assistance, as we re-balance the spending in our international priorities.

The government reports that the annual incremental cost of the combat mission in Afghanistan is nearly \$1.7 billion. The Parliamentary Budget Officer has reported that this cost is even higher than what's been disclosed. The incremental cost of the 2011-2014 training mission will reportedly be \$500 million annually. That leaves more than \$1 billion per year to be reallocated by a Liberal government in a balanced manner across the full spectrum of defence, development and diplomacy. For more information on our Global Networks Strategy, please see our platform at: www.liberal.ca/platform

The Conservatives have muzzled and cut the funding of a long list of Canadian civil society groups and NGOs that are essential partners in carrying out the wide range of essential civil society work in this country. A Liberal government will seek to repair the damage caused by the decimating funding cuts of the Conservatives. This transparent relationship should be based on standards informed by the Official Development Assistance Accountability Act as well as the newly agreed "Istanbul Principles" and possibly the International Aid Transparency Initiative.

Climate Change

The Earth, our home, is a gift from the Creator. The impacts of climate change adversely affect the most vulnerable who are least responsible for it. The strategy of promoting endless economic growth and high consumption lifestyles that contribute to increased GHG emissions must be challenged and constrained. Wealthy countries like Canada must come to a more profound understanding of the interdependence of life and take courageous steps to care for the planet.

In the realm of climate change, what concrete plans will your party implement to ensure global average temperatures do not exceed a 2° Centigrade increase from pre-industrial levels?

The Liberal Part of Canada agrees with the Canadian Council of Churches on the urgent need to address climate change. Canada needs to do its part at home and abroad to mitigate the devastating impacts of climate change. We urged the Harper Conservatives to work for an ambitious global agreement on climate change that would keep the global rise in temperatures below 2°C. Their embarrassing obstruction at the Copenhagen conference, and invisibility a year later in Cancun made it clear they have no intention to help reach a new global agreement.

A Liberal government will establish a cap-and-trade system – a mechanism that sets a ceiling on the total amount of permissible greenhouse gas emissions by large industrial facilities, and then auctions off emission permits to companies who can trade them amongst themselves to remain compliant under the law.

A Liberal government will work to achieve an 80 percent reduction of greenhouse gas emissions below 1990 levels by 2050. To ensure we remain on target, we will ask the independent advisory body, the National Round Table on Environment and Economy, to recommend a series of science-based, achievable medium-term targets.

Rather than waiting for the U.S. Congress to act, as the Harper Conservatives have done, a Liberal government will engage American counterparts in the Administration and Congress proactively on key issues including: carbon pricing, research and development for standards and regulation, clean energy technologies, cooperation on electricity transmission grid development, and transportation. While the Harper Conservatives have outsourced Canadian policy to American legislators, a Liberal government will act in the Canadian interest.

A Liberal government will also work responsibly with other countries and multilateral bodies to secure a strong global climate change agreement based on science.

<http://www.faithchallengeg8.com/pdfs/2010%20Interfaith%20Statement%20-%20English.pdf>

Canada's Role in Afghanistan

We believe God desires peace in Afghanistan as well as in Canada. In terms of political commitment and dollars spent, Canada's military investment in Afghanistan dwarfs our support for diplomatic solutions to the conflict, for community reconciliation, promoting human rights, and development. Non-military solutions to resolving the conflict are out of balance with military approaches pursued so far. Meanwhile excellent principles to ground new and important non-military efforts are available in the most recent consensus report of the House of Commons Special Committee on Afghanistan.

How will your party work for peace in Afghanistan, supporting Afghans in implementing reconciliation programs and responsive governance at local and district levels, as well as urging the international community to pursue diplomatic efforts to end the war?

http://www.councilofchurches.ca/en/Social_Justice/canada-afghanistan.cfm

Canada's combat mission in Afghanistan is ending in 2011. However, the basic objective will not be completed. The Afghan people will still not be fully able to govern themselves and maintain their own security. That is why the Liberal Party supports the 2011-2014 training mission, and continued development work. The purpose is to help the Afghan people build a better future for themselves.

The post-combat presence for Canada must also include a substantive role in the diplomatic process and any political talks on Afghanistan's future. A Liberal government will appoint a Special Envoy to the peace process for the region, something essential to the crucial diplomatic component and something the Conservatives have stubbornly refused to do.

We have and will continue to consult with a wide range of experts and stakeholders on all means of bringing peace and justice to the people of Afghanistan, including at Parliamentary committees and in bilateral and multilateral consultations with our international partners.

A World Without Nuclear Weapons

In a recent letter from churches leaders on the topic, they wrote, "We cannot conceive how the use of nuclear weapons could be justified and consistent with the will of God, and we must, therefore, conclude that nuclear weapons must also be rejected as a means of threat or deterrence."

How will your party work towards achieving the vision of a world without nuclear weapons, and publicly and prominently recommit Canada to the energetic pursuit of the early elimination of all nuclear weapons?

http://www.councilofchurches.ca/documents/social_justice/peacedisarmament/

[Church_Leaders__Letter_on_Nuclear_Disarmament.pdf](#)

The Liberal Party has always been a leader on nuclear non-proliferation. In 1969, the government of Pierre Trudeau joined the global community by signing and ratifying the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation (NPT) of Nuclear Weapons. Since then, the Liberal Party's position has remained consistent. As the Liberal government's 1999 policy statement Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation states: "Canada will continue to resist any movement to validate nuclear weapons as acceptable currency in international politics."

To this day, our party's objective remains the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

Within NATO, Liberal governments had been at the forefront of efforts to ensure that the alliance continues to uphold the global non-proliferation regime. In December 2000, Canada succeeded in ensuring that NATO explicitly and publicly endorsed the 13 practical steps towards disarmament from the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference.

In December 2010, we voted to support a resolution in Parliament to support "negotiations for a nuclear weapons convention" and to "deploy a major world-wide Canadian diplomatic initiative in support of preventing nuclear proliferation and increasing the rate of nuclear disarmament."

A Liberal government will continue to oppose any measures that would increase the proliferation of nuclear weapons throughout the world and pursue efforts to achieve their reduction. Under Liberal governments, Canada has been a global leader in the fight to reduce

the use of all armaments, from land-mines to nuclear weapons, and we will continue our efforts to uphold that proud tradition.

Convention on Cluster Munitions

When and under what conditions will Canada become a full state party to the Convention on Cluster Munitions by ratifying it?

http://www.councilofchurches.ca/documents/social_justice/peacedisarmament/Cluster_Munitions_Letter.pdf.

A Liberal government will ratify the Convention on Cluster Munitions, which continue to injure and kill civilian populations, including children, years after they are dropped. Whereas the Liberal government led the world on the treaty to ban land mines and speedily ratified it in Parliament, the Conservatives have delayed and stonewalled ratifying the treaty on cluster munitions.

The Conservatives removed Earl Turcotte as chief negotiator on cluster munitions because he was too aggressive in treaty negotiations and wouldn't toe the line on a softer interpretation of the treaty rules. This is just another in a series of firings by the Conservatives of officials who do their job too well or blow the whistle on the Conservatives' misdeeds.

In November, 2010, Michael Ignatieff spoke in support of the ban on cluster munitions ban:

“Once, we fought to ban landmines. Now, we should be fighting to ban cluster munitions, nuclear proliferation, the transfer of fissile materials, and that latest weapon of war, the child soldier. When the current government took office in 2006, one of the first things they did was cut words like “human security” and “public diplomacy” from the vocabulary of the Department of Foreign Affairs.”

We should not be surprised at this from Stephen Harper who said in 2002: “In 1996-97 Canada aggressively pushed forward with the treaty to ban landmines without giving due consideration to U.S. concerns...”

Human Trafficking in Canada

Human Trafficking is a growing worldwide and Canadian phenomenon that exploits and dehumanizes women. The issue is complex, multifaceted, and stretches across different levels of jurisdiction.

What federal legislation will your party introduce to better prevent, protect, prosecute and partner to end human trafficking in Canada?

http://www.councilofchurches.ca/documents/social_justice/Human_trafficking-background.pdf

The Liberal Party and particularly the Liberal Women's Caucus have demanded that Canada must take stronger action against human trafficking. A Liberal government will work for stronger measures and action on this matter.

While Liberals supported Bill C-268 – the private member's bill that called for mandatory minimum sentences of five years for human trafficking – we will go further. The Conservatives believe that simply increasing jail times will solve problems. It doesn't. It requires a more comprehensive approach that brings the world's police forces, prosecutors and social agencies together to work on issues of prosecution, protection of victims and prevention.

Our Women's Caucus met with the Citizens' Summit on Human Trafficking at the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Games and Beyond to deliver this same message of support and to back their declaration that calls for, among other things, increased resources to effectively fight this battle.

Prisons and Corrections

Many faith leaders have expressed concern that in this time of financial cuts to important federal services a significant increase in investment in the building of new prisons is proposed.

Increasing levels of incarceration of marginalized people is counter-productive and undermines human dignity.

What commitments will your party make to enhance public safety through healthy communities that support individuals and families, considers the impact corrections policies have on the most disadvantaged in society, and rely on the most effective ways to restore human dignity for individuals, families, and the communities they live in?

www.ccjc.ca

The Harper government's narrow approach to protecting our communities has been concerned only with punishing crime and exploiting fear. The Parliamentary Budget Officer estimates that just one of their piecemeal sentencing Bills will cost federal and provincial governments \$10 to 13 billion over five years, for building US-style mega-prisons. No one disagrees that criminals must be punished. But more prisons alone will not make our communities safer and stronger. That approach has failed in the U.S. Evidence and experience suggest it will take much more than prisons.

The Conservatives think there is no problem that can't be solved by throwing more Canadians into prison and building more U.S.-style mega-prisons. These dumb on crime policies failed in the United States and they would fail in Canada. We believe that a responsible government will invest in both imprisonment and crime prevention, including preparing inmates for successful re-entry into society to avoid repeat offences.

The Conservative justice agenda has included mandatory minimum sentence provisions that are causing an explosion in the prison population. The Liberal Party believes that strict sentences for serious crimes are important, but that does not mean we should import failed, U.S.-style mega-prisons.