

Nine reasons to oppose the Harper candidate in your riding

by Kathleen O'Hara

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*** note: this is an abridged version of an online article ('Ten reasons ...') from rabble.ca*

Stephen Harper promised to "change the face of Canada" so drastically we wouldn't recognize it. He has succeeded and Canadians must decide if that is really what they want.

Money mismanagement

► In 1993, Mulroney's Conservatives chalked up a \$38 billion deficit. By 2006, Martin's Liberals turned this into a \$16 billion surplus. Now, Harper has given us a \$55-plus billion deficit.

► The Tories promoted the HST, which moves the tax burden from corporations to consumers, increasing the cost of essentials like food and heat. The Ontario government has admitted that this will cost citizens at least \$500 a year per family.

► In 2011/12, Harper is introducing more corporate tax cuts which will cost \$5.6 billion annually, creating a smaller revenue base for the country. On the other hand, Harper's Income Trust "betrayal," will result in a \$2 billion a year tax "leakage."

► Don't forget the \$75 billion bail-out package for banks with no closed tax loopholes or tightened regulations required.

Fossil fuel fools

► In Cancun, Tories lobbied against an extension of the Kyoto Accord -- in spite of the 2010 weather horrors, estimated to cost \$220 billion globally.

► They also claim they can't bring in cap-and-trade legislation without U.S. co-operation. They will go ahead with "equivalent" regulations if and when our neighbour does.

► Harper intends to spend massively, expanding Alberta tar sands production -- in spite of resulting CO2 emissions (100,000 tonnes daily), forest clearances the size of Florida, Athabaska River pollution, and toxic tailing ponds.

► A report revealed that Environment Canada scientists are being muzzled on the subject of climate change. They have been prevented from attending conferences, their websites closed down, and the role of National Science Advisor dropped.

Weapons obsession

► The government is buying 65 "problem-plagued" F-35s stealth fighters from Lockheed Martin through an untendered contract worth \$9-billion -- an amount which excludes roughly \$7 billion more in maintenance costs. The auditor-general has warned that there could be cost overruns and delays.

► Alan Williams, former assistant deputy minister of defence for materiel, has testified that: "The procurement process is out of con-

trol and has degenerated into handouts for the chosen beneficiaries."

► As for smaller weapons, the Tories pushed hard to end the long-gun registry, even calling pro-registry police a "cult." Marty Cheliak, the RCMP chief superintendent and a strong proponent of the registry was suddenly replaced as head of the Canadian Firearms Program.

► RCMP morale is down since Harper appointed an abrasive William Elliott to head the force; the term for Paul Kennedy, chairman of the Commission for Public Complaints Against the RCMP was not renewed after he criticized the force.

Not smart on crime

► Crime rates are down and the population is aging, but the Harper government claims it must introduce tougher laws, incarcerate more Canadians, and spend \$9 billion for more prisons -- some of them American-style super-prisons -- because of an increase in "unreported" crime.

► One-third of the 54 bills introduced by the Conservatives over the past several months are related to crime. The Parliamentary Budget Officer predicted a price tag of \$7 billion to \$10 billion for the cost of passing Bill C-25 alone, which eliminates the two-for-one credit for time served.

► A new report by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives think-tank says that harsher prison conditions, longer sentences, and more crowded prisons will increase the chance that criminals will re-offend.

► At the same time, six prison farms, one of Canada's most effective rehabilitation pro-



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Need more reasons not to vote for the Cons? Here they are

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grams, are being closed.

► While paying lip service for victims of crime, the Tories have cut the budget to Grants for the Victims of Crime Initiative by 41 per cent and Contributions for the Victims of Crime Initiative by 34 per cent.

International humiliation

► Canada wanted a seat on the UN Security Council, which would give it status, power, and influence, but it appears that the Harper government's "I'm right you're wrong" attitude alienated too many countries. It suffered what *The Globe and Mail* called "a stinging defeat" -- which it then tried to blame on Michael Ignatieff.

► Harper has helped stop the UN from declaring asbestos a dangerous substance, and still promotes exports to poorer countries.

► Canada took a lead in preventing genetically modified seeds from being banned under the UN convention on Biological Diversity.

► Harper abandoned our internationally praised development partnership with eight of the poorest countries in Africa.

► Instead, he is focusing on Colombia -- a militarized country with government death squads.

► Harper's comment that the vicious bombing of Lebanon in 2006 was a "measured" response and his unquestioning support of Israel has also raised questions.

► He has cut funding for UNRWA, the UN agency that provides aid, education, and other services to Palestinian refugees, and has opposed Iran on women's issues while backing Saudi Arabia.

► Harper was also seen as disrespectful of the UN when he skipped out of a General Assembly meeting for a photo op at a Tim Horton's donut store that had just opened in New York.

Big Brother

► The non-elected staff in the leader's office controls tactics and strategies. To do this, the Prime Minister's Office increased its taxpayer-paid funding by \$1 million.

► Tory MPs, who should be speaking for their constituents, are muzzled. Harper's central authority writes media releases and MPs' often-aggressive statements and questions, laced with personal attacks, for the House. It also

provides MPs with "talking points" on issues, so they won't deviate from the party line.

► On a constituency level, unwanted Conservative candidates have complained of "smear" campaigns against them. Generally, those who don't agree with the Harper way become victims of name-calling and what journalist Lawrence Martin calls "demagogic sloganeering."

► CBC's *the Fifth Estate* has revealed that 20 government departments are now involved in national "security," along with CSIS and the RCMP.



Prime Minister Stephen Harper in effigy at an anti-prorogue rally in Ottawa, January 2010.

Photo: Greg Pang/Flicker

'I Make the Rules'

► Harper himself summed up the Tory attitude after being told that riding an ATV on a restricted airport runway was illegal, responding, "I make the rules."

► Tom Flanagan, Harper's former chief of staff and former campaign manager, a man who remains a mentor and long-time advisor, announced on CBC TV that Julian Assange of WikiLeaks should be "assassinated... Obama should put a contract out on him."

Scandalous behaviour

► Former Public Works Minister Christian Paradis has denied knowing that a Montreal fundraiser he attended was organized by LM Sauve construction boss Paul Sauve and packed with industry heavyweights. Meanwhile, Sauve has told a parliamentary committee that the \$140,000 he paid Conservative lobbyist Gilles Varin was probably distributed to various party officials.

► Sauve is convinced that's why his company

got the \$9-million contract to renovate Parliament Hill's West Block in 2008. "Because we paid, we received," he said. The RCMP is investigating.

► The force has also been asked to investigate whether the Harper government illegally leaked cabinet confidential information concerning Taseko Mines -- which may have led to insider trading of the company's shares.

► As well, there was a taint connected to the fact that Harper dined with the head of Fox News in New York. Later, Harper's former spokesman, Kory Teneycke, had to resign as political editor for Quebecor/Sun Media, which is setting up a "Fox News North," after fraudulent names were added to a petition.

► There are fears that CRTC head Konrad von Finckenstein might be replaced by Quebecor's Luc Lavoie, a Mulroneyite, compromising the commission's independence.

Broken promises

► Prime Minister Harper campaigned on accountability and transparency. The Information Commissioner has found the Harper government the most secretive ever when it comes to Access to Information requests; one senior government aide was caught interfering with the process.

► There is an atmosphere of "trench warfare" and "disdain" as the government refuses to cooperate with parliamentary committees. Staff members, who should be accountable to the public, are no longer allowed to testify before them.

► Contrary to his position as an opponent of the unelected Senate, Harper used his new majority there to recently stop a climate change bill passed by the elected majority in the House of Commons.

► Elections Canada is battling with a few former Tory candidates -- it has cost \$1.3 million so far.

Kathleen O'Hara has worked for the media, government, and non-profit groups. Her book, 'Lost and Found in London' comes out this year. She is also a member of the Catch 22 Campaign that targets ridings where the Cons are vulnerable:

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