



REVIEW

of the
**Conservative
Government**

WHY WE NEED TO GET RID of Stephen Harper's conservatives

Before every election in Québec or Canada, the CSQ publishes a review of the outgoing government. Our current assessment provides several reasons for launching an appeal to get rid of the conservative government at the next federal election. I invite to take some time to read it through carefully.

When first elected in 2006, Stephen Harper declared that we would no longer recognize Canada when he was done with his plan. Unfortunately, he was right. Canada is no longer an example for the world. Previously, Canada was at the forefront of the fight against global warming; today, it's one of the worst threats to the planet. Canada also used to send Peacekeepers where they were needed; today, it intervenes militarily in Irak and has adopted a warlike tone on the international scene.

Since its ascension to power, we have denounced the government's positions and policies many times as they undermine the survival and development of public services, threaten work legislations and the rights of unions, and accentuate social inequalities.

During our Congress in 2012, participating members asked the CSQ to do everything in its power to denounce and fight against ideologies that are contrary to our values, especially those advocated by the conservative federal government. Next October, we will have the opportunity to block the Conservative Party by exercising our right to vote and to do so in large numbers.

Happy reading.


Louise Chabot
CSQ President

Numerous reasons to vote against Harper!

A disastrous environmental record

Since taking power, the conservatives have done everything to sabotage Canada's advances in environmental protection.

They repealed the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, dissolved the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy, and reworked the Fisheries Act, the Species at Risk Act, and the Navigation Protection Act.

They ruined the negotiations for the Kyoto protocol on climate change. In 2013, Canada backed out of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (192 countries signed it and Canada is now the only country that is not part of it).

The conservatives have also decreased targets for reducing greenhouse gases. They have decreased protection for biodiversity, requirements for environmental assessments, and access to public consultations to facilitate approval for industrial projects. Therefore, the environmental assessment to be conducted by the National Energy Board on the energy east project will not take into consideration the increase in greenhouse emissions, even if the pipeline will be carrying 1.1 million barrels of petroleum per day.

Dangerous transportation deregulation

The conservatives did not concern themselves with the risks to the population caused by deregulation in the transportation sector, which led to the tragic railway accident in Lac-Mégantic on July 6, 2013. Forty-seven people were killed, as well as the destruction of the downtown core and forty or so buildings. Following this tragedy, the federal government was in no hurry to adopt new laws to improve the safe transportation of oil by rail and better protect the population.

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Plain and simple anti-unionism

The Harper government's vision of labour relations goes against Canada's labour laws. In 2011 and 2012, the conservatives adopted 5 special laws to force a return to work, end negotiations, or impose a final offer with Canada Post, Air Canada, and Canadian Pacific Railway.

In 2013, the conservatives changed workplace health and safety standards in the public sector to reduce the possibility of using the right of refusal.

In 2015, they passed a bill (C-525) making it more difficult for federal employees to unionize and easier to deunionize. They are now getting ready to pass a law that would require unions to publicly disclose the details of their finances in a way that is not required by any other public association, such as employer associations (C-377).

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Cutting tax credits to workers' funds

Despite all out mobilization in Québec for the preservation of tax credits benefiting workers' funds, which provide venture capital to many SMBs, the conservative government has decided to go ahead with their elimination. This measure was adopted in the spring budget of 2013.

Attacking the rights of retired workers

In the 2012 budget, the conservatives decided to gradually increase the minimum retirement age for the Old Age Security pension and the Guaranteed Supplement income from 65 to 67 years. This decision will lead to a decrease in revenue of \$13,000 annually for every senior across Canada.

Contempt for Parliament

Since obtaining a majority in Parliament, the Harper government has increasingly invoked closure, refused to consider the results of parliamentary committees, and changed major laws without consultation, by adopting massive budget bills.

Prime Minister Harper has systematically refused to answer questions from the opposition during question period. Plus, he has prorogued parliament twice because he didn't agree with the debates. This has never been seen in the entire history of the Canadian Parliament. Finally, he got rid of the system of public financing for political parties, which allowed them to collect a budget equal to two dollars per vote received. By doing so, he has eliminated the most stringent regulations passed during the sponsorship scandal and which limit the reach and influence of private donations. Yet, this system of per-vote subsidies was fairly effective against political corruption.

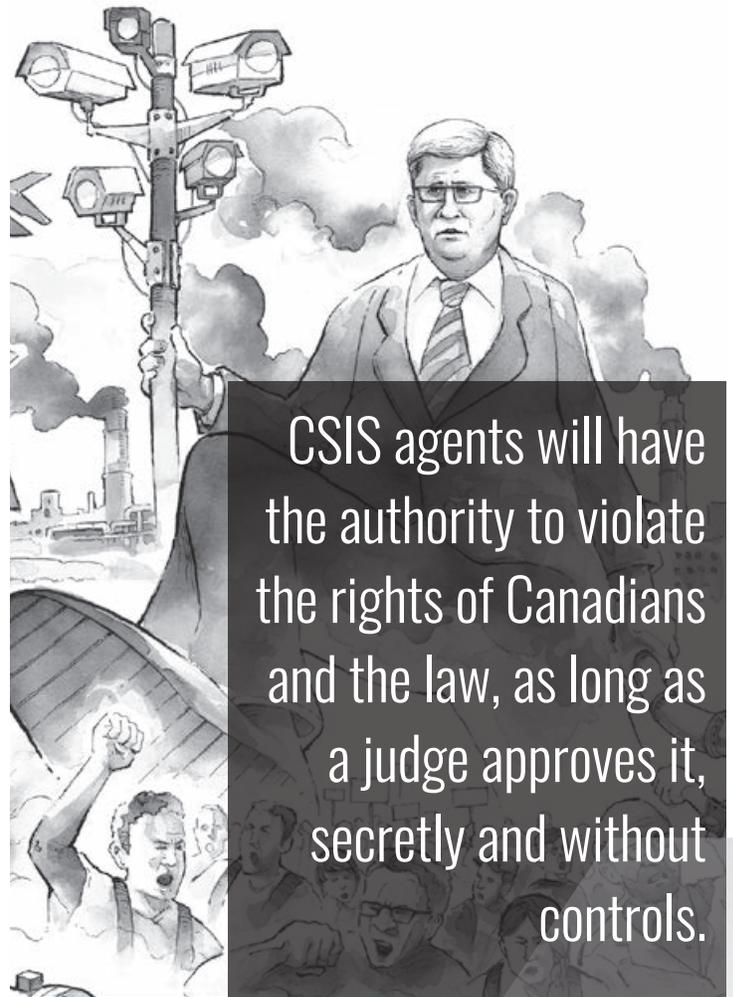
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Obsessed with security

Along with the most conservative parties in the western world, namely the American Republican party, the Harper government is obsessed with security, as evidenced by the adoption of its anti-terrorism legislation (Bill C-51) on May 6.

This new bill grants additional powers, beyond what is necessary to ensure the safety of the Canadian population, to the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) and various police forces. In fact, CSIS agents will have the authority to violate the rights of Canadians and the law, as long as a judge approves it, secretly and without controls. Even in the U.S. and Great Britain, where anti-terrorism laws currently exist, the authority of various police forces and information are restricted, something the Harper government has refused to do.

CSIS agents can now disrupt the activities of individuals threatening “the security of Canada”. They can also attack environmentalists or aboriginal protestors since “the security of Canada” is very broadly defined in the Bill, and includes economic security.



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A foreign policy that has transformed the image of Canada

Canadian citizens no longer recognize themselves in the role Canada is playing on the international scene. Since the election of the Harper government, Canadian foreign policy has become characterized by:

- ☞ a nearly blind loyalty to our American neighbours;
- ☞ an increased attachment to the British monarchy;
- ☞ the increased status of the military identity;
- ☞ an increased defence budget;
- ☞ its unwavering support for the Israeli government;
- ☞ its intervention in the Middle East;
- ☞ its support for the oil industry;
- ☞ its disengagement from environmental issues;
- ☞ a shift in foreign aid to areas where we hold financial interests;
- ☞ ambiguous positions regarding human rights issues;
- ☞ the increased role of religion;
- ☞ a casual attitude towards multilateral institutions, particularly the United Nations.

Threats to federal health transfers

When Canada's health care system was first implemented, the federal government covered 50% of the plan's costs. This allocation was maintained until 1977. After decades of cutbacks, the federal government now only covers 23% of the plan's costs. The conservative government wants to decrease federal health transfers even more.



Attacks against the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC)

The CBC has had \$500 million cut from its budget and eliminated 3000 jobs. These cuts have had dramatic consequences on the programming and quality of television and radio productions. Maintaining the public broadcaster will be on the agenda for the next elections.

A modern age of darkness for scientists

The Harper government is only interested in science for commercial gains or if it is favourable to the oil industry. The impact of deliberately ignoring the facts is clear:

- 👉 dismissal of over 2000 scientists working for the federal government since 2009;
- 👉 closure of nearly 200 scientific research centres and government institutions;
- 👉 cancellation of 492 environmental impact studies;
- 👉 abolition of the census long form questionnaire;
- 👉 closure of 7 of the 11 Fisheries and Oceans Canada libraries.

The work of Canadian scientists is not only hampered by budget cuts, but also by constraints on their freedom to travel, to communicate, and to collaborate with their colleagues in other countries.

The Harper government denied the rights of women

for equal pay in the public sector

A government that is anti-woman

Since it began leading the country, the Harper government has:

- ✎ dismantled several programs and measures that aim to defend and promote the rights of women;
- ✎ decreased the working budget of Status of Women Canada, leading to the closure of 12 regional offices;
- ✎ abolished public financing of women's rights organizations and denied their legitimacy to act (groups that have existed for decades have had to close their doors);
- ✎ denied the rights of women for equal pay in the public sector;
- ✎ cancelled the federal-provincial agreement regarding childcare centres that would have allowed for financing Québec's network of childcare centres;
- ✎ etc.

Violating the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people

By financing and maintaining close ties with fundamentalist religious groups, the conservative government is slowing down the progress of social equality for the LGBT community and impeding the fight against violence and intimidation towards these communities.

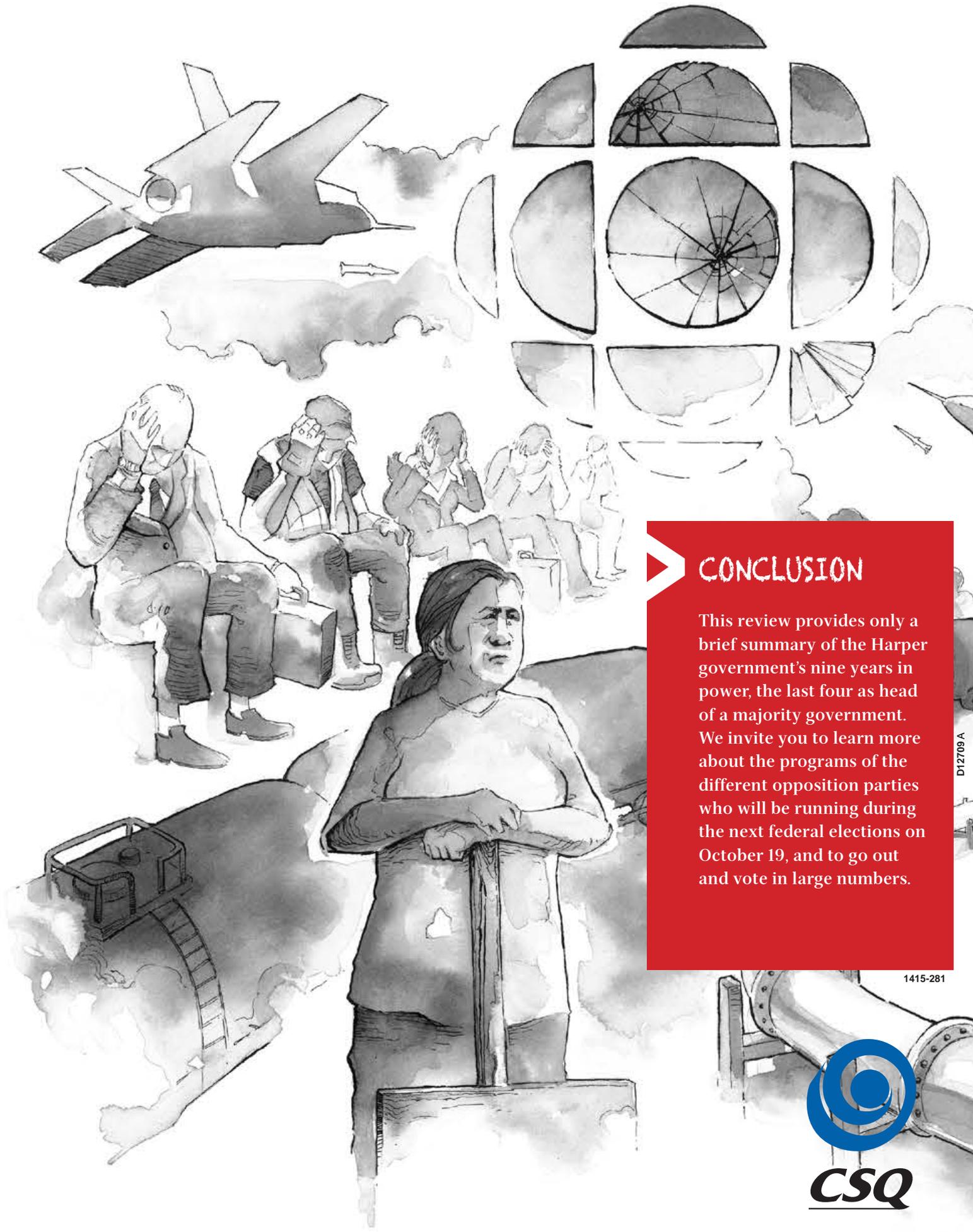
Plus, no representative of the Harper cabinet has ever attended the Pride Parade in Montreal. In addition to avoiding this event, the government does not provide financial support to the organization as it does to other comparable cultural events.¹

¹ This excerpt was taken from Jasmin Roy's letter on the website: www.cherstephen.ca.



Recognizing aboriginal rights

After six years of gathering the testimonials of aboriginal people who have suffered multiple abuses in residential schools, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission has submitted its final report. The report concludes that residential schools were central to the cultural genocide of Canada's First Nations and that only a renewed commitment from the state can pave the way to true reconciliation. The commission has made 94 recommendations, including conducting an inquest into the disappearance and murder of aboriginal women and girls, a recommendation that was once again denied by the Harper government last Tuesday.



CONCLUSION

This review provides only a brief summary of the Harper government's nine years in power, the last four as head of a majority government. We invite you to learn more about the programs of the different opposition parties who will be running during the next federal elections on October 19, and to go out and vote in large numbers.

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