



Liberal

Real CHANGE

A FAIR AND OPEN
GOVERNMENT

CANADA



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GOVERNMENT

Everywhere I go, all over the country, Canadians tell me they want change – real change.

That means doing different things, but it also means doing things differently.

After a decade of Stephen Harper, Canadians' faith in government has never been lower. The reason is simple: Canadians do not trust their government, because it does not trust them.

Under Stephen Harper, the government has grown secretive and closed-off from Canadians. Unprecedented power has been concentrated in the hands of the Prime Minister and his office. Science and evidence have never mattered less; politics and partisanship have never mattered more. Millions of Canadians who elected good people to be their communities' voice in Ottawa have watched those same people become Stephen Harper's voice in their communities.

After promising reform, the Conservatives have delivered the most centralized, partisan, self-serving government in Canadian history. Stephen Harper was elected on a solemn commitment to never appoint a single Senator. Once in office, he appointed 57 of them. And the people he appointed – including Mike Duffy, Pamela Wallin, and Patrick Brazeau – were there to serve the Conservative Party above all else.

This plan includes real change for the Senate. It eliminates partisanship and political patronage, without bogging down the country in years of divisive constitutional negotiations with the provinces. I will not make a cynical promise to enact reforms that everyone knows are impossible. That is what Stephen Harper did 10 years ago.

That is the root cause of the mess he created in the Senate.

Real Senate reform is just the start. After all, Stephen Harper has broken a lot more than the Senate during his decade in office. The Conservatives have lost the ability to distinguish between their narrow political interests and the public interest. From their inexcusable waste of public money on partisan government advertising – \$750 million and counting – to their use of public servants as props, to their muzzling of scientists whose research contradicts Conservative policies, they seem to think they own the place.

No wonder Canadians are cynical.

Canadians are justifiably skeptical about whether it will ever change. Let's face it: Harper's Conservatives have brought things to a new low, but Canadians know that this is not a problem with just one political party. We have seen too many members of all political parties – including my own – behave deplorably over the years, and now wonder if their vote can possibly make a difference.

I have had too many conversations with Canadians who are beyond hope that things can ever change. They think elected representatives are “all the same,” and whoever is in power will act similarly or worse.

Well, it can change, and it must. If we are to tackle the very real challenges we face as a country – from the decline of the middle class to the threat of climate change – Canadians need to have more faith in their government's honesty and willingness to listen. We need to believe that the government of Canada is genuinely interested in working with us to solve real problems.

Canadians are beyond taking their elected representatives at their word when it comes to integrity. We've heard enough talk. We want to see leaders walk the walk. That is why, in the years since I was elected Liberal Leader, I have brought forward real changes to be implemented, not

just promised in order to gain votes. Liberals led the way by disclosing our expenses online, and all other parties followed our lead. As a tangible step to end partisanship in the Senate, I removed Senators from the Liberal Caucus. I hope that Canadians take these actions as a down payment on the values I will bring to the office of Prime Minister.

Our plan for a fair and open government not only builds on those measures, but it also moves far beyond them. It is a sweeping agenda for change. It is an agenda that will allow us to modernize how the Canadian government

works, so that it better reflects the values and expectations of Canadians. At its heart is a simple idea: transparent government is good government. If we want Canadians to trust their government, we need a government that trusts Canadians. For me, open government is effective government.

Liberals believe in the ability of government to be a force for good in society. That is why it is especially important to us that government work well, and be seen to work well. Our plan will deliver better public services and more effective public servants for Canadians. It is the result of years of hard work and thousands of conversations with experts, members of other governments who have led the way, and most importantly, everyday Canadians. People know that Ottawa is broken. We have a comprehensive plan to fix it. That's real change.

As the saying goes, sunlight is the world's best disinfectant. Liberals will shed new light on the government and ensure that it is focused on the people it is meant to serve: Canadians.

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OPEN AND TRANSPARENT GOVERNMENT

Together, we can restore a sense of trust in our democracy. Greater openness and transparency are fundamental to accomplishing this.

Liberals have led the way by introducing numerous bills and motions in Parliament to raise the bar on transparency and accountability in government. A Liberal government will implement all of these proposals, and go even further with new initiatives that expand Canadians' access to information.

MORE ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION

Our objective is nothing less than making transparency a fundamental principle across the Government of Canada. To start, we will amend the *Access to Information Act* so that all government data and information is made open by default in machine-readable, digital formats. In the rare instances where information cannot be disclosed, the individual making the request would receive a written explanation within 30 days. We will also eliminate all fees associated with the Access to Information process, except for the initial \$5 filing fee. We will expand the role of the Information Commissioner by providing them with the ability to issue binding orders for disclosure. We will ensure a full legislative review of the Access to Information system every 5 years thereafter. We will also ensure that Access to Information applies to the Prime Minister's and Ministers' Offices, as well as administrative institutions that support Parliament and the courts.

OPEN DATA

While it is vital that we modernize our Access to Information system, we must also ensure that government on the whole is open by default. Data paid for by Canadians belongs to Canadians. As such, we will accelerate and expand open data initiatives and continually look for additional opportunities to do so. Data will regularly be made available digitally and in formats that allow the public to easily use government data.

EASY ACCESS TO PERSONAL INFORMATION

While Canadians currently have a right to access personal information about them held by a government body, the process to retrieve it is far too complicated and slow, requiring requests to each individual department. We will create a central, no-fee portal for personal information requests. Where requests are not fulfilled within 30 days, the reason would need to be disclosed in writing to the applicant and the Privacy Commissioner's Office.

OPEN PARLIAMENT PLAN

Liberals led the way on ensuring that all Parliamentarians proactively disclose travel and hospitality expenses. We will create a common, quarterly, and more detailed parliamentary expense report, and we will make the Board of Internal Economy open by default. We will ensure that the House of Commons and the Senate work with the Auditor General to develop mandatory performance audits, and public guidelines for the Auditor General to perform more detailed audits of parliamentary spending in both Houses.

GIVING CANADIANS A VOICE IN OTTAWA

For Parliament to work best, its members must be free to do what they have been elected to do: represent their communities in Parliament and hold the government to account. Some say the public is turned off of politics because they watch the House of Commons' Question Period, and the behavior is so poor that good people turn away. This is more a symptom of what is wrong than the cause of the problem itself: the steady weakening of the work of Parliamentarians, as power is increasingly concentrated within the Prime Minister's Office. We need to make sure that Parliament is a place where all Canadians – such as those with young families – can serve their country. A Liberal government will restore Parliament as a place where accountable people, with real mandates, do serious work on behalf of Canadians.

STRONGER PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES

We will strengthen the role of parliamentary committee chairs, including elections by secret ballot. We will also ensure a more robust system of oversight and review for legislation and other matters in the House of Commons and Senate. Specifically, parliamentary committees will be given more resources to acquire independent, expert analysis of proposed legislation. We will also change the rules so that Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries may not be, or stand in for, voting members on committees.

MORE FREE VOTES

Liberal Caucus members in a government led by Justin Trudeau will only be required to vote with the Cabinet on three different measures: those that implement the Liberal electoral platform; traditional confidence matters such as the Speech from the Throne and significant budgetary measures; and those that address the shared values embodied in the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

REAL CHANGE TO THE SENATE

The Senate needs to change. The status quo is not an option.

Stephen Harper and Thomas Mulcair have cynically proposed solutions that they know are unworkable, as they require protracted rounds of constitutional negotiation. Liberals would rather talk with the Premiers about job creation and fighting climate change, not re-opening the Constitution. A credible plan is one that ends the partisan nature of the Senate, so that it can better serve its core function of legislative review and in-depth study. That is why Justin Trudeau removed all Senators from the Liberal Caucus and why we will also create a new, non-partisan, merit-based, broad, and diverse process to advise the Prime Minister on Senate appointments. We will also work to implement the recent recommendations of the Auditor General regarding Parliamentarians' expenses, including with legislative measures where necessary.

ACCOUNTABLE SUPREME COURT APPOINTMENTS

Under Stephen Harper, the all-party Supreme Court appointment process has been diminished and dismantled, culminating in the Prime Minister's unprecedented attacks on the Chief Justice. We will work with all parties in the House of Commons to ensure an inclusive, representative, transparent, and accountable process to advise on appointments to the Supreme Court. This includes proper consultation with the

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provinces, provincial bar associations, provincial appellate and superior courts, and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. This process would also ensure judicial appointments to the Supreme Court are functionally bilingual.

RESTORE RELEVANCE TO QUESTION PERIOD

We will introduce a Prime Minister's Question Period. We will also empower the Speaker to challenge and sanction Members during Question Period, and allow more time for questions and answers. In addition, we will work with all parties to recommend other changes to House of Commons rules that will restore Question Period's relevance, including the use of online technologies to engage Canadians.

GREATER OVERSIGHT OF TAXPAYER DOLLARS

We will change parliamentary financial processes so that the government can be better held to account by Parliament and the public, including: ensuring accounting consistency among the Estimates and the Public Accounts; ensuring more clarity in voting on Estimates; providing costing analysis for each government bill; and restoring the requirement – ended by Stephen Harper – that the government's borrowing plans receive Parliament's pre-approval.

STRONGER NATIONAL SECURITY OVERSIGHT

Among our Five Eyes allies that collaborate on national security and intelligence sharing, Canada is the only country that does not have oversight of its security agencies by legislators. Liberals are committed to correcting this; we will create an all-party national security oversight committee to monitor and oversee the operations of every government department and agency with national security responsibilities.

REAL INDEPENDENCE FOR THE PARLIAMENTARY BUDGET OFFICER

We will ensure the Parliamentary Budget Officer is truly independent, properly funded, and answerable only, and directly, to Parliament.

REAL INDEPENDENCE FOR GOVERNMENT WATCHDOGS

We will ensure that all of the Officers of Parliament – the Chief Electoral Officer, the Access to Information Commissioner, the Auditor General, the Official Languages Commissioner, the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, the Public Sector Integrity Commissioner, the Commissioner of Lobbying, the Privacy Commissioner, and now the Parliamentary Budget Officer – are all properly funded and respected for doing their important work to help Canadians.

END ABUSE OF PROROGATION AND OMNIBUS BILLS

We will not use prorogation to avoid difficult political circumstances. We will also change the House of Commons Standing Orders to end Stephen Harper's practice of using inappropriate omnibus bills to reduce scrutiny of legislative measures.

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OPEN AND FAIR ELECTIONS

Elections are the cornerstone of representative democracy. It is the mechanism by which Canadians put our trust in elected officials. We believe it is vital that we make our electoral system more civil and ideas-based, rather than an overly partisan process that leaves out most Canadians. Mr. Harper's Conservatives have changed our election laws to make it harder for Canadians to vote, easier for parties to cheat, and more difficult to catch rule breakers. Even worse, the Prime Minister's spokesperson on election reform, Dean Del Mastro, was himself convicted of breaking election laws.

A Liberal government will change course. We will restore the integrity of our electoral process and improve the fairness of our elections.

MAKE EVERY VOTE COUNT

We are committed to ensuring that 2015 will be the last federal election conducted under the first-past-the-post voting system. As part of a national engagement process, we will ensure that electoral reform measures – such as ranked ballots, proportional representation, mandatory voting, and online voting – are fully and fairly studied and considered. This will be carried out by a special all-party parliamentary committee, which will bring recommendations to Parliament on the way forward, to allow for action before the succeeding federal election. Within 18 months of forming government, we will bring forward legislation to enact electoral reform.

CRACK DOWN ON ELECTION FRAUD

We will repeal the anti-democratic elements in the Conservative *Fair Elections Act* and scrap the *Citizen Voting Act*, which were designed to make it more difficult for Canadians to vote, and make it easier for election lawbreakers to evade punishment. We will restore the voter identification card as an acceptable form of identification. We will also increase penalties so that there are real deterrents for deliberately breaking our election laws.

STRENGTHEN ELECTIONS CANADA

We will provide Elections Canada with the resources it needs to investigate voter fraud and suppression, illegal financing, and other matters that threaten the integrity of our electoral process. We will also remove the muzzle the Conservatives have placed on the Chief Electoral Officer, and ensure they, and Elections Canada, have the tools and mandate to encourage more Canadians to vote. We will restore the independence of the Commissioner of Canada Elections so that they are freely able to prosecute electoral violations, and are accountable to Parliament and not the government of the day. We will also ensure that Elections Canada has the capacity to provide Canadians who want to volunteer in our democratic process with the necessary tools and information to do so.

BAN PARTISAN GOVERNMENT ADS

As outlined in Liberal MP David McGuinty's Bill C-544, we will appoint an Advertising Commissioner to assist the Auditor General in providing oversight on government advertising. Proposed messages will be reviewed by the Advertising Commissioner to ensure they are non-partisan and related to actual government requirements.

OPEN AND FAIR ELECTIONS

CLOSE POLITICAL FINANCING LOOPHOLES

When the federal government passed fixed election date legislation, it left a loophole that allows unlimited spending in the period leading up to the official writ period. We will review electoral spending limits, and also ensure that political party spending between elections is subject to limits.

INDEPENDENT LEADERS' DEBATES

Leaders' debates during election campaigns should be about improving Canadians' knowledge of the parties, their leaders, and their policy positions. We will create a more inclusive, independent process with a mandate to increase Canadians engagement and knowledge of the issues. This independent commission will organize leaders' debates during election campaigns, and end the partisan gamesmanship around election debates.

PREPARE YOUTH TO VOTE

Many Canadians are not on the voters list when they turn 18; that needs to change. We will work with interested provinces and territories, and support Elections Canada, to register young Canadians as a part of their high school curriculum. This would include Elections Canada staying in contact with them if they change addresses after graduation. We will support this registration as part of a civic ceremony in high schools, celebrating our right and responsibility to vote. Finally, we will support Elections Canada in proactively registering Canadians from groups that historically have lower voter turnout, such as students.

EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY

Government should base its policies on facts, not make up facts based on policy. Without evidence, government makes arbitrary decisions that have the potential to negatively affect the daily lives of Canadians. We need reliable economic indicators and data for sound economic policy, and to provide other governments, businesses, and civil society with the tools to enrich our national life. Unfortunately, Stephen Harper's Conservatives have allowed ideology to trump common sense, good policy, and evidence about what works. A Liberal government will ensure the federal government rebuilds its capacity to deliver on evidence-based decision-making.

UNMUZZLE SCIENTISTS

We will revoke rules and regulations that muzzle government scientists and allow them to speak freely about their work, with only limited and publicly stated exceptions. We will consolidate government science so that it is easily available to the public at-large through a central portal. We will create a Chief Science Officer whose mandate would include ensuring that government science is freely available to the public, that scientists are able to speak freely about their work, and that scientific analyses are appropriately considered when the government makes decisions.

DATA-DRIVEN DECISION-MAKING

We will release key information that informs decision-making. We will devote a fixed percentage of program funds to experimenting with new approaches to existing problems, instilling a culture of measuring results, innovation, and continuous improvement in how government serves the needs of Canadians. We will stop funding initiatives that are no longer effective and invest program dollars in those that are of good value.

BRING BACK LONG-FORM CENSUS AND MAKE STATSCAN INDEPENDENT

We will make Statistics Canada fully independent with a mandate to collect data needed by the private sector, other orders of government, not-for-profits, and researchers, in order to support good decision-making. We will consult broadly and work with a strengthened Statistics Canada to make available additional data needed by businesses, municipalities, the not-for-profit sector, and the public. This would include more detailed labour market information, child development data, and statistics on natural capital. We will also immediately restore the mandatory long-form census.

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BETTER SERVICE FOR CANADIANS

In a digital era, citizens expect greater responsiveness from their federal government. Our world has been changing rapidly, and the federal government has not kept up. Dealing with government should be facilitated by modern digital standards, in full accordance with privacy laws.

Unfortunately, the Conservatives have continually degraded service for Canadians. Veterans seeking benefits, laid off workers trying to collect Employment Insurance, business travelers seeking visas to Canada, Canadians trying to correct a mistake with Revenue Canada, individuals trying to help their relatives immigrate to Canada, even asking Canadians to pay more for less service from Canada Post – over and over during the Harper decade we have heard how Canadians cannot get access to the services they need in a timely manner. A Liberal government will ensure higher standards and a better client experience for Canadians when they interact with government. We will also guarantee quality and timeliness in the delivery of services.

OPEN AND FAIR CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

We will introduce a significant overhaul of the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) operating practices to develop a client relationship rather than that of simply a taxpayer. Elements include: proactively contacting Canadians when they are entitled to, but are not, receiving tax benefits; offering to create returns for clients, particularly lower income Canadians and those on fixed incomes whose situations are unchanged year to year; supporting more Canadians who want to file taxes with no paper forms; ensuring CRA correspondence is user-friendly; combatting international tax evasion; and ending the CRA political harassment of charities, as well as clarifying rules to affirm the important role that charities can and should play in developing and advocating for public policy in Canada.

SAVE HOME MAIL DELIVERY

We will stop the Harper Conservatives' plan to end door-to-door mail delivery in Canada. We will begin a new review of Canada Post to ensure that the Crown Corporation is fulfilling its public

mandate to provide high-quality service at a reasonable cost to Canadians – urban, suburban, and rural. We disagree strongly with the Conservative decision to ask Canadians to pay more for a reduced quality of service.

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS THAT LOOK LIKE CANADA

Our country is enriched, and our government is more effective, when decision-makers at the leadership level accurately represent Canada's diversity. A Liberal Cabinet will have an equal number of women and men. We will also adopt a federal government-wide open and merit-based appointments process, which will ensure gender parity and that more Indigenous Peoples and minority groups are reflected in positions of leadership.

INVOLVING YOUTH IN GOVERNMENT

At its highest levels, our government needs to do a better job of understanding and addressing the needs of Canada's youth.

BETTER SERVICE FOR CANADIANS

That is why we will create a Prime Minister's Youth Advisory Council, consisting of young Canadians aged 16-24, to provide non-partisan advice to the Prime Minister on issues the country is facing.

GENDER-BASED ANALYSIS IN GOVERNMENT

We also recognize that public policies affect men and women in different ways, and it is important that government understands these impacts when introducing policies. We will ensure meaningful gender-based impact analysis in Cabinet decision-making. We will also ensure that federal departments are conducting the gender-based analysis that has been required of them for the past 20 years.

EASY ONLINE ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT SERVICES

We will create individualized, secure accounts for Canadians who want to access all of their government benefits and review key documents. For example, access to a simple website that outlines unclaimed tax benefits, or passport renewal reminders. We will also create a single window for all government services, and work with the provinces and territories on ways to combine online access efforts. As we expand online services, we will simultaneously expand in-person service that is critical to the delivery of programs. For example, we are committed to reopening the 9 veterans' service centres closed by Stephen Harper. We will work with our dedicated public service and the Privacy Commissioner on the implementation of all these new initiatives.

HIGHER SERVICE STANDARDS

We will create new performance standards for services offered by the federal government, including streamlining applications,

reducing wait times, and money-back guarantees. Performance will be independently assessed and publicly reported. We will start with Employment Insurance processing, veterans' services, immigration processing, and Employment Insurance and Canada Pension Plan appeals at the Social Security Tribunal. After years of cuts by Stephen Harper, all of these services take too long and do not provide the service that Canadians deserve. We will also make an iron-clad commitment that federal services will be delivered in full compliance with the *Official Languages Act*.

INVOLVE CANADIANS IN POLICY-MAKING

Technology is evolving quickly and allows more rapid connections between citizens and their government. These technologies are being used today by organizations to engage their clients and partners. The Canadian government must catch up. We will mobilize the experience and knowledge of Canadians and incorporate their input into our decisions and evaluations of existing programs and policies.

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