



Conservative Party of Canada

POLICY DECLARATION

March 19, 2005

Message from the Leader of the Conservative Party

March 2005

Dear Members,

It is my honour to present the Conservative Party of Canada's 2005 Policy Declaration, which delegates adopted at our recent National Policy Convention. This Declaration offers solid, forward-looking policies that reach out to all Conservatives and all Canadians, and it provides a road map for the future of Canada.

As Conservatives we are looking for a Canada where corruption, waste and dishonesty are news of the past. This Policy Declaration sets out how a Conservative Government will be accountable, trustworthy, and committed to properly addressing issues that Canada faces today and in the future.

In this document we have proposed a new era of transparency, accuracy and confidence in the government's finances. We will provide continuous tax relief so that all Canadians – including families, seniors, and new Canadians – can prosper. We will end wasteful and mismanaged programs, and replace them with new initiatives that strengthen our economy, our quality of life, and our criminal justice system.

We have a plan for the 21st century that ensures health care will be available for all Canadians, that parents are equipped to raise their children, and that streets remain safe and our environment clean and protected. Canada needs democratic reforms to strengthen the federal government, and the federation. And we commit to ensuring that our national interest is defended and we build a stronger country.

This Policy Declaration aims to restore our country's confidence in the federal government, and it offers Canadians a new, principled vision for a better Canada.

I thank all the members who participated in drafting resolutions, who participated in Convention debates, and who helped in other ways to shape this Policy Declaration – a Declaration that will "Define the Future".

Hon. Stephen Harper, P.C., M.P.
Leader, Conservative Party of Canada

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FOUNDING PRINCIPLES

The Conservative Party will be guided in its constitutional framework and its policy basis by the following principles:

- A balance between fiscal accountability, progressive social policy and individual rights and responsibilities;
- Build a national coalition of people who share these beliefs and who reflect the regional, cultural and socio-economic diversity of Canada;
- Develop this coalition, embracing our differences and respecting our traditions, yet honoring a concept of Canada as the greater sum of strong parts;
- The Conservative Party will operate in a manner accountable and responsive to its members;
- A belief in loyalty to a sovereign and united Canada governed in accordance with the Constitution of Canada, the supremacy of democratic parliamentary institutions and the rule of law;
- A belief in the equality of all Canadians;
- A belief in the freedom of the individual, including freedom of speech, worship and assembly;
- A belief in our constitutional monarchy, the institutions of Parliament and the democratic process;
- A belief in the federal system of government as the best expression of the diversity of our country, and in the desirability of strong provincial and territorial governments;
- A belief that English and French have equality of status, and equal rights and privileges as to their use in all institutions of the Parliament and Government of Canada;
- A belief that the best guarantors of the prosperity and well-being of the people of Canada are:
 - The freedom of individual Canadians to pursue their enlightened and legitimate self-interest within a competitive economy;
 - The freedom of individual Canadians to enjoy the fruits of their labour to the greatest possible extent; and
 - The right to own property;
- A belief that a responsible government must be fiscally prudent and should be limited to those responsibilities which cannot be discharged reasonably by the individual or others;



A belief that it is the responsibility of individuals to provide for themselves, their families and their dependents, while recognizing that government must respond to those who require assistance and compassion;

- A belief that the purpose of Canada as a nation state and its government, guided by reflective and prudent leadership, is to create a climate wherein individual initiative is rewarded, excellence is pursued, security and privacy of the individual is provided and prosperity is guaranteed by a free competitive market economy;
 - A belief that the quality of the environment is a vital part of our heritage to be protected by each generation for the next;
 - A belief that Canada should accept its obligations among the nations of the world;
 - A belief that good and responsible government is attentive to the people it represents and has representatives who at all times conduct themselves in an ethical manner and display integrity, honesty and concern for the best interest of all;
 - A belief that all Canadians should have reasonable access to quality health care regardless of their ability to pay; and
 - A belief that the greatest potential for achieving social and economic objectives is under a global trading regime that is free and fair.
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POLICY DECLARATION OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY

A) ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

1. Role of Government

The Conservative Party believes that the role of government is to:

- i) protect the lives and property of its citizens;
- ii) ensure equality of opportunity;
- iii) foster an environment where individuals and private initiative can prosper;
- iv) ensure the security of our nation's borders; and
- v) provide services to Canadians that cannot be provided more efficiently and effectively by individuals or by the private sector.

B) GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

2. Ministerial Accountability

A fundamental component of Parliamentary government is Ministerial accountability to Parliament. The Conservative Party is determined to enforce parliamentary principles of government accountability. Ministers in a Conservative Government will have authority and be accountable for the policies they implement and the administrative actions of their departments.

3. Public Service Excellence

A Conservative Government will ensure that Canadians have an efficient, effective, and independent professional public service. A Conservative Government will legislate whistleblowing protection to ensure that those who expose corruption and wrongdoing are protected from reprisal.



4. Sound Financial Management

- i) A Conservative Government will strengthen the internal audit and comptrollership functions of government, ensuring that program delivery matches the intent of the program, spending is measured against objectives and cost overruns are brought immediately to the attention of Parliament.
- ii) A Conservative Government will create the independent office of the Comptroller General reporting to Parliament with a mandate to ensure that the highest standards and practices of expenditure management are enforced in all federal departments, Crown corporations, agencies and foundations.
- iii) A Conservative Government will restore the audit role of the Treasury Board.
- iv) A Conservative Government will allow the Auditor General to table reports with the Clerk of the House of Commons when Parliament is not sitting, and have them made public through the Speaker. Currently, the Auditor General can only report when Parliament is sitting.
- v) A Conservative Government will ensure transparency and accuracy of and confidence in the government's finances by providing the Auditor General with full access to all documents from all federal organizations, including all agencies, Crown corporations, the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) Investment Board, and foundations. Currently, the Auditor General does not have full access to all of the government's books.

5. Government Duplication and Waste

A Conservative Government will streamline government services and eliminate waste, unnecessary overlap and duplication between the levels of government.

C) DEMOCRATIC REFORM

6. Officers of Parliament

A Conservative Government will ensure that senior officers such as the Auditor General, Chief Electoral Officer, Comptroller General, Ethics Commissioner, Information Commissioner, and Privacy Commissioner will be appointed by Parliament and report to it.



7. Free Votes

A Conservative Government will restore democratic accountability in the House of Commons by allowing free votes. A Conservative Government will make all votes free, except for the budget and main estimates. On issues of moral conscience, such as abortion, the definition of marriage and euthanasia, the Conservative Party acknowledges the diversity of deeply held personal convictions among individual Party members and the right of Members of Parliament to adopt positions in consultation with their constituents and to vote freely.

8. Supreme Court Judge Appointments

A Conservative Government will ensure that nominees to the Supreme Court of Canada will be ratified by a free vote in Parliament, after receiving the approval of the Justice Committee of the House of Commons.

9. Senate Reform

i) A Conservative Government will support the election of senators. The Conservative Party believes in an equal Senate to address the uneven distribution of Canada's population and provide a balance to safeguard regional interests.

ii) Where the people of a province or territory by democratic election choose persons qualified to be appointed to the Senate, a Conservative Government will fill any vacancy in the Senate for that province or territory from among those elected persons.

10. Electoral Reform

i) A Conservative Government will consider changes to electoral systems, including proportional representation, the single transferable ballot, fixed election dates, and the use of referendums.

ii) In reviewing options for electoral reform, a Conservative Government will not endorse any new electoral system that will weaken the link between Members of Parliament and their constituents, that will create unmanageably large ridings, or that will strengthen the control of the party machinery over individual Members of Parliament. A national referendum will be held prior to implementing any electoral reform proposal.

11. Independent Judiciary

The Conservative Party believes that an independent judiciary is a vital safeguard of the freedom of Canadians against the exercise of arbitrary power by the state.



12. Parliament and the Courts

- i) A Conservative Government will ensure that Parliament is the law-making body of Canada rather than abdicating that responsibility to the courts.
- ii) A Conservative Government will establish a Judicial Review Committee of Parliament to prepare an appropriate response to those court decisions which Parliament believes should be addressed through legislation.

13. Property Rights

- i) A Conservative Government will seek the agreement of the provinces to amend the Constitution to include this right, as well as guarantee that no person shall be deprived of their just right without the due process of law and full, just, and timely compensation.
- ii) A Conservative Government will enact legislation to ensure that full, just and timely compensation will be paid to all persons who are deprived of personal or private property as a result of any federal government initiative, policy, process, regulation or legislation.

D) OPEN FEDERALISM

14. Federalism

A Conservative Government will restore the constitutional balance between the federal and provincial and territorial governments.

The Conservative Party is committed to the federal principle and to the notion of strong provinces within Canada. A Conservative Government will work co-operatively with the provinces to improve the lives of Canadians while respecting the division of power and responsibilities outlined in the Constitution.

A Conservative Government will ensure that the use of the federal spending power in provincial jurisdictions is limited, authorizing the provinces to use the opting out formula with full compensation if they want to opt out of a new or modified federal program, in areas of shared or exclusive jurisdiction.



15. Reform of the Federation

i) A Conservative Government will consider reforming Canadian federalism, taking into account: (a) the need to consolidate Quebec's position within the Canadian federation due to the province not signing the *Constitution Act, 1982*, (b) the need to alleviate the alienation felt by the citizens of the West, and (c) the importance of building a long term partnership with aboriginal peoples.

ii) The Conservative Party believes the new Council of the Federation is an important innovation in Canadian intergovernmental relations with the potential to improve collaboration among governments, while respecting regional diversity and flexibility within the federation. A Conservative Government will support the work of the Council of the Federation and will encourage the development of better methods of inter-provincial information sharing.

16. Fiscal Imbalance

A Conservative Government will fix, in collaboration with the provinces, the problem of fiscal imbalance by increasing the amounts allocated to provincial transfers, by reducing taxes, or by transferring tax points to the provinces.

E) FISCAL

17. Balanced Budget Legislation

A Conservative Government will enact balanced budget legislation, which includes overrides for declared national emergencies or other defined, and presumably rare, circumstances.

18. Debt Repayment

i) A Conservative Government will move to pay down the mortgage, which the huge national debt places on the shoulders of our children and grandchildren, thus reducing the interest payment on the debt which is the single largest federal budgetary commitment.

ii) A Conservative Government will introduce a debt repayment plan with the main part of budget surplus being allocated to debt repayment, in order to have a debt-to-GDP ratio well under 20% as soon as possible, thus having greater flexibility to deal with the fiscal pressure coming from the aging of the Canadian population.



19. Tax Relief

- i) A Conservative Government will provide immediate and long-term broad based tax relief, starting with reducing personal income tax rates and substantially raising both the Basic Personal Exemption and the Spousal Exemption under the Income Tax Act. Reducing personal income taxes will hike the take home pay and raise the living standard of all Canadians.
- ii) A Conservative Government will reduce business taxes. Reducing business taxes would encourage both foreign and domestic businesses to invest in Canada, meaning more and better jobs for Canadian workers. Lower business taxes mean greater returns for pension plan members and those who own RRSPs, mutual funds and common shares.
- iii) A Conservative Government will reduce capital gains taxes. Lower capital gains taxes encourage saving and investment which means more capital for Canadian businesses, more jobs for Canadian workers and bigger returns for Canadian investors.
- iv) A Conservative Government will reduce payroll taxes. Payroll taxes that exceed the amount necessary to properly fund Employment Insurance are a tax on job creation. Lower payroll taxes encourage hiring and business expansion.
- v) Canada's tax system must be built on a foundation of fairness. The Conservative Party will take steps to close loopholes such as the use of offshore tax havens which erode the Canadian tax base and allow companies to avoid paying Canadian taxes.

20. Family Tax Fairness

- i) A Conservative Government will create tax fairness for families by eliminating inequities between single and dual income families and introducing a deduction for dependent children.
- ii) A Conservative Government will amend the Income Tax Act to eliminate all tax disadvantages to families including those who care for children at home and to recognize the economic value of stay at home parents by introducing tax fairness measures such as income splitting.
- (iii) The Conservative Party also recognizes that many of our seniors lived on single family incomes as one parent stayed home and cared for their children. Our seniors deserve tax fairness to eliminate the discrepancy between single and dual family income in retirement. A Conservative Government will review income splitting as a means of creating this tax fairness.



21. Spending Controls

A Conservative Government will strengthen enforcement and criminal code penalties for fraud involving the misuse of tax dollars.

22. Equalization

Equalization is an essential component of Canada's nation building efforts. The Conservative Party supports changes to the equalization program to ensure provinces and territories have the opportunity to develop their economies and sustain important core social services. We will remove non-renewable natural resource revenue from the equalization formula to encourage the development of economic growth in the non-renewable resource sectors across Canada. The Conservative Party will ensure that no province is adversely affected from changes to the equalization formula.

23. Monetary Policy

A Conservative Government will promote a stable and predictable monetary policy that creates a positive climate for investment and growth for Canada within the context of the global economy.

24. Taxpayer's Bill of Rights

A Conservative Government will implement a Taxpayer's Bill of Rights to ensure that taxpayers are treated fairly, and will create an independent Office of Taxpayer Protection, which would act as an ombudsman for Canada Revenue Agency complaints.

25. Independent Chief Actuary

Canadians expect their governments to honour long-term promises such as those concerning the provision of health care and pensions.

Decisions on the long-term financing of those promises must be based on independent advice as to their future costs. In carrying out their analysis of those long-term projections, the government's actuaries currently are unable to work with complete independence.

To improve the public's confidence that the promises made by governments are affordable over the long-term, a Conservative Government would make the Chief Actuary of Canada an independent officer of Parliament.



F) ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

26. Economic Principles

A Conservative Government will create an economic climate in which Canadians can thrive and prosper, and with their success create quality job opportunities for Canadians.

The Conservative Party believes that a dollar in the hand of a Canadian citizen is better than a dollar in the hand of a government bureaucrat. Canadians should be enjoying a higher standard of living, a more competitive economy and greater productivity, similar to our major trading partners. A Conservative Government will ensure that Canada's competitive position in the world is not impeded by a lack of ethics in government.

27. Industrial Development

i) The Conservative Party favours reducing subsidies to for-profit businesses. We believe it will be possible to not only reduce, but eventually to eliminate subsidies to for-profit businesses by focusing on improving overall economic growth through facilitating competition, improving productivity, streamlining regulation and fostering innovation in concert with free and fair trade agreements.

ii) A Conservative Government will work with international organizations and individual nations to reduce protectionist policies to secure free trade agreements. Our goal in negotiations will be to secure agreements that benefit Canadian manufacturers by allowing them to compete and succeed through competition on a level playing field. Where there is injurious harm caused by a trade action, and we have a reasonable chance of winning and/or reversing this action, we will support an industry on a temporary basis until the trade action is resolved.

iii) A Conservative Government would amend the Investment Canada Act to expand the review process to include not only the net benefit to Canada in reference to our industrial, economic and cultural policies, but also a consideration of our national security interests. This would include security of supply, technology transfer and any anti-trust implications.

iv) A Conservative Government will privatize crown corporations that compete directly with comparable services from existing private sector institutions.



28. Science, Research and Development

i) A Conservative Government will establish a single authority or single window to review big science projects according to published guidelines. These types of projects are often tied up in the bureaucracy because, under the current system, they are forced to seek funding from a myriad of departments and agencies. A single-window approach would be more transparent for the research community and more accountable to Canadian taxpayers.

ii) A Conservative Government will appoint an independent Chief Scientist who will advise and report to Parliament on scientific matters, and help coordinate science policy issues within government, and internationally. This office will be modeled on the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology in the United Kingdom. The Chief Scientist will be mandated by Parliament to provide independent and balanced analysis of public policy issues related to science and technology. This information will be provided openly to Parliamentarians and Canadians to enable informed decisions.

iii) A Conservative Government will uphold funding of innovation, technology and research through the granting councils. The Conservative Party supports a competitive peer review process and enhanced transparency and accountability to determine who shall receive grants through these councils. A Conservative Government would continue to fund the indirect costs of research with particular attention to small universities.

iv) The Conservative Party recognizes the importance of private sector investment in research and development of commercial applications. We recognize that the Scientific Research and Experimental Development (SR&ED) tax credit has been successful in spurring private investment in R&D. We will work with stakeholders in all fields of research and various industry sectors to expand this tax credit. A Conservative Government will also eliminate the capital tax and reduce the capital gains tax because the effectiveness of the SR&ED tax credit relies upon the general level of tax on capital and investment.

29. Foreign Ownership Restrictions

The Conservative Party supports relaxing foreign ownership rules on Canadian industry in concert with our major trading partners in the telecommunications, broadcast distribution, and airline industry. We will conduct an immediate review to determine whether to reduce or completely remove these rules.

30. Infrastructure

A Conservative Government will reduce federal gasoline taxes conditional on an agreement with the provinces and territories that they will use this tax room to fund infrastructure in provincial, territorial and municipal jurisdictions.



31. Financial Institutions

A Conservative Government will protect the best interests of consumers by fostering competition and ensuring that the financial services sector is appropriately regulated, balanced with stability and opportunity for success and growth in these institutions.

32. Labour

i) The Conservative Party supports the right of workers to organize democratically, to bargain collectively and to strike peacefully.

ii) A Conservative Government will work with unions and employers in areas of federal jurisdiction to develop a dispute settlement mechanism to minimize or avoid work disruption.

33. Regional Development

The Conservative Party recognizes that regional development policies are an important part of any comprehensive strategy to assist the regions of Canada to meet the opportunities of the new global economy. Regional development agencies, like ACOA, WED, FEDNOR and CED-Q, must be de-politicized and focussed on attracting new private sector investments.

34. Intellectual Property – Patent Legislation

The Conservative Party will create a process to allow the patent holder to restore time lost on 20 year patent protection due to delays in government approvals.

35. Copyright Legislation

i) The Conservative Party believes that the objectives of copyright legislation should be:

- a) to create opportunities for Canadian creators to enjoy the fruits of their labour to the greatest possible extent;
- b) to ensure that the rights of Canadian creators are adequately protected by law;
- c) that these rights are balanced with the opportunity for the public to use copyrighted works for teaching, researching and lifelong learning;
- d) to continue to allow an individual to make copies of sound recordings of musical works for that person's personal and individual use; and
- e) that enforcement is applied fairly and in accordance with international standards.

ii) The Conservative Party believes that reasonable access to copyright works is a critical necessity for learning and teaching for Canadian students and teachers, and that access to copyrighted materials enriches life long learning and is an essential component of an innovative economy.



iii) A Conservative Government will give consideration to educational public policy goals within the copyright framework. A Conservative Government will work with industry to increase awareness and develop a public education campaign to better inform users and creators on the copyright laws in Canada.

iv) A Conservative Government will eliminate the levy on blank recording materials.

36. Northern Development

The Conservative Party believes it is essential to the economic development of the three northern territories to ensure they have a resource revenue sharing agreement with the federal government immediately.

The Conservative Party is committed to the devolution of responsibilities of the “Northern Development” portfolio from the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs to the three territorial governments, Aboriginal governments, and where necessary to the appropriate federal departments. Northerners shall control their own future and the Conservative Party is committed to the orderly devolution of decision making away from Ottawa to the territories.

37. Long-Term Energy Framework

The Conservative Party believes that Canada has a natural economic advantage due to an abundance of fossil fuels, an abundance of hydro power generation, some of the world’s best wind regimes and other renewable and non-renewable sources. The Conservative Party will develop a renewable and non-renewable energy framework which takes into account outstanding obligations and which will meet our long-term requirements for domestic consumption and export. The Conservative Party believes that strengthening energy market integration will ensure greater reliability of energy supplies across Canada. A Conservative Government will explore ways to reduce barriers to the movement of energy products across provincial and other borders.

38. Mining

The Conservative Party shall support positive policies pertaining to the mining industry for the future such as increased investment in geosciences programs and research and by streamlining regulatory processes related to these industries.



G) TRADE

39. International Trade

In an increasing competitive global economy, trade remains the key to future prosperity in Canada.

Many Canadian jobs depend heavily upon foreign markets. Those jobs are placed in jeopardy when other nations make it difficult for our exporters to sell their products.

i) A Conservative Government will bring more security to existing trade related jobs. To create new employment opportunities, our trade agenda will focus on diversifying both the products we sell abroad and the markets into which we sell those products. A Conservative Government will secure access to international markets through a rules based trading system. A Conservative Government will strive to maximize the benefits we have as a free trading nation, emphasizing the need to establish trading relationships beyond North America.

ii) In future rounds of trade negotiations, a Conservative Government will vigorously pursue reduction of international trade barriers and tariffs. A Conservative Government will pursue the elimination of trade-distorting government export subsidies within clearly established time limits. A Conservative Government will seek a clear definition of what constitutes an export subsidy.

iii) A Conservative Government would move to find new markets for Canadian goods and services by emphasizing development of trade ties with emerging markets.

iv) In recognition of freshwater as a critical resource to the future of Canadians, the Conservative Party believes that there should be an investigation into the security of our long term freshwater resources as they pertain to exportation as a commodity.

40. Inter-provincial Trade

A Conservative Government will take the lead in working with its provincial partners to eliminate inter-provincial trade barriers in commerce, labour, and capital mobility.



H) TRANSPORTATION

41. Transportation

- i) A Conservative Government would consider expanding 'Open Skies' to promote competition and consumer choice.
- ii) A Conservative Government believes a modern, efficient transportation system is integral to the well-being of Canada's economy, and essential for Canada to be competitive in continental and global markets.
- iii) A Conservative Government will support public-private infrastructure investment as part of a comprehensive approach to improving and sustaining a world-class transportation system.
- iv) A Conservative Government will work in partnership with the provinces and territories to achieve an integrated transportation system.
- v) A Conservative Government will work in partnership with the provinces to achieve a truly 'National Highway System'. A first-class Trans-Canada highway should be the centrepiece.
- vi) A Conservative Government will reduce or eliminate federal government fees, levies, taxes and rents, hidden and otherwise, associated with Canada's national transportation system.
- vii) A Conservative Government will re-evaluate the corporate governance and ensure accountability at Canada's airport authorities.
- viii) A Conservative Government will ensure access to future transportation infrastructure for people with disabilities is a fundamental priority for all future public or private transportation installations.
- ix) To reduce automobile-rail accidents at level crossings, a Conservative Government will encourage railroad owners to take more responsibility for ensuring consistency in level crossing markings and equipping rail cars with side reflectors.
- x) A Conservative Government will assume responsibility for legitimate Customs and Immigration costs for all points of entry into Canada. A Conservative Government will improve border crossings and alleviate congestion resulting in the timely delivery of goods.
- xi) A Conservative Government will ensure airlines are represented on the Board of NAV Canada.



xii) The Conservative Party supports the retention of lightstations, their personnel, and their aids to navigation. Lightstations are an important contribution to Canadian sovereignty, provide for public safety especially for recreational boaters and kayakers, are an essential presence to monitoring sea-planes and marine traffic, and assist in the interdiction of smuggling. The Conservative Party also recognizes the historical value of the lightstations and promotes the concept that they are well situated infrastructure and personnel which can be utilized for scientific data collection and for other uses.

xiii) A Conservative Government will work on a solution to improve border crossings and alleviate congestion at the borders setting goals within specified timelines while recognizing the need for improving security and improved relations with the United States and establish a study of the feasibility of a North American perimeter.

I) ENVIRONMENT

42. Environmental Principles

i) In order to have a strong economy and maintain good health, Canada must have strong, coordinated and achievable environmental policies. A Conservative Government believes responsible exploration, development, conservation and renewal of our environment is vital to our continued well-being as a nation and as individuals. A Conservative Government will ensure that the sometimes competing values of preserving the environment and creating jobs are maintained in proper balance.

ii) A Conservative Government will:

- a) initiate a review of all environment and energy initiatives, including the Kyoto Accord;
- b) adopt a new approach for an environmental strategy at the international level;
- c) create a program to heighten public awareness to the economic benefits of environmental solutions minimizing the wasting of resources; and
- d) establish a program of tax credits to promote environmental solutions in the areas of transportation and entrepreneurial innovation, among others.

43. Clean Air

A Conservative Government will legislate caps on smog causing pollutants like nitrogen oxide (NOx), sulphur dioxide (SO₂), and volatile organic compounds (VOC's). We will negotiate power plant and smokestack emissions limits with the United States and the northern border states. Within Canada we will also investigate a cap-and-trade system that will allow firms to generate credits by reducing smog-causing pollutants.



44. Alternative Energy and Transitional Fuels

The Conservative Party believes in promotion of alternative energy (such as wind, solar, geothermal) and transitional fuels (such as biodiesel, ethanol, natural gas) to help develop hydrogen as a fuel. The expense of assuring the security of traditional fuel sources and concerns over pollution makes the use of these energy sources necessary.

45. Contaminated Sites

In cooperation with the provinces, territories and municipalities, a Conservative Government will determine how many federal contaminated sites are in Canada, rank them according to the threats they pose, and provide stable long-term funding to for cleanup.

A Conservative Government will remove roadblocks that discourage the private sector from cleaning and developing contaminated land:

- i) Amend the Income Tax Act to allow remediation expenses to be treated as a deductible expense;
- ii) Introduce legislation to terminate regulatory liability upon issuance of regulatory approval of remediation to encourage development of brownfields, reversible only in emergency and in cases of fraud;
- iii) Create an insurance fund for post liability insurance claims. This will permit the quantification and spreading of development risk through insurance, reinsurance and diversification of ownership; and
- iv) Provide economic incentives to the private sector to clean up contaminated lands.

46. Offshore Oil and Gas Development

A Conservative Government will promote exploration and environmental assessment of offshore natural resources on both the Pacific and Atlantic coasts, in cooperation with the provinces, affected First Nations, private industry and other relevant scientific and environmental groups. We will ensure that companies follow best practices and the precautionary principle to mitigate environmental risk, allow for arms-length regulatory processes to ensure safe and environmentally responsible practices prior to development of these natural resources, and consider the potential of these natural resources before designating new Marine Protected Areas.

47. Water - Great Lakes

A Conservative Government will work with the United States to provide a clear federal plan of action to address critical threats to the sustainability of our shared resource, the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Basin. Our government will provide adequate funding to fulfill its commitment to this region, which is home to 16 million Canadians and



is a crucial source of clean air, drinking water, food, shelter, health, employment and recreation, as well as Canada's highest concentration of industry. We will establish long-term outcomes; translate them into real plans for the basin; apply a consistent basin-wide approach for issues that span the entire basin; clarify responsibilities of federal and provincial governments; and recognize constitutional authority of the provinces.

48. Illegal Oil Dumping

i) A Conservative Government will expand oil-dumping detection; prohibit ships from entering sensitive sea areas; legislate ship operators to account for their ships' waste; and offer incentives to dump waste at our port facilities, not in our waters.

ii) A Conservative Government will massively increase fines for illegal oil dumping, a practice that kills hundreds of thousands of sea birds every year along Canada's coastlines. This problem is encouraged by current Canadian laws that make profitable the practice of dumping oil in the ocean instead of disposing of it legally at a port. Ship operators caught illegally dumping oil will face criminal charges and be prevented from plying Canadian waters.

49. Aquifer Mapping

A Conservative Government will develop a long-term plan in cooperation with the provinces and territories to create an inventory that could define significant and key aquifers and establish policy to protect the quality and sustainability of Canada's major aquifers. Currently, there is no clarity on the quality, sustainability or number of Canada's aquifers – the geologic units capable of containing a usable amount of groundwater. With the threat of groundwater resources becoming depleted in Canada we will face increasing need to understand the extent and replenishment of aquifers.

50. Aquatic Invasive Species

A Conservative Government, in cooperation with local, provincial and international governments, will make mandatory the existing voluntary guidelines for ballast water management practices and enforce compliance for all ships carrying ballast water. We will ensure all ships plying Canadian waters built after a set date have proper ballast water treatment technology and implement economic incentives, which will see ship owners and operators rewarded for improved ballast water treatment practices. Such measures will address the introduction and spread of aquatic alien invasive species that severely impairs biological integrity and threatens the economies of water-dependent communities in Canada. They will also alleviate the costs for treatment, containment and control of these invasive species, which are massive and generally borne by local communities, rather than the industries that contribute to the problem.



J) HEALTH

51. Health Care

- i) The Conservative Party believes all Canadians should have reasonable access to timely, quality health care services, regardless of their ability to pay.
- ii) The provinces and territories should have maximum flexibility to ensure the delivery of medically necessary health services within a universal, public health care system. The Conservative Party supports adding a sixth principle to the Canada Health Act to provide stable and transparent federal funding. We will work with the provinces in a co-operative and constructive manner.
- iii) Flexibility for the provinces and territories in the implementation of health services should include a balance of public and private delivery options. This approach would ensure that health services remain publicly funded, while services are provided through the most appropriate public or private provider based on quality and cost.
- iv) We will work with the provinces and territories in the development of national quality indicators and objectives.

52. Medicare Audit

A Conservative Government will conduct a social audit, under the existing office of the Chief Actuary, to help Canadians and their governments determine how well their medicare is working. The audit would include actuarial advice on program design and health care financing issues.

53. Public Health

The Conservative Party supports the creation of a Canada Public Health Agency and the appointment of a Chief Public Health Officer of Canada. We recognize the importance of wellness promotion and disease prevention in enhancing the health of Canadians and contributing to the sustainability of our health care system.

54. Health Sciences Research, Development and Innovation

i) The Conservative Party recognizes the importance of health sciences research in enhancing the health of Canadians and as a dynamic economic sector in its own right. A Conservative Government will foster an environment that encourages health sciences research and development of new health care technologies in part through the provision of an adequate level of federal funding.



ii) A Conservative Government will be open to innovations which would reduce waiting lists, improve the quality of care, and ensure better coordination and information sharing in the delivery of health. A Conservative Government will not be afraid to implement new advances so that all Canadians can benefit from a modern effective health system tailored to meet their needs.

55. Pharmaceuticals

i) The Conservative Party believes that Canada's pharmaceuticals legislation must strike a balance between encouraging the development of new drugs and ensuring that those drugs are available to Canadians at affordable prices. We believe that part of this balance is achieved through adhering to the international standard of 20 years patent protection for pharmaceuticals.

ii) We believe no one should lose their life savings because of unexpected health problems or the costs of prescription drugs. Accordingly, we support the commitment made in the February 2003 Health Accord to provide all Canadians with reasonable access to catastrophic drug coverage by the end of 2005-2006.

iii) We support faster processing of drug approvals without compromising patient safety.

56. Natural Health Products

The Conservative Party supports enhanced freedom for Canadians in their choice of natural health products and complementary treatments, with proper safeguards for public safety.

57. Assisted Human Reproduction and Related Research

The Conservative Party recognizes the need for federal regulation in assisted human reproduction and related research. This field should be governed by principles that respect human individuality, integrity, dignity and life. In recognition of the ethical and scientific concerns around research using human embryos, we support an initial three-year prohibition on embryonic research, and call on the federal government to encourage its granting agencies to focus on more promising adult (post-natal) stem cell research.

58. Abortion Legislation

A Conservative Government will not support any legislation to regulate abortion.



K) SOCIAL POLICY

59. Social Principles

The Conservative Party is committed to a strong and effective health care program, well-funded post-secondary education and an effective safety net so that Canadians will be able to face the challenges of life at the beginning of the 21st century. We will work with the provinces and territories to strengthen the social fabric of Canada to improve the quality of life for all Canadians but especially children, seniors and the disabled.

60. Post-Secondary Education

The Conservative Party believes in greater accessibility to education by eliminating as many barriers to post-secondary education as possible. The transfer will be distributed to provinces and territories on the basis of the numbers of enrolled students. We believe strongly that provincial jurisdiction must be respected. However, the federal government must play a role in addressing tuition and standards.

- i) A Conservative Government will remove post-secondary education funding from the Canada Social Transfer and create an independent Canada Education Transfer. The Transfer will be funded at a base level and increased annually according to inflation and demographic growth. The Transfer will be negotiated with the provinces and territories to ensure the funding is targeted to post-secondary education.
- ii) A Conservative Government will change the current policy and make scholarships and bursaries tax free.

61. Student Loans

- i) A Conservative Government will revamp the federal student loan program to eliminate the inclusion of parental income and assets in the assessment of loan applications.
- ii) A Conservative Government will provide greater flexibility to students paying back federal student loans by implementing Income Contingent Loans and provide a preferred interest rate on student loans post-graduation.
- iii) As the Millennium Scholarship Program currently only assists six per cent of students, a Conservative Government will channel these funds into the student loan program to help more students obtain post-secondary education.

62. Employment Insurance

A Conservative Government will encourage the establishment of an independent employment insurance system, with a self-accounting fund administered by employees and employers, the surplus of which being used to increase workers' benefits or reduce contributions.



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63. Family and Marriage

i) The Conservative Party believes that the family unit is essential to the well-being of individuals and society, because that is where children learn values and develop a sense of responsibility. Therefore government legislation and programs should support and respect the role of the Canadian family.

ii) The Conservative Party believes in the right and duty of parents to raise their own children responsibly according to their own conscience and beliefs. We believe no person, government or agency has the right to interfere in the exercise of that duty except through due process of law.

iii) The Conservative Party believes that Parliament, through a free vote, and not the courts should determine the definition of marriage. A Conservative Government would support the freedom of religious organizations to determine their own practices with respect to marriage.

iv) A Conservative Government will support legislation defining marriage as the union of one man and one woman.

64. Support for Parents

A Conservative Government will consider, in collaboration with the provinces and territories, establishing the policies required to give parents who choose to stay home to take care of their preschool children the recognition and financial support they need to carry out this important task.

65. Shared Parenting

A Conservative Government will make the necessary changes to the Divorce Act to ensure that in the event of a marital breakdown, the Divorce Act will allow both parents and all grandparents to maintain a meaningful relationship with their children and grandchildren, unless it is clearly demonstrated not to be in the best interests of the children.



66. Child Care

The Conservative Party recognizes that parents are in the best position to determine the care needs of their children, and that they should be able to do so in an environment that encourages as many options as possible, and in a manner that does not discriminate against those who opt to raise their children in family, social, linguistic, and religious environments. We also recognize that the delivery of education and social services are provincial responsibilities under the constitution. We believe that support should go to all parents and families raising children, especially to lower and middle income parents. All existing levels of support will be maintained and improved if necessary.

67. Women

The Conservative Party supports gender equality through all policy and legislative considerations.

i) The Canadian workforce has evolved to include more women than ever before. The Conservative Party believes all Canadians have the right to freedom from discrimination in the workplace and equality of opportunity.

ii) Individuals should be only judged on skills, qualifications and merits. Women must be entitled to equal pay for work of equal value.

iii) The Conservative Party recognizes the value of the caregiver. We will examine measures within the tax system to help offset economic costs without discrimination.

68. Seniors

The Conservative Party recognizes that those over the age of 65 are becoming a dominant segment of our population. We also recognize that in ten years, the baby boomers will have reached retirement age, representing a significant portion of the population. We are committed to ensuring that seniors continue to have quality of life, accessible health care and the ability to stay in their homes longer.

i) Four million Canadians are now over the age of 65, a number that is growing rapidly as Canadians are living longer. Many Canadians wish to continue working but are penalized by the loss of retirement benefits. A Conservative Government would end the discriminatory practice of mandatory retirement and give Canadians the choice of retirement or continuing to work without the loss of federal retirement benefits.

ii) Canadians over the age of 65 who cannot collect Employment Insurance yet are required to pay premiums when working. A Conservative Government would end this unfair practice and ensure that those over the age of 65 would not pay Employment Insurance premiums.



iii) Policies must be developed in order to enable a greater number of Canadian seniors in need of care to remain in their own homes, rather than in more expensive institutional accommodations where their independence suffers and costs are higher to the taxpayer. A Conservative Government would create tax incentives for non-professional caregivers to look after elderly parents or other elderly or disabled relatives in the home.

iv) A Conservative Government would take tough measures to prevent elder abuse, and to implement more severe punishment for those who commit this crime.

v) A Conservative Government would appoint a Minister Responsible for Seniors to ensure that the unique needs of seniors are being properly addressed across government departments.

vi) A Conservative Government will appoint a Seniors Council comprised of seniors and representatives of seniors' organizations to advise the Minister Responsible for Seniors on issues of national importance.

vii) A Conservative Government would work with provincial counterparts to identify seniors entitled to either federal or provincial benefits. A Conservative Government would review the retroactivity policy of entitlement to federal benefits.

69. Retirement Savings

i) A Conservative Government values retirement security as a vital element of independence. We confirm our commitment to the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) and Old Age Security (OAS).

ii) A Conservative Government will pursue economic and fiscal policies that will ensure government retirement programs are affordable and sustainable over the long run, protecting the sanctity of the CPP investment fund so that it will not be available to be raided as a vehicle to balance the budget or for any other political purpose.

iii) A Conservative Government will ensure that the CPP Investment Fund is mandated to seek maximum security and to maximize the rate of return being earned on behalf of Canada's pensioners. No other policy objective will be permitted to interfere with the objectives of security and maximum rate of return.

iv) A Conservative Government will recognize the efforts put forth by Canadians to prepare for retirement and consider the splitting of registered retirement income and how best to enable flexibility in pension withdrawals.

v) A Conservative Government will increase financial flexibility by implementing a Registered Lifetime Savings Plan which would allow Canadians to withdraw their savings tax-free.



70. Housing and Homelessness

i) The Conservative Party believes that all Canadians should have a reasonable opportunity to own their own home and to have access to safe and affordable housing.

ii) A Conservative Government would develop a policy of broad based tax relief, income support programs and tax incentives, to make home ownership and rental accommodation more attainable and accessible.

iii) A Conservative Government will address homelessness by assisting in the provision of shelters and by recognizing, addressing and seeking solutions to contributing factors of homelessness.

iv) A Conservative Government will partner and link with the respective jurisdictions of provincial, territorial and municipal governments, business initiatives and the work of social agencies and non-profit organizations, in dealing with housing, homelessness, social infrastructure and related support services, such as skills development, literacy, substance abuse treatment, health and social development.

v) A Conservative Government will work with the provinces and municipalities to develop framework agreements that help low-income city dwellers access affordable housing, through the use of tax incentives for private sector builders. The Conservative Party recognizes that most renters live in urban centres, and that the pressures of population growth as well as certain economic factors have made it increasingly difficult for many renters to find housing.

71. National Disability Act

A Conservative Government would introduce a National Disability Act designed to promote reasonable access to medical care, medical equipment, education, employment, transportation and housing for Canadians with disabilities.



L) ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

72. Aboriginal Affairs Principles

The fundamental obligation of the federal government is to improve the living conditions of Aboriginal Canadians, including the Inuit, in terms of economic opportunity, health, education, and community safety.

The Conservative Party believes that the following principles should govern the administration of existing federal Aboriginal programs. These principles should also govern future legislative reform to the Indian Act and related legislation. They should also inform government decision making in the resolution of rights disputes – whether based upon existing treaties, court decisions or Section 35 of the Constitution Act:

i) *The Need for a Legislated Framework for Federal Aboriginal Expenditures:* The Parliament of Canada must develop legislation which governs the delivery of federal governmental programs to Aboriginal Canadians. Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians deserve to know the legislative basis upon which the Government of Canada is expending funds on Aboriginal health, education, social welfare and infrastructure. Legislation should be developed which governs such programs and which prescribes the standards of service which the federal government has undertaken to provide to aboriginal Canadians.

ii) *Self Government – Legal and Democratic Authority:* The Indian Act (and related legislation) should be replaced by a modern legislative framework which provides for the devolution of full legal and democratic responsibility to First Nations, including the Inuit, for their own affairs within the overall constitutional framework of our federal state.

Such legislative reform should be pursued following full consultation with First Nations, with the objective of achieving a full and complete devolution of democratic authority that is consistent with the devolution of other decision making responsibility within our federal system. First Nations like other Canadians, are entitled to enjoy democratic control over their own affairs within a legislative context that ensures certainty, stability, respect for the rule of law and which balances collective and individual responsibility.

First Nation communities must have the flexibility to determine for themselves, whether and how free market principles, such as individual property ownership should apply to reserve lands. Self government should be accomplished in a manner which takes into account the cultural and linguistic diversity of Canada's First Nations. Within the context of the Canadian Constitution, we should be prepared to make flexible accommodations for the protection of language and culture within self-government agreements.



iii) *Transparency:* Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians are entitled to complete transparency and accountability in the expenditure of all public funds on aboriginal programs, services and inter-governmental transfers. Aboriginals, like other Canadians, must have ready access to police and judicial intervention to constrain and check any exercise of governmental authority (whether aboriginal or non-aboriginal) which is illegal, corrupt or an abuse of power.

iv) *Respecting the Canadian Constitutional Framework:* We are a nation governed by the Constitution Act, under which the rights of all citizens are protected and advanced by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Our future together as a country must be built upon the universal application of that framework.

All Aboriginal rights recognized under Section 35 of the Constitution must be conferred within the four square corners of the Constitution Act and the Charter, with full protection for equality rights, such as women's rights, for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians. Future Aboriginal legislation, policies and programs must balance the collective rights of Aboriginal Canadians under Section 35 of the Constitution with the individual equality rights enshrined in the Charter – which protect all Canadians – whether Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal. Aboriginal Canadians are entitled to the full benefits of Canadian citizenship and the full protection of the Charter - in areas such as economic opportunity, the delivery of health services, community safety, women's rights, respect for the rule of law, and the education and protection of children. Canada must develop in a manner that ensures constitutional equality and workability.

v) *A Framework for the Settlement of Comprehensive Claims and Self Government Agreements:* Settlement of all outstanding "comprehensive claims" must be pursued on the basis of a clear framework which balances the rights of Aboriginal claimants with those of Canada – in particular, negotiated settlements must balance the economic and social needs of Aboriginal Canadians with Canada's need for certainty and finality of terms. Self government agreements must reflect Canada's need for both efficacy and practicality in institutional structure, and "constitutional harmony" so as not to impede the overall governance of Canada.

vi) *The Resolution of Existing Specific Claims and Lawsuits against the Federal Crown:* The federal government should, as a priority, adopt measures to resolve the existing backlog of "specific" claims so as to provide justice for Aboriginal claimants, together with certainty for Government, industry and non-Aboriginal Canadians. Institutional reform in the specific claim area should be pursued in a manner which resolves claims in a timely manner. The jurisdiction of the Federal Court should be expanded and the arbitrary ambit of the Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) Minister and the Specific Claims Policy contracted to eliminate the inherent conflict of interest of the Federal Crown in the resolution of 'specific claims'.



73. Land Title

i) The Conservative Party supports the development of a property regime that would encourage lending for private housing and businesses. This will promote economic opportunity and individual freedom.

ii) A Conservative Government, in conjunction with First Nations, would create a First Nations Land Ownership Act, which would transfer Reserve land title from the Federal Crown to willing First Nations.

74. Matrimonial Property

The Conservative Party supports, in conjunction with First Nations, the creation of a matrimonial property code to protect spouses and children in cases of marriage breakdown.

75. Educational Choice

The Conservative Party proposes where available and agreed to by all parties, including provincial authorities, to offer choice in schooling for First Nations.

M) CRIMINAL JUSTICE

76. Justice Principles

A Conservative Government will reorient the approach to criminal justice and the policing system to give greater emphasis to the protection of society through the prevention of crime and emphasize the needs and rights of victims.

77. Dangerous Offenders

i) A Conservative Government believes that government has an obligation to strengthen Canadians' confidence in our legal system's ability to judge dangerous offenders appropriately so that dangerous offenders will not be released until they are no longer a threat to society.

ii) Anyone convicted of three offences causing death or serious harm against the person shall be automatically designated as a dangerous offender. This would not preclude the Crown from pursuing dangerous offender status for any other offender deemed to fit the criteria.



78. Sex Offender Registry

A Conservative Government will require the registration of all convicted sex and (pronounced) dangerous offenders (as currently defined). Such registration will be retroactive to the date of first conviction.

The registry and its services will provide:

- i) Mandatory DNA sampling and banking;
- ii) A registry information network, available to all police and parole services to assist in locating (and tracking) registrants; and
- iii) A system to incarcerate registrants who break the terms of release prior to trial.

79. Sentencing

A Conservative Government will:

- i) institute mandatory minimum sentences for violent and repeat offenders;
- ii) require that sentences for multiple convictions be served consecutively;
- iii) eliminate statutory (automatic) release;
- iv) Reform the National Parole Board including increased input from the community and victims in National Parole Board decisions; and
- v) require applicants for parole to demonstrate to the National Parole Board that they have been rehabilitated.

80. National Victims' Ombudsman Office

A Conservative Government will establish a National Victims' Ombudsman Office with a budget allocation equal to that of the Office of the Correctional Investigator to ensure victims have a voice in the federal corrections and the justice system.

81. Firearms

A Conservative Government will repeal Canada's costly gun registry legislation and work with the provinces and territories on cost-effective gun control programs designed to keep guns out of the hands of criminals while respecting the rights of law-abiding Canadians to own and use firearms responsibly. Measures will include: mandatory minimum sentences for the criminal use of firearms; strict monitoring of high-risk individuals; crackdown on the smuggling; safe storage provisions; firearms safety training; a certification screening system for all those wishing to acquire firearms legally; and putting more law enforcement officers on our streets.



82. Organized Crime

- i) A Conservative Government would recognize that organized crime is growing throughout Canada, that international criminal organizations are more and more active in Canada in money laundering and illicit drug trafficking and, finally, that this phenomenon crosses boundaries.
- ii) To fight against this curse and ensure the safety of Canadians in their communities, a Conservative Government will:
 - a) adopt, in collaboration with the provinces, a national strategy on the fight against organized crime, including the creation of a joint national task force on security;
 - b) increase the financial resources allocated to the RCMP to help them to fight against those activities in all regions of the country; and
 - c) propose an amendment to the Criminal Code to reverse the burden of proof, so that members of a criminal organization (and not the Crown) will have to prove at the time of seizure that the goods were not acquired through criminal acts committed for organized crime. Specific criteria will govern this measure to respect the principle of the presumption of innocence of the accused.

83. Young Offenders

- i) A Conservative Government will introduce measures to hold young lawbreakers accountable to their victims and the larger community. A Conservative Government will introduce measures to ensure that violent or serious repeat offenders 14 and over are tried as adults.
- ii) A Conservative Government will work with the provinces and territories to put in place early identification and intervention strategies for youth at risk. The justice system for young people will provide effective punishment that deters criminal behaviour and instills a sense of responsibility in young offenders for their behaviour; and gives young people better opportunities for rehabilitation.

84. Family Violence

The Conservative Party believes that the consequences of family violence are harmful to all of society. The Conservative Party will ensure that sentences for crimes of family violence reflect our belief in the serious nature of violent criminal activity, its effect on individuals, on families and on communities. The protection of children in family violence situations is paramount.



85. Child Protection

A Conservative Government will act to protect children by eliminating all defences that are used to justify the possession of child pornography.

A Conservative Government would rename the Age of Consent to the Age of Protection and raise it from 14 to 16 years of age.

86. Missing Persons Registry

A Conservative Government will enact a national missing persons registry to assist in the location and identification of persons reported missing. The registry would operate in conjunction with the Canadian Policy Information Centre (CPIC) and DNA databanks currently in place. We would streamline and improve the existing computer systems, including DNA databanks, CPIC and the sex offender registry.

N) COMMUNICATIONS

87. Canadian Broadcasting System

i) The Conservative Party believes in a stable Canadian presence in a varied and vibrant broadcasting system. The Canadian broadcasting system should offer a wide range of Canadian and international programming, while being respectful of Canadian content. The system should provide audiences with maximum choice and have the ability to utilize new technologies to achieve its public and private objectives.

ii) The CBC-SRC is an important part of the broadcasting system in Canada. It must be a true public service broadcaster, relevant to Canadians. The Conservative Party will focus the CBC-SRC services on its mandates as public broadcasting services.

iii) The Conservative Party recognizes the vital role played by the private broadcasters of Canada through their local and regional programming that reflects the language and multicultural realities of our country. Private sector broadcasters and service-providers first and foremost are businesses and must be able to compete in an ever-increasing fragmented and global market. The Conservative Party recognizes the need for both regulatory flexibility and predictability.

iv) Broadcasting policy in Canada must be relevant in today's communications environment and responsive to the demands of Canadians. The Conservative Party will review and update the Broadcasting Act to ensure its relevance in today's technological environment. The Conservative Party will establish clear, national policy directions and a framework that will maximize the freedom of choice and ensure that freedom of speech is respected. The CRTC's role in content regulation will be reduced to eliminate duplication where other legislation exists.



88. Canadian Production Industry

The Conservative Party recognizes that the creative community gives expression in the film and electronic media to Canada's identity and peoples. The production industry must be strengthened to participate in a global marketplace and become a self-sustaining, thriving industry with a skilled workforce.

O) CELEBRATING CANADA'S DIVERSITY

89. Diversity Principles

The Conservative Party believes that Canada's multicultural society is a valued reality and accepts the need to foster understanding and equality of opportunity while promoting common values across Canada.

90. Multiculturalism

The Conservative Party recognizes the rich, diverse make-up of the Canadian population and the contribution of these communities to our history and the Canadian way of life. The government must ensure that each community is able to enhance and contribute to Canada without discrimination and barriers.

91. Bilingualism

The Conservative Party believes that Canada's official languages constitute a unique and significant social and economic advantage that benefit all Canadians.

- i) A Conservative Government will support the Official Languages Act ensuring that English and French have equality of status and equal rights and privileges as to their use in all institutions of the Parliament and Government of Canada.
- ii) The Conservative Party will work with the provinces and territories to enhance opportunities for Canadians to learn both official languages.



P) CANADIAN HERITAGE AND CULTURE

92. Heritage Principles

The Conservative Party affirms the federal government's role in the preservation of Canada's natural and historical heritage (such as national parks, museums and historic sites) for the benefit and enjoyment of all and as an enduring reminder to all Canadians of our common inheritance.

93. Arts and Culture

i) The Conservative Party supports arts, culture and the diverse heritage of Canada. Recognition that language is an integral part of one's culture and heritage should form the basis for decision making relating to its cultural and artistic community. While recognizing Canada's diverse culture and shared history, the Conservative Party will work to strengthen opportunities and accessibility in both the domestic and international markets for our creative works.

ii) The Conservative Party believes that government support should be linked to accountability, transparency and sustainability. A review of programs and policies will ensure that they effectively meet their objectives, are based on merit, and remove political involvement from the process. Arts, culture and heritage make a substantial contribution to Canadian society and in a positive way, affect the quality of life of many Canadians. A Conservative Government will, through the tax system and other means, support charitable giving by individuals and corporations to the arts and cultural community in order that its work can be expanded.

94. Amateur Sport

The Conservative Party recognizes the value of promoting amateur sport as a means of building legacy and heritage in local communities, and as a means of serving future generations of athletes. We will help develop tax incentives to support and increase participation in local and top-tier international sporting events. An investment in amateur sport is an investment in future Canadian leaders and builds Canadian representatives around the world.



Q) RURAL CANADA

95. Rural Principles

Rural Canada plays an intrinsic role in Canada's economic and social fabric, contributing approximately 15% of Canada's GDP and 40% of our exports. The Conservative Party is committed to assuring rural Canadians that the sectors such as agriculture and agri-food, fisheries, mining, and forestry that support their communities will be a priority with the federal government.

R) AGRICULTURE

96. Agriculture Principles

The Conservative Party views the agriculture industry to be a key strategic economic sector of Canada. We recognize that various regions of Canada and sectors of the industry hold competitive advantages in agricultural production. National agriculture policy will reflect our belief that one size does not fit all.

Agriculture policy must be developed only in consultation with the agricultural producers. Our farmers today are business operators, and to dictate policy which might have an adverse effect on this business community would have negative consequences and go against Conservative Party principles. Balancing financial responsibility with support programs that actually work is a major priority of this party.

i) *Food.* Food is one of the basic necessities of life, and a Conservative Government places high priority on assuring that Canada's food supply is safe, secure, and sustainable. We seek to be among the world's best when it comes to the safety of our food supply.

ii) *Export and Diversification.* To ensure that Canada has a secure supply of food, a Conservative Government will encourage self-sufficiency in national food production, including increased diversification in the types of foods and agricultural products produced. We will seek to enhance export opportunities for all agricultural products with special emphasis on markets for processed and finished commodities. Through diversifying, the value added process and manufacturing will create new jobs within the respective communities and Canada.

iii) *Sustainability.* If we are to ensure that Canada's food supply is assured in the long term, agricultural production must be both economically and environmentally sustainable. We believe that responsible land use and receiving a fair return for growing food go hand in hand. To mitigate against unforeseen adversity, we will put in the hands of the individual producer innovative economic tools they need to be flexible, to respond to changing market conditions and to manage the risks of weather and disease.



iv) *Rural Economy.* As the agricultural base of the rural economy has declined, so too has infrastructure in small communities. To preserve the social fabric of rural Canada, a Conservative Government will encourage diversity and responsible development in small towns and villages by encouraging innovation in the development of small businesses that keep these communities alive.

97. Canadian Wheat Board

A Conservative Government will give farmers the freedom to make their own marketing and transportation decisions and to direct, structure, and to voluntarily participate in producer organisations.

98. Supply Management

The Conservative Party believes it is in the best interest of Canada and Canadian agriculture that the industries under the protection of supply management remain viable. A Conservative Government will support supply management and its goal to deliver a high quality product to consumers for a fair price with a reasonable return to the producer.

S) FISHERIES

99. Fisheries

i) A Conservative Government will work cooperatively with the provinces and territories in all regions of the country to put emphasis on protecting and enhancing all stocks. This must be done in order to meet the needs of Canadians rather than reducing the harvesting and processing efforts to fit declining and mismanaged fisheries.

ii) A Conservative Government will take a leadership role in international dealings with other fishing countries in order to assure cooperative management of common stocks and end fishing abuses, including foreign overfishing. We will not hesitate to take custodial management of the stocks on the Nose and Tail of the Grand Banks and the Flemish Cap. We recognize that fish is a renewable resource which can be rebuilt and sustained through a proper investment in science and management.

iii) A Conservative Government would invest significantly in increasing our scientific knowledge base and make firm and fair decisions based on facts, with a regulatory and enforcement regime that has the ability to carry out the necessary function. Responsibility must come from participating regions where more decision making must be located so that wild stocks, as well as aquaculture, can be managed appropriately.



iv) A Conservative Government would ensure that the current capital gains deferral available to farmers and woodlot owners when capital property is transferred to a child is extended for the commercial fishery.

v) A Conservative Government will adopt, with any interested coastal province or territory, a system of increased provincial management over fisheries through a system of joint management and joint fisheries councils modelled on the system proposed by unanimous resolution of the Newfoundland and Labrador House of Assembly in May 2003 and as detailed in the government of Newfoundland and Labrador's white paper on the subject as released in 2003.

vi) A Conservative Government will continue to support the Canadian Sealing Industry by working to eliminate unfair international trade bans on Canadian seal products.

T) IMMIGRATION

100. Immigration Principles

The Conservative Party supports a welcoming and well-managed immigration system for Canada based on:

- i) a fair and transparent process that earns the respect and confidence of Canadians as well as of the international community;
- ii) compassionate measures to assist in family reunification;
- iii) ensuring that Canada is successful in encouraging skilled immigrants to make Canada their destination of choice;
- iv) a clear and workable process for immigrants to obtain equivalency for their international skills, training and experience;
- v) addressing the need for adequate long-term funding for settlement services providers; and
- vi) upholding Canada's humanitarian tradition of providing safe haven for refugees.

101. Settlement Support

The Conservative Party wants to ensure that immigrants have the best possible opportunity to contribute to Canada's economic and social well-being. Support from settlement organizations and the broader community plays an important role.

A Conservative Government will:



- i) work cooperatively with the provinces and municipalities on policy relating to settlement support for immigrants;
- ii) address the need for adequate and equitable resources to provide language instruction, encourage community mentoring, build job search skills and offer other settlement services to meet the needs of immigrants, including children;
- iii) work to streamline the funding process to deliver enhanced funding stability and allow long-term planning by service providers; and
- iv) examine the feasibility of having federal funds for settlement services follow the movement of newcomers from one region to another.

102. Refugee Determination

The Conservative Party is proud of Canada's humanitarian tradition of providing safe haven to those who have had to flee their homeland, and we welcome refugees to Canada. A Conservative Government will promote the integrity and fairness of our refugee determination system, and will ensure that decisions are made expeditiously and with respect for due process. We believe that the current appeals process is flawed and moves far too slowly.

A Conservative Government will:

- i) streamline the process of validating refugee claims;
- ii) where the Immigration and Refugee Board finds claimants do not qualify as genuine refugees, ensure such individuals are escorted from Canada in a timely manner and provided with the information they need to start the proper process of applying for an immigration permit from abroad;
- iii) give greater priority to refugees identified pursuant to the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees;
- iv) implement a fully merit-based process for Immigration and Refugee Board appointments; and
- v) develop a refugee appeals process that is fair and timely.

103. Applications Process

The Conservative Party believes that there must be fundamental change to the applications process to minimize stress and uncertainty for applicants and their families.

A Conservative Government will:

- i) ensure that Citizenship and Immigration Canada is properly staffed, trained and resourced to improve the processing of people wanting to come to Canada;



- ii) reorganize the applications process so that applicants are given accurate information about what to expect, are readily able to obtain information on the status of their files, and are given service in a considerate and professional manner;
- iii) reverse the Liberal policy of separating married couples while the application of the non-status partner is being processed;
- iv) extend automatic Canadian citizenship to children adopted from abroad by Canadian parents once the adoption is final;
- v) provide options such as the posting of a bond to allow higher acceptance rates for family visits while protecting the integrity of the system from queue jumping; and
- vi) reduce the need for Temporary Resident Permits (TRPs) issued by the Minister by making the applications process more fair and efficient, and make the use of TRVs by the Minister both transparent and accountable through a process of independent review.

104. Recognition of International Credentials

The Conservative Party believes in providing new immigrants with the best possible opportunity to use their education and experience here in Canada. We see this as a matter of fairness to newcomers and their families and a means of ensuring that Canada receives the full benefit of immigration.

A Conservative Government will:

- i) work with the provinces to develop, in consultation with Canadian professional and trade associations, a process to evaluate standards in countries of origin in order to establish a workable system for assessing and recognizing credentials and experience;
- ii) work with the provinces to develop, in consultation with Canadian professional and trade associations, criteria for obtaining equivalent Canadian professional status and transition programs for integration of immigrants into the Canadian workplace;
- iii) require the credentials process to be disclosed to applicants by immigration staff overseas and on the Citizenship and Immigration Canada website;
- iv) encourage international students graduating from accredited Canadian colleges and universities to remain and work in Canada; and
- v) develop a better system to identify Canada's labour market needs and make the points system more flexible to ensure these needs can be met.



U) FOREIGN AFFAIRS

105. Foreign Affairs Principles

- i) The Conservative Party supports a foreign policy that protects Canada's sovereignty and independence, promotes our national interests (political, economic and strategic), contributes to collective security and defence, promotes democratic principles and human rights, and assists in international development.
- ii) A Conservative Government will recognize the importance of an ethical dimension in foreign policy and will advance the values broadly supported by Canadians.
- iii) A Conservative Government will coordinate Canada's international relations, trade and foreign aid policies to advance the country's economic interests while promoting human rights and individual freedom.
- iv) A Conservative Government will integrate our foreign policy with policies on trade and national defence.

106. Foreign Aid – Official Development Assistance

- i) The Conservative Party believes in the inherent benefits of development assistance to Canadians and the world. Development assistance must be anchored by expression of Canadian values and pursued within the context of Canada's strategic interests as defined by an integrated foreign policy.
- ii) The Conservative Party is committed to strengthening Canada's record in foreign aid. A Conservative Government will introduce legislation that will empower Parliament to define a legal framework for Canada's Official Development Assistance (ODA) envelope of spending. This legislation will include a clear mandate for development assistance; mechanisms for policy coherence, monitoring, accountability and reporting to Parliament; and enhanced public transparency.
- iii) The Conservative Party supports increasing the effectiveness of humanitarian aid efforts by the Canadian government. In order to accomplish this, the Conservative Party will establish clear criteria for recipient countries.
- iv) The Conservative Party will provide the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) with the authority to monitor and report on the expenditure and implementation of all official development assistance dollars to ensure it meets the objectives of poverty reduction, respect for human rights and good governance. CIDA will be responsible for publishing an annual report to the public to maintain public support for increases in ODA, enhance transparency, and increase accountability.
- v) The Conservative Party will ensure that the ODA envelope of spending will increase in a steady and predictable manner, beginning with a significant one-time increase in the



ODA budget. Benchmarks will be established in order to allow Canadians to hold the government accountable.

107. Parliamentary Role in Foreign Affairs

A Conservative Government will make Parliament responsible for exercising effective oversight over the conduct of Canadian foreign policy and the commitment of Canadian Forces to foreign operations.

108. International Treaties

Before entering into any new major international treaties or undertakings, a Conservative Government will ensure that Parliament is fully informed and consulted before binding action is taken. The provinces will also be fully consulted if such treaties have a direct effect on the authority and finances of provinces in their areas of responsibility.

V) NATIONAL DEFENCE AND SECURITY

109. Canada First Defence Policy

The purpose of Conservative defence policy is to better defend the national interest – the security of the Canadian nation and the economic prosperity of the Canadian people – in accord with the values of Canadians. In all that we do in the area of defence policy, we will apply this basic measure of the national interest, and advance a “Canada First” Defence policy.

i) The roles and missions supported by the Conservative Party are first, sovereignty protection, domestic defence, and North American shared defence. Conservatives will also support international peace and security missions as well as humanitarian assistance.

ii) The Conservative Party supports a multi-role, combat capable maritime, land and air force as the appropriate requirement to meet the goals of a “Canada First” Defence Policy. Fundamental capability requirements are national surveillance and control, counter terrorism, air and sea deployability, as well as logistics supportability.

iii) To achieve these capability requirements, the Conservative Party believes that Canada’s national defence must be more effective and efficient. This includes commitments to provide: improved security of our territory, more front line personnel with less administration; a more efficient and properly funded national procurement process; increased investments in infrastructure with a specific care to married quarters and base housing; a more efficient training and recruitment process; a reduction in rank structure overhead, and an increase in Parliamentary oversight over national defence matters.



iv) To achieve the goals of a “Canada First” Defence Policy, the Conservative Party believes the regular force strength of the Canadian Forces must be steadily increased to at least 75,000 personnel, along with simultaneous increases in reserve personnel levels.

v) To support and maintain Canada’s military today as well as cover the costs of an increased force, the Conservative Party believes in immediately injecting significant funds into the Department’s budget, to address the shortfalls in capital, personnel, operating and maintenance activities. To implement our policy, annual increases will follow throughout the mandate.

vi) The Conservative Party supports the longer term goal of increasing the defence budget base to ensure that Canada can advance its national interests, at levels comparable to Canada’s NATO European allies. A Conservative Government will increase defence spending to the NATO European average as a percentage of G.D.P. A Conservative Government will also guarantee a stable defence budget so that the Department of National Defence can spend funds on its most urgent operational and equipment priorities.

vii) The Conservative Party supports:

- a) Canada’s participation in negotiation of a North American Missile Defence System on the clear understanding that any agreement must serve Canada’s interest;
- b) NORAD as a viable aerospace defence organization to counter threats to North America;
- c) Canada’s continued cooperation between Canada and the United States with respect to military activities in defence of North America;
- d) Canada’s continued sovereign and independent command of all armed forces operations within Canadian territory; and
- e) Immediate moves to increase equipment and resources to exercise Canada’s sovereignty in the Arctic.

viii) The Conservative Party believes that a viable Canadian Defence Industry contributes to our national security and our industrial productivity, through such sectors as shipbuilding, aerospace, electronics, and land systems among others. Defence procurement will, subject to availability, quality and cost, support Canadian industry that can meet military requirements. The Conservative Party also believes that it is essential to ensure Canadian defence industry has access to the United States defence procurement market.

110. Veterans

i) A Conservative Government will treat all veterans with respect and will create a Veteran’s Bill of Rights to ensure that all disputes involving veterans are treated quickly, fairly and with the presumption in favour of the rights of the veteran.

ii) A Conservative Government will ensure the veterans of Canada’s wars and peacekeeping operations receive their veterans’ benefits and health care in a timely fashion.



- iii) A Conservative Government will conduct a complete review of the veterans' hospitals to ensure that the needs of veterans are being met.
- iv) The Conservative Party would immediately disband the Veterans Review and Appeal Board (VRAB) and replace the membership with qualified medical and military members who are capable of adjudicating appeals on an informed basis rather than a political basis. The VRAB would be housed in offices separate from VA offices and be in locations as set out in the VA Regional offices (major centres).
- v) The Conservative Party would immediately enlist the services of an Ombudsman with a mandate similar to that of the National Defence Ombudsman.
- vi) The Conservative Party would immediately extend Veterans Independence Program services to the widows of all Second World War and Korean War veterans regardless of when the Veteran died or how long they had been receiving the benefit before they passed away.
- vii) The Conservative Party would examine measures to ensure that National military treasures are retained in Canada as a part of our Canadian heritage.
- viii) The Conservative Party would immediately institute a complete overhaul of Veterans Affairs Canada bringing it online with the needs of today's veterans of conflict and peacekeeping missions. This would include instituting a standard of delivery of services, i.e., reviews, payment of services, etc.

111. Security

- i) The Conservative Party believes that Canada has a direct interest in a more stable and secure world. Our government must be positioned to deal with complex international security issues in order to protect our citizens and contribute to the broader responsibility.
- ii) A Conservative Government will ensure better cooperation among Canada's intelligence and security agencies to more effectively protect Canadians against internal and external security and economic threats in a changing and unstable global environment. Canada must not be a safe haven for international terrorist operatives.
- iii) A Conservative Government will establish a Canadian national intelligence agency to coordinate existing intelligence from all sources to provide the Prime Minister, senior ministers and officials with national intelligence information and assessments. The creation of a new Canadian national intelligence agency will be drawn from the Privy Council Office's international assessment and security and intelligence secretariats.
- iv) A committee of senior government and official opposition Members of Parliament (sworn to secrecy as required) will be established to scrutinize and oversee the activities of the national intelligence agency, utilizing confidential and in-camera sessions as required. The head of the national intelligence agency should be confirmed by Parliament and should appear before the committee as required.



v) In a post September 11th world, a Conservative Government will enhance the foreign intelligence gathering and analytical capacity of the Canadian Security and Intelligence Service (CSIS), Department of National Defence, and Communications Security Establishment (CSE).

vi) A Conservative Government will work with our North American partners to coordinate efforts on security for our collective personal safety and economic prosperity.

vii) The responsibilities for a revitalized Canadian Coast Guard (CCG) should be part of the Ministry of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness. As part of increasing marine security, we will reinstitute the Ports Police as a unit of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), and increase surveillance on the coasts and the Great Lakes.

viii) A Conservative Government will ensure that agencies such as CSIS, RCMP, Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA) and Coast Guard are properly resourced both in manpower and equipment.

W) STRONG DEMOCRACY – ONGOING POLICY DEVELOPMENT

112. Policy Development Principles

The Conservative Party believes true democracy involves vigorous participation by all citizens in the affairs of the country. We will commit to broad consultation with citizens across Canada to further the ongoing policy development process and ensure Members of Parliament have the fullest input from all Canadians.



Conservative Party of Canada

130 Albert Street, Suite 1720
Ottawa, Ontario
K1P 5G4

Toll free: (866) 808-8407

Phone: (613) 755-2000

Fax: (613) 755-2001
