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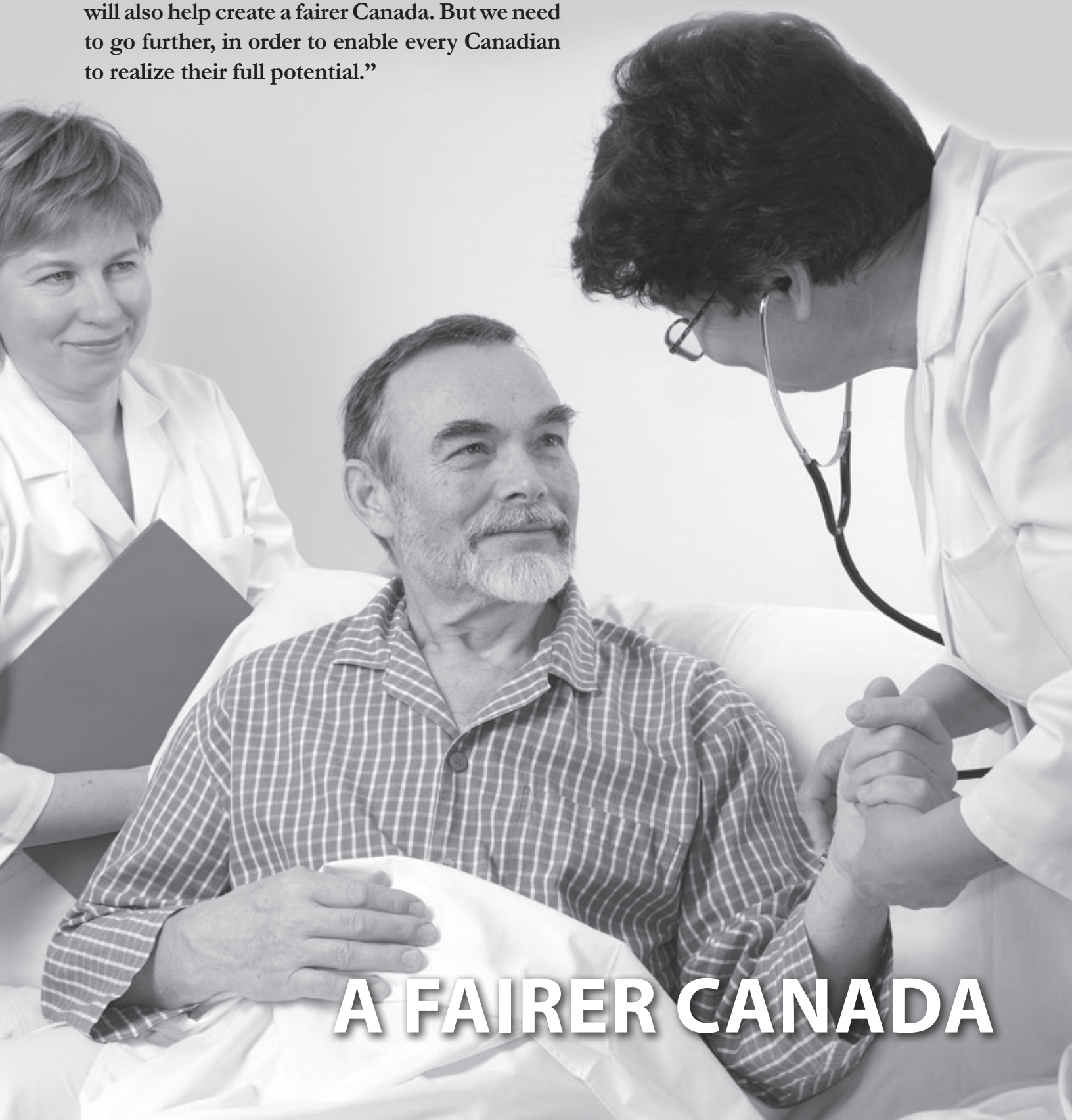

A FAIRER CANADA

The measures needed to prepare Canada for a stronger economy and a healthier environment will also help create a fairer Canada. But we need to go further, in order to enable every Canadian to realize their full potential.

A Liberal government will break down the barriers that hold so many Canadians in poverty. Through our 30-50 Plan, we will decrease poverty by one third over five years, and by half for children—the most ambitious anti-poverty program in generations. By full implementation, we will invest $1.25 billion each year to give parents access to the affordable early learning and child care they need. We will work with provinces to reduce the shortage of doctors and nurses that is crippling our health care system, by establishing a Doctors and Nurses Fund. We will create a new plan for catastrophic drug coverage to assist Canadians with staggering costs of prescription drugs in the face of serious health conditions or illnesses.

We will help Canadians who lose their jobs get back into the job market, by making EI work better for those who need it most. We will build a new partnership with Aboriginal Canadians, starting with a return to the commitments of the Kelowna Accord. We will offer better access to Canada's two official languages. And we will give Canadians the security they need for their families and for their communities.

1. The 30-50 Plan

Among the most sacred of Canadian values is this core belief: the true measure of a country is the way it treats its most vulnerable.

When we fail to address the scourge of poverty, we hold back our own potential as a society. By lifting our fellow Canadians out of poverty, we will ensure that they are not prevented from realizing their true potential for the benefit of the entire society. We must ensure that no Canadian is prevented from making their full contribution to our economy and to our communities because of poverty. As we compete with international giants, Canada cannot afford to miss the opportunity of every possible contribution from every citizen.

We will reduce the number of people living below the poverty line by at least 30 percent, so that 1 million more Canadians are better able to realize their potential. And we will reduce the number of children living in poverty by at least 50 percent.

A Liberal government will enact the 30-50 Plan to Fight Poverty, a full-scale attack on poverty. Our strategy to decrease poverty will reward Canadians who want to go to work every day to provide for their families and contribute to Canadians society. Our current tax system does a poor job of ensuring that working Canadians are kept out of poverty, and can live in dignity and provide for their children. We need to do better.

Within our first term, we will reduce the number of people living below the poverty line by at least 30 percent, so that 1 million more Canadians are better able to realize their potential. And we will reduce the number of children living in poverty by at least 50 percent, to give nearly 400,000 children a better chance in life.

We will make this possible through a combination of the initiatives contained in the Liberal green shift plan outlined earlier in this platform and additional measures. Four tax measures included in the Liberal green shift plan are specifically designed to help low-income Canadians:

- the creation of a new, refundable child tax benefit worth $350 per child;
- replacing the Conservatives' regressive, small, poorly designed $1,000 employment credit – with a $1,850 refundable employment credit targeted at those Canadians who earn less than $50,000 per year which will put up to $250 per person into the pockets of those working Canadians who need it most;
- increasing the Working Income Tax Benefit above the level legislated by the Conservatives, encouraging work by having this benefit available on the first dollar earned, which is $3,000 sooner than the Conservative plan, and ensuring that it benefits more families by phasing it out more slowly; and
- making the Disability Tax Credit refundable, ensuring that low-income individuals who are disabled are able to directly benefit from this tax credit.

In addition to these tax measures, we will create the Guaranteed Family Supplement, to help 500,000 of Canada's poorest families with children by providing up to $1,225 a year more per family. To provide further help to lower-income families with children, we will ensure that all families with incomes up to $26,000 keep all of the National Child Benefit Supplement which is currently phased out at incomes of approximately $21,000.

A Liberal government will create the Guaranteed Family Supplement, to help 500,000 of Canada's poorest families with children.

All this means that Canadians who are willing to work every day shouldn't have a tax system that works against them. A Liberal government will encourage work, not penalize it.

In addition to helping working families, a Liberal government will significantly reduce the number of seniors living in poverty so that they can live in the dignity they deserve. To reach that goal, we will:

We will increase the Guaranteed Income Supplement by $600 a year for Canada's low-income seniors, and by $800 a year for low-income senior couples.

- increase the Guaranteed Income Supplement by $600 a year for Canada's lowest income seniors, and by $800 a year for low-income senior couples; and
- change the CPP disability requirements to ensure that those with episodic illnesses – such as Multiple-sclerosis and some mental illnesses – do not jeopardize their ability to collect CPP or QPP disability benefits if they work when they are able to.

In addition to these income supports, we will work with provinces to increase supports for people in need in areas like public transit, child care and social housing.

A Liberal government will tackle the housing crisis, by helping to provide for 30,000 new social housing units, and refurbishing another 30,000 existing units.

A Liberal government will tackle the housing crisis by helping to provide for 30,000 new social housing units, and refurbishing another 30,000 existing units to make them more liveable. As part of this commitment, we will look to expand subsidies for dedicated units for low-income Canadians in federally funded co-operative housing. We will renew the Residential Rehabilitation Program and the Homelessness Partnering Initiative. And a Liberal government will help low-income families pay less on their energy bills: we will support the building and upgrading of affordable housing for low-income Canadians, to help them reduce their energy costs through high environmental standards – because every Canadian deserves to share the benefits of a greener economy.

2. Investing in Our Children

We will allocate substantial new funds, eventually climbing to more than $1 billion annually, to achieve our goal of coast-to-coast high-quality, universal community-based, early education and child care.

Early education and child care is part of how parents are able to achieve a work/life balance and provide early educational opportunities for their children. Unfortunately all too often, children are stuck on waiting lists because of a shortage of spaces. As every parent knows, no space means no choice.

For our children, early education and child care centres are a wonderful environment in which to play. It's a place to make best friends; to feel safe, secure, valued, comfortable and nurtured; to learn and develop new skills; to do interesting and stimulating activities in an environment that complements – not replaces – the family.

For moms and dads, an excellent early education and child care program respects their primary role in raising children and builds on the lessons children learn at home. It is a place where they know their child's daily experience is the best it can be; it is affordable, flexible and available for everyone. It empowers parents to make the best choices possible for themselves and their children.

Parents know – and studies show – that early education and child care helps their children grow physically, socially, intellectually, and emotionally. Canada was making strides forward under the previous Liberal government as all ten provinces had signed agreements with the federal government on early learning and child care based on a nationally-shared vision. One of the first acts of the Conservative government was to abandon this partnership with the provinces on this issue that is so vital to Canada's future. The provinces will find a new partner in a Liberal government as we will work with them to rebuild what was torn down by the Conservatives.

Our long-term goal will be coast-to-coast high-quality, universal, community-based, early education and child care. In pursuit of this objective, we will allocate substantial new federal funds. This investment will increase over a four-year period and at full implementation in the fourth year, the will climb to $1.25 billion annually.

To give families the flexibility they need to bridge to quality child care, a Liberal government will introduce the choice to take a shorter parental leave at a higher benefit level, or a longer leave (up to 18 months) at a lower benefit level. That way, parents who return to work early will still benefit from the full payment allowable, and those who wish to stay home with their children until 18 months – the point at which there are more, and more affordable, child care options – can do that as well.

3. Health Care

In order to build back the confidence that Canadians will get the health care they need when they need it, a Liberal government will work with a renewed spirit of cooperation with all provincial and territorial governments to sustain and improve Canada's publicly funded health system and to build comprehensive policies that prevent illness wherever possible. The provinces and territories will once again know that they have a real partner in Ottawa.

Doctors and Nurses

Too many Canadians are without a family physician. This is unacceptable. Canadians want to know that they can find a medical professional when they need one.

A Liberal government will help address the shortage of doctors and nurses by establishing a Doctors and Nurses Fund.

The average age of Canadian physicians is close to fifty, which means that Canada will be facing a drastic shortage of doctors within the next fifteen years. It isn't just doctors that this country needs. According to the Canadian Nurses Association, if we don't find a way to recruit and train more registered nurses, Canada will experience a shortage of 78,000 nurses by 2011 and 113,000 by 2016. At the same time, our aging population will increase the need for medical professionals.

It is critical that Canada be able to recruit, train, and integrate more health care professionals into the health care system.

In recent years, provincial governments have successfully increased the number of medical and nursing school graduates, but more needs to be done. A Liberal government will work with provinces to end the shortage of doctors and nurses that is crippling our health care system, by establishing a Doctors and Nurses Fund. More health professionals mean more Canadians getting care, and shorter wait times.

The Doctors and Nurses Fund will:

- increase the capacity to train and graduate doctors, nurses and medical technicians by funding actions such as increasing the number of residency positions, including in smaller hospitals, and expanding educational programs;
- remove bottlenecks that currently slow the process of licensing new health care professionals;

- reward medical students choosing needed specialties such as family medicine, rural medicine, and geriatrics; and
- provide financial support to assist foreign-trained doctors and other health professionals in obtaining their Canadian qualifications more quickly.

To help under-serviced communities attract more doctors and nurses, a Liberal government will forgive $10,000 per year of student debt for health care professionals who agree to set up practice in an under-serviced community for a minimum of 5 years.

The Spirit of the Canada Health Act

A Liberal government will enforce both the spirit and the letter of the Canada Health Act so that patients will be confident that they will receive the care they need when they need it, regardless of ability to pay, where they live, or the nature of their illness.

Too many groups of Canadians are still not receiving the standard of care afforded to most, including our First Peoples, minority language communities, those suffering from mental illness, veterans, and our armed forces. To work towards achievement of health equity, we will:

- work with aboriginal communities to close the unacceptable gap in health status of our Aboriginal Peoples;
- help provinces use internet technology to provide health care in both official languages as well as deaf language interpretation;
- establish a Health Ombudsman both within the Canadian Forces and within Veterans Affairs Canada and have the Department of National Defence double the number of spaces that it reserves in medical schools for military personnel who train to be doctors;
- work with the Mental Health Commission to develop and launch a public awareness campaign to reduce the stigma of mental illness.

The Cost of Medications

We will introduce a plan to ensure that Canadians across the country have access to catastrophic drug coverage.

When the drug costs of an illness become too much for a family to bear, the federal government should be there to help. This need becomes even more pressing with an aging population. That's why a Liberal government will create a new plan for catastrophic drug coverage to cover this cost.

The premiers called on the federal government to do this, and Liberals will respond. We will work with the provincial governments to determine the level of catastrophic drug coverage that should be provided as a national minimum, and we will directly compensate those provinces that are providing that level of coverage. This will make a huge difference, especially for the Atlantic Provinces, which have no catastrophic drug coverage at all.

Prevention and Health Promotion

A Liberal government will honour the original goal of Medicare: to keep Canadians well, not just to patch us up once we got sick. The ever-increasing costs of our health care demonstrate that it is not sustainable for us just to fund a "sickness care" system. The sustainability of our cherished health care system will require Canadians to make healthy choices and use the system wisely.

A Liberal Government will reinstate the popular Canadian Health Network to provide up-to-date, authoritative information on healthy living and disease prevention.

A Liberal government will reinstate the popular Canadian Health Network website to provide up-to-date, authoritative information on healthy living and disease prevention. We will also support work to develop a comprehensive set of evidence-based clinical guidelines, such as for breast cancer diagnosis, which can be disseminated to health professionals and to all Canadians on the site. That way, new research and best practices can be available to all Canadians no matter where they live.

A Liberal government will end the Conservatives' ideological war against harm reduction when it comes to drug policy. All scientific evidence indicates that Insite – North America's first legal supervised injection site located in Vancouver – saves lives. It has won widespread support from the international scientific community, from the Vancouver police and from the residents of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. The Conservative government is killing the project by refusing to provide additional funding for it. The Conservatives even forced Insite to go to the BC Supreme Court to overturn the Conservative government's decision to end Insite's exemption from some of Canada's drug laws – a decision the Conservatives have decided to appeal. A Liberal government will stop the appeal, reverse the short-sighted decisions on funding and ensure that that Insite has the funding and legal protection it needs to continue saving lives. Furthermore, no Liberal cabinet minister will ever question the ethics of Canada's doctors and nurses for supporting harm reduction programs such as Insite – as the Conservative Health Minister did earlier this year – because we believe that it is turning your back on people who run the risk of dying that it is truly unethical.

In order to reach the goal of having the healthiest possible Canadians, we need to be able to properly measure health outcomes. From asbestos related diseases, to the effects of pollution, learning disabilities to brain tumours, we need better data than is currently available.

A Liberal government will work with provinces and territories to begin the process of a pan-Canadian profile of infectious and chronic diseases, mental illness and injuries.

We will also expand the Canadian Health Measures Survey, to provide much-needed information to help evaluate the risk factors for, and extent of, major health concerns such as diabetes, obesity, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, exposure to infectious diseases, and exposure to environmental contaminants.

Promoting good health is just as important as preventing disease. We will invest in community sports facilities so that Canadians across the country can access quality sports facilities in their communities.

And of course, at a time when environmental risks, including exposure to harmful contaminants, are damaging the health of Canadians and causing deaths, the strong Liberal environmental strategy will help protect Canadians – and especially our children – from the harmful health effects of polluted air and water and toxic substances in our products.

4. Women's Equality

The Liberal Party is committed to building a Canada where true equality exists for all, and where the principles of fairness and justice are embedded in all federal government initiatives. Unfortunately, the policies of the Conservative government of Stephen Harper have been detrimental and damaging to women and threaten the hard-won gains made in past decades.

Liberals believe in a different approach. We will chart a progressive course that is essential not only to the advancement of Canadian women, but to the success of our country. Informed by the tireless work of the National Liberal Women's Caucus and its Pink Book recommendations, a future Liberal government will focus its efforts on advancing the equality and economic status of women, and improving the lives of women and families across the nation.

Elsewhere in our platform, we have laid out plans for an Early Learning and Child Care plan and more flexible parental leave, our 30-50 Plan for fighting poverty, our Affordable Housing Plan and an increase to the Guaranteed Income Supplement by $600 a year for Canada's lowest-income seniors. These initiatives will dramatically improve the lives of many women and in particular, aboriginal women, immigrants and women of colour.

While the Conservatives claim that law and order is their biggest priority, they have taken no real measures to combat violence against women. A new Liberal government's efforts to fight this problem will begin with an amendment to the Criminal Code to include "gender" in the hate propaganda provisions to help end societal acceptance for those who would incite hatred against women.

A Liberal government will amend the Criminal Code to include "gender" in the hate propaganda provisions.

We will also propose amendments to the federal Divorce Act, to include consideration of family violence in determining custody and access.

Since aboriginal women are more than three times as likely to report being victims of domestic violence as non-aboriginal women, we will create a nation-wide Violence Prevention Strategy for Aboriginal Peoples, to ensure a culturally-appropriate, holistic approach to helping the victims, their families and their communities.

We will create a nation-wide Violence Prevention Strategy for Aboriginal Peoples.

A Liberal government will take a number of concrete steps to give voice to women's issues and reverse the cuts made by the Conservatives.

The Conservative government conducted a systematic, ideologically-driven campaign to dismantle programs that help give voice to women's issues. We will repair this damage and ensure it cannot happen again by:

- re-designating "equality" as the main goal of the Women's Program at Status of Women Canada;
- over-turning changes to the funding rules of the Women's Program, so that groups advocating for women's rights can again apply for resources;
- reopening the Status of Women regional offices on which women rely for assistance and information;
- reinstating and doubling the funding for the Court Challenges Program to help remove the financial barriers that can stop Canadians from exercising their constitutional rights; and
- creating an independent Commissioner for Gender Equality, reporting to Parliament, to ensure that legislation and policies of the Government of Canada are examined with an equality lens.

Our ultimate goal is a better society for women and families – a society based on our Canadian values of justice and equality. And as Stéphane Dion has pledged, we commit to the women of Canada that the Liberal Party of Canada will not reopen the debate on a woman's right to choose.

5. Immigration: Welcoming New Canadians

Immigration will account for 100 percent of Canada's net labour force growth over the next five years. We are in fierce global competition for skilled and talented people. And our immigration system is currently not up to the task.

A successful immigration plan is built on the sound principles of fairness, accountability and opportunity. The immigration measures contained in the Conservatives' budget bill, Bill C-50, which give sweeping discretionary power to the Minister to pick and chose between classes of people, fail that test and a Liberal government will repeal them.

A Liberal government will invest $400 million to modernize the immigration system and reduce the backlog.

To streamline and improve the immigration system and reduce the current backlog, a Liberal government will invest $400 million over four years to modernize its information, data gathering and processing procedures. A Liberal government will respect Canada's international commitments to refugees while providing a timelier and efficient refugee determination system.

A Liberal government will revamp Canada's immigration points system to give greater weight to skilled trades, to better align our immigration policy to the needs of the labour market. We will create In-Canada Fast Track – a new program to allow temporary workers, international students and live-in caregivers to apply for

permanent residence within Canada, as well as increase the number of landed immigrants into our country consistent with our "immigrant success strategy."

And we will introduce the Welcome Canada Pass – a five-year renewable, multiple-entry visitor visa for individuals sponsored by Canadian citizens and landed immigrants. Under this visa, the financial and personal responsibility for visitors will be borne by the sponsor, not the taxpayer. In addition, we will create a Canada Express Pass for frequent business visitors to reduce processing times and promote trade and commerce.

To help New Canadians reach their full potential, we will invest $200 million over four years in New Beginnings Canada – an enhanced language training initiative designed to help newcomers master the language necessary to get jobs that match their qualifications. We will commit $200 million over four years to Bridge to Work – a new initiative that will better prepare newcomers for the workplace through the use of internships, mentorship and work placement opportunities. And we will help get foreign credentials recognized, by providing direct financial support to assist foreign-trained doctors and other professionals in obtaining their Canadian qualifications.

To help New Canadians reach their full potential, we will invest $200 million over four years in the New Beginnings Canada – an enhanced language training initiative.

To ensure that all parts of Canada share the benefits New Canadians bring, we will work with the provinces while respecting their jurisdiction, to help them attract and retain immigrants by strengthening their Provincial Nominee Program, providing better information about opportunities in all parts of Canada, and enhancing settlement resources for smaller centres. In essence we welcome New Canadians everywhere in Canada to help us enrich our country while we provide and expand their opportunities to succeed.

6. EI Changes

A new Liberal government will make Employment Insurance work better, to ensure that unemployed Canadians won't be punished for working. We will make permanent three measures that were introduced as pilot projects by the previous Liberal government in 2004 and 2005 in areas of high unemployment. Employers and workers have expressed concerns that the Conservative government would not extend these measures.

The three measures which will be made permanent by legislation are:

- workers who accept temporary work while receiving benefits will be allowed to earn the greater of $75 or 40 percent of the benefits without it being clawed back;
- benefits will be based on the 14 best weeks of earnings in the 52 weeks preceding a claim; and
- in order to eliminate what has been called the "black hole" – the time be-

tween the end of benefits and the beginning of many seasonal jobs – we will add five weeks of EI benefits in high-unemployment areas.

A Liberal government will also commit to processing EI claims faster, guaranteeing that EI cheques get delivered no more than three weeks after a completed application is filed.

We will also review and modernize the Labour Code dealing with collective bargaining, dispute resolution, replacement workers, strikes and lockouts. This review – the first since 1995 – will better reflect the realities of today's economy and workforce.

7. A New Relationship with Canada's First Nations, Inuit and Métis

The first people to live on the land we now call Canada made it their home for thousands of years. They built proud communities from the far north to southern Ontario. Early encounters with European settlement were marked by conflict, disease, and inequality, as well as halting efforts at partnership. Treaties were signed, but too often not respected. Restoring civility and understanding to that relationship today is one of the great challenges facing the country.

Too many aboriginal children live lives of poverty and uncertainty. Those members of First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities living on and off reserves in rural areas face tremendous challenges. That is equally true for those who have decided to live off reserve in Canada's cities: a rapidly growing community that must experience the security of good housing, challenging and positive education and training, and real opportunities to participate in Canadian life on a basis of real equality.

Canada needs respectful and progressive partnerships with our Aboriginal Peoples—partnerships characterized by trust, with real engagement and participation by Aboriginal Canadians; partnerships that will create real opportunity and a deep respect for the principle of self-government.

A Liberal government will restore the Kelowna Accord.

The Kelowna Accord represented this type of partnership. It was an historic consensus between the federal government, provinces, territories and Aboriginal Peoples, committing nearly $5 billion to clear and reasonable targets to improve aboriginal health, education and housing outcomes both on reserve and off reserve. Unfortunately, the accord was scrapped by the Conservatives.

Over the course of our mandate, a Liberal government will bring back the Kelowna Accord killed by the Conservative government. We will also fulfill the commitments within the First Nations-Crown Political Accord, the Inuit Partnership Accord, the Métis Nation Framework Agreement, and the Accords on Cooperative Development between the federal government and the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples and Native Women's Association of Canada.

Premiers and Territorial Leaders have also committed to build a new relationship and have called for the Prime Minister to hold a First Ministers' Meeting on

aboriginal issues. Regrettably, Stephen Harper has not called such a meeting after nearly three years in office. A Liberal government would hold such a meeting within the first six months of coming into office.

A Liberal government will sign and ratify the UN Declaration on the Rights of Aboriginal Peoples.

On the international stage, the Conservatives demonstrated their lack of concern and respect for Canada's aboriginal population by being one of only four governments in the world that to vote against the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. This marked the first time in its history that Canada has failed to commit to a major international human rights treaty. A Liberal government will reverse this historical disgrace, sign and ratify the Declaration and show the world that Canada can be a leader in its treatment of its aboriginal population.

With the Residential Schools Apology and the start of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Canada and its Aboriginal peoples have begun to forge a new relationship. We now have an opportunity to strengthen this relationship and we must not miss it. But restoring Kelowna is only a starting point. Long standing grievances must also be addressed.

We will be committed to renewing the Métis Nations partnership in Confederation.

A Liberal government will be committed to renewing the Métis Nation's partnership in Confederation. We recognize the Métis right to self-government and will convene a table of negotiation for Métis jurisdiction and authority, including lands and resources and economic and fiscal arrangements. We will not ignore our federal fiduciary responsibility for the Métis Nation and all Aboriginal Peoples.

Where modern land claims agreements exist, a Liberal government will respect and uphold the spirit and intent of these agreements. We will also work towards establishment of an independent body to resolve comprehensive claims and to ensure that self-government agreements are respected and fully implemented.

A Liberal government will also work jointly with First Nations, Inuit and Métis to establish an open and transparent process for the joint development of a federal policy for consultation and accommodation. As the Supreme Court of Canada has ruled, the federal and provincial Crown has a legal duty to consult, and, where appropriate, accommodate when Crown conduct may adversely impact established or potential aboriginal and treaty rights.

We would improve access to health care for First Nations children by ensuring children in need of health care are not denied the care they need because of jurisdictional squabbles between different orders of government or different departments within the same level of government. "Jordan's Principle" calls for the needs of the child to be put first, ahead of jurisdictional disputes. A new Liberal government will work with other orders of governments on a policy that would require the agency of first contact to pay and establish a mechanism to resolve the disputes - after the needs of the child are addressed. To resolve these disputes at the federal level, a new Liberal government will enact a Jordan's Principle law, based on an existing Liberal Member's Private Member's bill, which will require the federal department of first contact to pay for the required services and to seek resolution later so that children are not denied the services they need.

Eliminating violence against aboriginal women will also be a priority. A Liberal government will adopt a nation-wide violence prevention strategy that allows for regional and jurisdictional flexibility in policy, programming and funding.

In recognition of the fact that a one-size fits all approach to First Nations, Métis and Inuit populations is unproductive, a Liberal government will work with aboriginal organizations to ensure the green shift takes into account their specific needs and realities. To assist in accomplishing this goal, a Liberal government will re-establish the First Nations' Advisory Committee that the Conservatives abolished. A Liberal government will also create a new Joint National Climate Change Advisory Panel to foster joint initiatives between the Government of Canada and First Nations, Métis and Inuit on climate change mitigation policies.

A Liberal government will ensure that the Aboriginal Human Resources Development Strategy is renewed.

Facilitating the participation of First Nations, Inuit and Métis people in the labour market is key to closing the gap in employment outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians. A Liberal government will ensure that the Aboriginal Human Resources Development Strategy is renewed and that the national aboriginal organizations involved in this strategy continue to be its main stakeholders.

We will enhance the Aboriginal Languages Initiative to support the preservation, revitalization and promotion of Aboriginal languages.

As a country we must ensure that we hear the voices of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people in their own languages, and that these aboriginal voices and languages continue to enrich the cultural heritage of the world. A Liberal government will enhance the Aboriginal Languages Initiative to support the preservation, revitalization and promotion of Aboriginal languages and restore the unjustifiable cuts to this initiative by the Conservatives.

Aboriginal Peoples, who represent the fastest-growing part of Canada's population and a significant portion of our country's young people, must have full opportunities to help Canada thrive in the 21st century. This is a matter of social justice and a condition of Canada's continued success.

We can not be intimidated by the scale of the challenge or discouraged by the failures of the past. We owe it to our children to pass along an even better country than we inherited from our parents and we will not do so as long as Aboriginal Peoples continue to be left behind.

8. Minority Language Rights

To strengthen minority language communities across the country and give Canadians better access to the richness of our two official languages, a new Liberal government will:

- restore and double the funding of the original Court Challenges Program, ensuring all minority communities have access to protections enshrined under the Charter;
- introduce infrastructure funding for minority language communities;

- provide a new plan to provide federal-provincial support to official languages, especially in education, health care, and culture; and
- increase funding for institutions that teach French or English as a second language.

9. A Safer Canada

Liberals understand that any law-and-order proposal that fails to address the root causes of crime will ultimately fail. The single most effective steps we can take as a country in our quest for safer communities is to make a commitment to eradicate domestic poverty and combine that with support for education and housing. These steps, which we have committed to taking in this platform, will provide the hope and opportunity that is lacking in the lives of too many Canadians today.

For a richer Canada, a fairer Canada, a greener Canada, we need a safer Canada. You deserve a government that will protect your family and your community.

A Liberal government will make communities safer, freeing Canadians from the barrier of fear, and helping them feel safe in their homes and communities. For a richer Canada, a fairer Canada, a greener Canada, we need a safer Canada. Canadians deserve a government that will protect their families and their communities.

Confronting the issue of violence connected to gangs and organized crime requires the most intensive allocation of resources and efforts on behalf of the RCMP and local police agencies. The cost associated with witness protection and relocation, case preparation, electronic and physical surveillance and extensive police hours all put a strain on the budgets of local communities. We do not want these added costs to become a barrier to the effective pursuit of safer communities. A new Liberal government will establish a fund to help ease the burden of these additional costs. The RCMP will administer this fund and will work with the provinces to ensure that it is accessible to police organizations that have a plan to address gangs and organized crime.

A Liberal government will provide additional resources to the RCMP to help deal with violence associated with gangs and organized crime.

To fight and prevent gun crime, a Liberal government will create a $40-million Gun Violence and Gang Prevention Fund, supporting community-based programs and skills development for youth at risk.

We will create a $40-million Gun Violence and Gang Prevention Fund.

We will also ensure that the list of prohibited weapons is updated to include all military assault weapons like those used in the tragic shootings at the École Polytechnique and Dawson College. Military assault weapons are easy to use, have large capacity magazines (in order to limit the time needed for reloading) and are designed so that an individual with limited skill can kill as many other individuals as quickly as possible. The purpose of these anti-personnel weapons is military in nature; they have no reasonable connection to hunting and serve no purpose outside of the military. The federal government has the power to prohibit these weapons and a Liberal government will, while ensuring that rifles with a legitimate connection to hunting and sport-shooting are not prohibited.

A Liberal government will ban military assault rifles while ensuring that rifles with legitimate purpose are not prohibited.

We will take concrete action to address the flow of illegal guns into Canada,

beginning with negotiations on a mutually responsible strategy aimed at curbing gun smuggling from the U.S. into Canada. And we will end the Conservative delay on implementing the international treaties on marking and tracking imported firearms – a tool that law enforcement groups on both sides of the border have identified as a key to both tackling domestic gun crime and combating the flow of illegal guns across the border.

We will create a $75-million Communities At Risk program to help fund security measures at ethno-cultural or religious places of worship, educational institutions and community centres.

To better protect communities that are sadly too often a target of violent hate crimes, a Liberal government will also create a $75-million Communities at Risk program to help fund security measures at ethno-cultural or religious places of worship, educational institutions and community centres.

No federal party should be blind to the ongoing problems of violence against women and domestic violence. Our efforts should start with an end to societal acceptance for those who would incite hatred against women. A Liberal government's efforts to address this problem will start with an amendment to the Criminal Code to include "gender" in the hate propaganda provisions to help end the societal acceptance of those who incite hatred against women.

A Liberal government will take steps to stop violence against children.

Modern criminals use advances in technology to take advantage of gaps in the Criminal Code, often as part of an effort to victimize the most vulnerable in our society: our children. For this reason, a Liberal government would move swiftly to introduce legislation that would include:

- Robust internet luring provisions to address explicit on-line conversations with children that intend to "groom" the child for future attempts at luring them;
- Provisions that address the growing problem of cyber-bullying, which can be as terrifying and threatening to today's children as violent schoolyard behaviour.

As previously described, since aboriginal women are more than three times as likely to report being victims of domestic violence as non-aboriginal women, we will create a nation-wide Violence Prevention Strategy for Aboriginal Peoples, to ensure a culturally-appropriate, holistic approach to helping the victims, their families and their communities.

A new Liberal government will take additional measures to deal with violent youth offenders.

A new Liberal government will continue to support the principles behind the Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA) which strives for a balanced approach to youth justice. The system needs improvement, but not a radical overhaul that focuses purely on punishment and pays no attention to rehabilitation. We know that a small number of youths are responsible for the vast majority of violent youth crime and that the current regime makes it difficult for the police and the courts to prevent these violent offenders from re-offending while they await trial. Fortunately, Justice Merlin Nunn conducted a thorough review of the YCJA for the Nova Scotia government and paid particular attention to this problem. He proposed a series of common sense changes to the law. For example, he proposed expanding the definition of "violent offence" to ensure that it includes conduct that endangers the life and safety of others. He also recommended

that the government increase a judge's ability to consider pending charges, not just past convictions, when considering pre-trial detention for a young offender. A new Liberal government will implement the recommendations of the Nunn Report which pertain to the federal government.

A Liberal government will also restore the Law Commission of Canada and ask it to perform a full review of the sentencing provisions in the Criminal Code. In many respects, the Code is outdated, reflective of the previous century. We must modernize it so that we have a Criminal Code that can protect Canadians against the criminal realities of the 21st century and ensure that penalties are proportional to the crime. We will also specifically request that the Law Commission evaluate whether there are sufficient provisions in the Criminal Code to protect and prevent violence against women in our society.

10. Respectful Federalism

The Conservatives promised an end to federal-provincial bickering. Instead, we have witnessed nearly three years of a disrespectful and aggressive approach to federalism that has been characterized by broken promises, childish insults and a lack of consultation on major initiatives. This started with Prime Minister Harper's decision to break the Conservative commitment to honour the Atlantic Accords. It continued with Finance Minister Flaherty's attempt to settle old political grudges with his campaign against the Government of Ontario, which resulted in his suggestion that investors should not invest in the province.

We have seen the Conservatives put forward major constitutional changes dealing with fundamental issues like the representation of provinces in the House of Commons without any consultation. Unsurprisingly, the provinces have been left to voice their opposition to these measures through letters and Parliamentary committee hearings since the Prime Minister has repeatedly refused to hold a First Ministers' Meeting. Perhaps most inexcusably, the Conservatives have failed to join the provincial governments as a partner in their efforts to overcome a sluggish economy and combat the climate change crisis.

A Liberal government will take a different approach – one that places an emphasis on consultation, cooperation, partnership and respect for each government's role and responsibility. There will always be competing views in our federation, but these diverse views do not need to result in a combative and unproductive relationship. We will start by honouring the federal government's commitment in the Atlantic Accords because when the Government of Canada signs an agreement, it is the obligation of future governments, regardless of their political affiliation, to honour that commitment. We will not proceed with constitutional changes that affect the provinces without including them. Most importantly, we will work with the provinces to be a true partner for the benefit of the Canadian people as we work to build an economy that is ready for the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.