

common ground.

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This document compares the positions of the Liberal Party, the NDP, and the Green Party on some often-discussed issues. By contrasting these with the positions and actions of Stephen Harper's Conservative government, we can clearly see that the three parties share significantly similar positions. These are but a few simple examples, and we will continue our research to uncover even more common ground.

What this document demonstrates more than anything is that the parties' respective oppositions to Conservative policies are based on the same reasoning, and the remedies they advocate overlap such that arriving at consensus-based solutions would not be overly difficult or out-of-reach if they were to come together in good faith. The interests of everyday Canadians must always take precedence over partisanship and rigid ideology.

Liberal Party of Canada

Leader: Justin Trudeau (since 2013)

Former leader: Michael Ignatieff (2009-2011)

Percentage of popular vote in 2011 federal election: 18.9%

Current number of MPs: 34

New Democratic Party of Canada

Leader: Thomas Mulcair (since 2012)

Former leader: Jack Layton (2003-2011)

Percentage of popular vote in 2011 federal election: 30.6%

Current number of MPs: 100 (103 MPs elected in 2011)

Green Party of Canada

Leader: Elizabeth May (since 2006)

Former leader: Jim Harris (2003-2006)

Percentage of popular vote in 2011 federal election: 3.9%

Current number of MPs: 1

common ground.

When it comes to the issues Canadians care about, the three parties have a lot in common – especially compared to the Conservatives! Let's take a look at a few examples:

on the environment:

Liberal Party

- “The Liberal Party of Canada urges the government of Canada to undertake a comprehensive public assessment of the environmental, economic and social impacts of the oil sands developments immediately.”¹
- The Liberals “have committed to a long-term greenhouse gas reduction target of 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050” and would “continue to advance our long-term emission reduction target, and ask the independent advisory body, the National Round Table on Environment and Economy, to recommend a series of science-based, achievable midterm targets.”²

NDP

- “New Democrats believe in reviewing all economic decisions to assess their environmental impact.”³
- “New Democrats believe in establishing binding targets and clear standards to cut greenhouse gas emissions.”⁴
- “The rest of the world is moving forward with clean energy solutions, and under Stephen Harper, Canada is being left behind. That’s bad news for our environment, and it’s bad news for Canadian families who will be shut out of high-paying sustainable energy jobs,” said interim leader Nycole Turmel in December 2011.⁵

Green Party

- “The Greens believe that the federal government must signal to the civil service that it values and supports a strong scientific capacity for the Government of Canada. That includes regularly seeking scientific advice regarding all levels of environmentally-related decision making.”⁶
- “Under a Green government, Canada will work with other nations to achieve the development of a new global post-Kyoto Treaty... Canada will work to continue and enhance Kyoto’s Clean Development Mechanism to improve and strengthen verification of greenhouse gas reductions.”⁷

meanwhile...

Conservative Party

- In 2012, the Harper government’s budget “forced the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency to cancel nearly 3,000 screenings into potential environmental damage caused by proposed development projects across Canada, including hundreds involving a pipeline or fossil fuel energy.”⁸
- In 2011, the Harper government pulled Canada out of the Kyoto Protocol, “abandoning the world’s only legally binding plan to tackle global warming... Prime Minister Stephen Harper has made no secret of his disdain for the Kyoto Protocol...”⁹

¹ Liberal Party of Canada. (2013). “44. Oil Sands Environmental Impact.” Retrieved from <http://convention.liberal.ca/impact-analysis/44-oil-sands-environmental-impact/>

² Liberal Party of Canada. (2011). *Your Family. Your Future. Your Canada*, p. 47. Retrieved from http://www.liberal.ca/files/2011/04/liberal_platform.pdf

³ New Democratic Party of Canada. (2013). *NDP Policy*, p. 10. Retrieved from <http://www.ndp.ca>

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁵ New Democratic Party of Canada. (2011, December 5). “By killing Kyoto, Harper will put sustainable Canadian jobs at risk.” Retrieved from <http://www.ndp.ca/news/by-killing-kyoto-harper-will-put-sustainable-canadian-jobs-risk>

⁶ Green Party of Canada. (2011). *Vision Green*, p. 49. Retrieved from http://www.greenparty.ca/sites/greenparty.ca/files/attachments/vision_green_en.pdf

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

⁸ De Souza, Mike. (2012, August 23). “Harper government scraps 3,000 environmental reviews on pipelines and other projects.” *Canada.com*. Retrieved from <http://o.canada.com/2012/08/23/harper-government-kills-3000-environmental-reviews-on-pipelines-and-other-projects/>

⁹ Curry, Bill, & McCarthy, Shawn. (2011, Dec. 12). “Canada formally abandons Kyoto Protocol on climate change.” *The Globe and Mail*. Retrieved from <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/canada-formally-abandons-kyoto-protocol-on-climate-change/article4180809/>

on employment insurance:

Liberal Party

- “We’re concerned that the announced changes [to Employment Insurance] will force many Canadians to take low-skilled, low-paying jobs, jeopardize the economic security of communities that are reliant on seasonal industries, and that the appeals process will now be handled by a handful of political appointees based in Ottawa instead of by regional experts who are familiar with local circumstances.”¹

NDP

- “EI was designed to strengthen our workforce by helping jobless Canadians resume careers that take advantage of their education, training and experience... We call upon the Government of Canada to reverse the devastating changes it has made to EI and restore fair access to decent EI benefits for jobless workers.”²

Green Party

- “The current recession is an ideal time to expand and improve the EI benefits... Expanding the EI system can be justified as a sensible economic measure, as well as a matter of equity. This is one measure that does not require finding new money. The EI system has a healthy fund built up, yet the majority of unemployed workers are denied its benefits.”³

meanwhile...

Conservative Party

- Employment Insurance is an insurance policy that workers and employers pay into, not a government-funded program. But Harper’s changes to EI would force highly-skilled unemployed workers to accept low-paying jobs in other sectors, wasting their skills and training.⁴
- A federal fraud investigator was suspended without pay after leaking documents showing that she and other investigators had to deny people EI to the tune of \$485,000 in order to meet quotas.⁵ The Harper government denied these claims until proven by government documents obtained by the press.⁶
- EI recipients are being randomly selected to receive intimidating house calls from federal employees—whose own union is concerned that this puts their employees at risk.⁷ “The union representing the Service Canada employees who conduct the door-to-door inquiries has asked the government to suspend the work in areas of the country where recent EI changes have become an explosive issue.”⁸

¹ Liberal Party of Canada. (2013). “Stop Harper’s cuts to Employment Insurance (EI)” Retrieved from <http://petition.liberal.ca/stop-conservative-cuts-employment-insurance-ei/>

² New Democratic Party of Canada. (2013). “It’s our employment insurance.” Retrieved from <http://petition.ndp.ca/EI>

³ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

⁴ Beltrame, Julian. (2012, May 14). “EI Rule Change: ‘Suitable Employment’ Redefined; Flaherty Says No Such Thing As Bad Job.” *Canadian Press*. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2012/05/14/ei-rule-change-employment-insurance-job-suitable-employment-reasonable-efforts_n_1516146.html

⁵ CBC News. (2013, July 20). “EI whistleblower suspended without pay.” *CBC News*. Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/ei-whistleblower-suspended-without-pay-1.1407761>

⁶ CBC News. (2013, Feb. 25). “Tories set ‘targets,’ not quotas for EI fraud.” *CBC News*. Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/tories-set-targets-not-quotas-for-ei-fraud-1.1330294>

⁷ Olivier, Fannie. (2013, Feb. 20). “EI Recipients Get House Calls From The Feds.” *Canadian Press*. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2013/02/20/ei-canada-house-calls_n_2728222.html

⁸ CBC News. (2013, Feb. 25). “Tories set ‘targets,’ not quotas for EI fraud.” *CBC News*. Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/tories-set-targets-not-quotas-for-ei-fraud-1.1330294>

on science and evidence-based policy:

Liberal Party

- “The stature of Canada is declining in the international scientific community because government policy is made with little regard to scientific knowledge.”¹ The Liberal Party “urges the government to appropriately fund science research undertaken by federal departments and agencies to support the management and sustainable development of Canada’s resources and economy and ensure that this research is fully communicated.”²

NDP

- “Tom Mulcair’s New Democrats are standing up for science and standing up to Conservative attacks on scientific integrity. Because together we can ensure that scientists have the freedom to pursue discovery and the stable support for basic science needed to truly make Canada a home for innovation again.”³

Green Party

- “The Greens believe that the federal government must signal to the civil service that it values and supports a strong scientific capacity for the Government of Canada. That includes regularly seeking scientific advice regarding all levels of environmentally-related decision making. We decry the shift to a managerial culture, in which policy expertise is degraded in preference to management experience.”⁴

meanwhile...

Conservative Party

- The Harper government scrapped the mandatory long-form census, which could “damage the impeccable methodology and autonomy for which Statistics Canada is renowned” and could “produce a skewed or useless national demographic record.”⁵ The move prompted chief statistician Munir Sheikh to resign in protest.
- Under the Harper government, many government scientists have been muzzled from speaking about peer-reviewed research.⁶
- A scathing *New York Times* editorial slammed Stephen Harper for making it “harder and harder for publicly financed scientists to communicate with the public and other scientists... Now the government is doing all it can to monitor and restrict the flow of scientific information...”⁷
- The Harper government scrapped the position of National Science Advisor, the “voice of reason to the government over actions it should take on issues such as climate change, genetically modified foods, managing fisheries, sustaining the environment—any time the politicians need to be educated on the basic science behind those often controversial issues.”⁸
- The science advocacy group Evidence for Democracy “argues that evidence-based decision-making must inform governmental funding decisions on science. They say current funding has instead shifted towards commercialization of research.”⁹
- “On sensitive files from crime to health, taxation to climate, the Harper government has often clashed with experts who argue the fruits of their research are undervalued by the Conservatives in the development of new laws and regulations.”¹⁰

¹ Liberal Party of Canada. (2012). “12. Science and Policy.” Retrieved from <http://convention.liberal.ca/economy-1-2/12-science-and-policy/>

² *Ibid.*

³ New Democratic Part of Canada. (2013). “Standing up for science.” Retrieved from <http://petition.ndp.ca/science>

⁴ Green Party of Canada. (2011). *Vision Green*, p. 49. Retrieved from http://www.greenparty.ca/sites/greenparty.ca/files/attachments/vision_green_en.pdf

⁵ Proudfoot, Shannon. “StatsCan in turmoil over decision to long-form census.” *Canada.com*. Retrieved from <http://www.canada.com/news/StatsCan+turmoil+over+decision+scrap+long+form+census/3309695/story.html>

⁶ Belluz, Julia. (2012, July 10). “Scientists vs. Harper.” *Maclean’s*. Retrieved from <http://www2.macleans.ca/2012/07/10/the-scientists-vs-harper/>

⁷ Klinkenborg, Verlyn. (2013, Sept. 21). “Silencing Scientists.” *New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/22/opinion/sunday/silencing-scientists.html>

⁸ McDonald, Bob. (2008, Jan. 25). “No science in the PM’s ear.” *CBC News*. Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/newsblogs/technology/quirks-quarks-blog/2008/01/no-science-in-the-pms-ear-canada-dismisses-national-science-adviser-at-its-peril.html>

⁹ Makuch, Ben. (2013, Sept. 16). “‘Stand Up For Science’ Protests: Scientists Protest Harper Government ‘Muzzling,’ Cuts.” Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2013/09/16/stand-up-for-science-protests-harper_n_3936992.html

¹⁰ Wattie, Chris. (2010, Aug. 9). “Why Stephen Harper thinks he’s smarter than the experts.” *Maclean’s*. Retrieved from <http://www2.macleans.ca/2010/08/09/cracking-eggheads/>

on health care:

Liberal Party

- “Liberals believe strongly that all Canadians deserve the same level of high quality and timely health care provided by an efficient, accountable and sustainable public health system.”¹
- “Liberals are ready to work as partners with the provinces and territories to ensure a national standard of excellence in the delivery of health services. The Liberal Party of Canada will also keep fighting so that more can be done for mental health, caregivers, home and long term care.”²

NDP

- “New Democrats are calling on Stephen Harper to work with Canada’s first ministers on initiatives to improve and sustain our public health care system.”³
- The NDP believes in “fighting the privatization of public health care services” and “working towards the establishment of a national healthcare council to ensure that the Canada Health Act is enforced and the range of services extended to include home care, palliative care and prescription drugs.”⁴

Green Party

- “The Greens fully support the Canada Health Act (CHA) and all of its principles. We oppose any level of privatized, for-profit health care.”⁵
- “Allowing for-profit health care would be the ‘thin end of the wedge’ that jeopardizes our entire health system... If Canada allows increasing numbers of for-profit facilities, we run the risk of losing our entire universal single payer system.”⁶

meanwhile...

Conservative Party

- The Harper government cut funding to the Health Care Council of Canada, which oversees “accountability, oversight, planning and national coordination for our health care system. Its achievements to date include lowering wait times and encouraging innovation in the public health care system to ensure access to a continuum of services, in and out of hospital... Lack of federal coordination and guardianship means that more and more Canadians will lack access to comparable health services in primary care, prescription drugs, home care, rehabilitation and longer-term care.”⁷
- Former Saskatchewan Premier Roy Romanow, who headed the Royal Commission on the Future of Health Care in Canada, has warned that Stephen Harper “must join Canada’s premiers at the negotiating table to discuss medicare reforms or the country’s public health-care system will grow weaker, medical privatization will spread and national unity will be imperilled” and that “only the federal government can provide the leadership to set programs and standards.”⁸

¹ Liberal Party of Canada. (2013). “Caring for loved ones when they get sick.” Retrieved from <http://www.liberal.ca/caring-for-loved-ones/>

² *Ibid.*

³ New Democratic Party of Canada. “Harper failing to work with provinces on health care.” Retrieved from <http://www.ndp.ca/news/harper-failing-to-work-provinces-health-care>

⁴ New Democratic Party of Canada. (2013). *NDP Policy*, p. 12. Retrieved from <http://www.ndp.ca>

⁵ Green Party of Canada. (2011). *Vision Green*, p. 60. Retrieved from http://www.greenparty.ca/sites/greenparty.ca/files/attachments/vision_green_en.pdf

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

⁷ McBane, Michael. (2013, Apr. 17). “By closing the Health Council of Canada, Stephen Harper is abandoning national medicare.” *Toronto Star*. Retrieved from http://www.thestar.com/opinion/commentary/2013/04/17/by_closing_the_national_health_council_stephen_harper_is_abandoning_national_medicare.html

⁸ Kennedy, Mark. (2013, Jan. 8). “Stephen Harper’s hands-off stance could signal end to national health-care system: Romanow.” *National Post*. Retrieved from <http://news.nationalpost.com/2012/01/08/stephen-harpers-hands-off-stance-could-signal-end-to-national-health-care-system-romanow/>

on child care and Old Age Security (OAS):

Liberal Party

- “The Liberal Party of Canada urge[s] the Government of Canada to make federal funding available to provide better quality early childhood care, education and development.”¹
- “Liberals know the best way to make sure income tested benefits like OAS and the Guaranteed Income Supplement are affordable is by ensuring Canadians have access to strong pension plans so they won’t need the extra benefits. That is the path to sustainable prosperity for all Canadians.”²

NDP

- The NDP believes in “providing long-term, secure funding to provinces and territories for early childhood education and child care services”, and “ensuring federal funding provides high-quality, accessible, affordable, non-profit universal services.”³
- The NDP has vowed to roll back the Conservative government’s increase of the OAS eligibility age. “In a country as wealthy as Canada it is absolutely inexcusable to have hundreds of thousands of seniors living below the poverty line,” said Thomas Mulcair.⁴

Green Party

- “Canadian families need access to affordable, high-quality child care as an aspect of early childhood education... The Greens are committed to a high-quality federally-funded child care program in Canada, accessible to any family that wants to place children into early childhood education.”⁵
- “There are few issues as close to our core values as pensions... We can push back and protect Old Age Security,” wrote Elizabeth May in 2012.⁶

meanwhile...

Conservative Party

- In 2007, the Harper government cut \$1 billion from child care and “replaced” this with a \$100 monthly *taxable* allowance for parents, calling it a “universal child care benefit.” This is completely out of step with the true cost of child care, and does nothing to fix the underlying issue of lack of child care spaces. “Parents who don’t put their names on daycare waiting lists the moment they conceive are often left scrambling when they have to return to work. That hardly adds up to ‘choice in child care,’ which the Conservatives claim to be offering.”⁷
- The Harper government raised the eligibility age for Old Age Security (OAS) benefits from 65 to 67, ignoring the advice from the experts *he himself* had commissioned, who had concluded there was no need for the age increase.⁸

¹ Liberal Party of Canada. (2013). “47. Early Development and Child Care.” Retrieved from <http://convention.liberal.ca/specific-demographics/47-early-childhood-development-and-child-care/comment-page-1/>

² Liberal Party of Canada. (2013). “Stop the Harper Conservative OAS Cuts of 65 to 67.” Retrieved from <http://petition.liberal.ca/oas-old-age-security-pension-retirement-benefits-cuts/>

³ New Democratic Party of Canada. (2013). *NDP Policy*, p. 13. Retrieved from <http://www.ndp.ca>

⁴ Winnipeg Free Press. (2012, Oct. 27). “NDP would restore OAS to 65, says Mulcair.” *Winnipeg Free Press*. Retrieved from <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/canada/ndp-would--restore-oas-to-65-says-mulcair-176076051.html>

⁵ Green Party of Canada. (2011). *Vision Green*, p. 57. Retrieved from http://www.greenparty.ca/sites/greenparty.ca/files/attachments/vision_green_en.pdf

⁶ May, Elizabeth. (2012, Feb. 11). “On Old Age Security.” *Green Party of Canada: Elizabeth May’s Blog*. Retrieved from <http://www.greenparty.ca/blogs/7/2012-02-11/old-age-security>

⁷ Toronto Star. (2008, Sept. 20). “Daycare spaces or \$100 cheques?” *Toronto Star*. Retrieved from http://www.thestar.com/news/politics/federalection/2008/09/20/daycare_spaces_or_100_cheques.html

⁸ Curry, Bill. (2012, Jan. 30). “Research belies PM’s warning about OAS.” *The Globe and Mail*. Retrieved from <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/research-belies-pms-warning-about-oas/article2320279/?from=sec431>