

Canadian Taxpayers Federation's Top Ten Policy Questions

Received from Conservative leadership candidate Stephen Harper on March 2, 2004.

If you become Prime Minister, will your government introduce legislation:

1. To raise the Basic Personal Exemption from federal income taxes (both the individual exemption and the spousal exemption) to \$15,000 by 2008 as a way to provide all Canadians with some tax relief?

My priority on the tax side is to lower taxes for modest and middle income Canadians, with a particular focus on families with children. As I said in the recent candidate debate, the final form of my tax plan will be released following the upcoming federal budget, so that our plan is fiscally responsible.

2. To mandate the federal budget is balanced on an annual basis, and to give Canadians a greater role by ensuring any proposed tax increase is approved in a referendum? Such a law would mirror Ontario's *Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act*, which was passed by the provincial legislature in 1999 with bipartisan support.

I am committed to a legislated Taxpayer protection plan that makes deficits illegal and lays out a legislated debt repayment plan. This type of plan has been passed in a number of provinces.

3. To allocate 5 per cent of annual federal tax revenue to repaying the principal of Canada's \$510-billion national debt?

The federal debt is half a trillion dollars, and we need to get that debt down. I believe we need a legislated debt repayment plan that includes debt reduction targets, as Alberta has done. However, \$9 billion (5% of revenues) is too heavy a weight to put on debt reduction compared to other priorities.

4. To enact a Municipal Roadway Trust whereby the federal government will return half of its ten-cents-per-litre fuel tax to Canadian municipalities for roads and infrastructure?

I have committed to transferring 3 to 5 cents of the gas tax to the provinces conditional on that money being directed to infrastructure. The federal government cannot direct this directly to municipalities as that would (1) violate the constitution and (2) ignore rural areas that are also in need of infrastructure investment.

5. To end corporate welfare by eliminating \$4-billion in government subsidies paid to businesses through agencies such as Western Economic Diversification, Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, and Technology Partnerships Canada?

I support ending politically driven business subsidies and redirecting that money towards lower corporate taxes. I made this proposal in my Revitalization Plan for Atlantic Canada.

6. To amend the Canada Health Act to give provinces greater flexibility in the delivery of health care?

I support the Health Accord signed by the Provinces and Jean Chretien. That Accord gave provinces flexibility in meeting health reform objectives. More importantly, it has accountability provisions that Paul Martin is ignoring. I will hold governments accountable for the promises they made in that Accord.

7. To establish fixed dates for federal elections (such legislation would have special provisions dealing with minority governments, non-confidence votes, and other unusual circumstances), and to give Canadians the right to initiate referendums on issues of their choice as well as recall their Member of Parliament?

Yes. I have prepared a bill that mimics the fixed election date legislation in the province of British Columbia.

8. To phase out the Indian Act and the Department of Indian Affairs, and establish private property rights for Canadian Aboriginals and develop an accountable and democratic systems of governance for reserves?

I believe we need to work with Aboriginals to establish property rights and improved governance. As a concrete measure, I would seek to expand the use of "Certificates of Possession" for Aboriginal home ownership.

9. To repeal the federal gun registry?

I will repeal the current \$2 billion gun registration legislation and work cooperatively with the provinces to replace it with a cost-effective gun control program 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: severe mandatory minimum penalties for the criminal use of any weapon; strict monitoring of high-risk individuals; crackdown on the smuggling of guns; safe storage laws; firearms safety training; a licencing system for all those wishing to acquire and use firearms legally; and putting more police on our streets.

10. To withdraw Canada from the Kyoto Protocol?

This does not require legislation. I would withdraw from Kyoto and redirect money currently being wasted on this boondoggle towards clean air, clean water and clean land, as outlined in my Environmental paper available on my website.

Bonus Question: (Yes or No answer only.)

To change the federal income tax system to ensure it is neutral in its treatment of single-income-earner families and dual-income-earner families?

Yes.