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For immediate release

How are Canadians Doing After Five Years of a Harper Government?

There is much speculation swirling around about a spring election, but personally I do not think that will happen. However, at the 5-year anniversary we should all ask: Is Canada better off after five years of Stephen Harper?

When Canadian families are asked if they are better off, and if Canada is better off, today than five years ago, the answer for most is 'no'. This response is understandable if we look at the facts.

Over the past five years, the cost of living has risen faster than incomes for most Canadian families.

Hundreds of thousands of full-time, well-paying secure jobs have disappeared under Stephen Harper's government. Unemployment is higher now than it was five years ago, and most of the new jobs that Harper talks about are lower paying, or part-time work with no benefits.

Under Stephen Harper, many families are finding it tougher to support their kids' future and pay for their education. People regularly tell me that they are unable to save for their retirement - even though they want to and know that they should.

Meanwhile the federal government has gone from a \$13-billion surplus to a record \$56-billion deficit. Stephen Harper had spent the surplus even before the recession hit - so all of the infrastructure projects we hear about have been funded by new debt. This means that a growing part of our taxes will pay interest on the debt instead of providing services that we want and need.

The Conservatives often quote The Economist magazine as saying that "Canada is an economic star". What they do not mention is that the same article clearly gives credit to the strong economy and banking system created by the Liberals before Stephen Harper took office!

Canada has fallen behind on the environment: now many countries are far ahead of us in producing green energy - and in manufacturing the solar and wind energy equipment to produce green energy.

Prison expansions, the most-expensive fighter jets available and corporate tax cuts are the wrong priorities when the crime rate is falling, there may be more cost-effective jets available and our corporate tax rates are already competitive.

A Liberal government will invest in childhood learning, caregiver support - programs to help middle-class families. We will invest in education and training and green energy to prepare us for future jobs. We will help rural communities and small towns attract doctors and nurses, expand access to high speed internet and support volunteer firefighters.

When speaking with people of all ages in all parts of Leeds-Grenville I regularly hear an underlying fear of what the future holds for them. They worry about caring for their family, they express concern that they or their children will not have good jobs, and they worry as the cost of

living escalates beyond their means. Their priorities are universal health care, jobs, post-secondary education and a strong, secure retirement. These are the Liberal priorities.

Stephen Harper is taking our country in the wrong direction. Only the Liberal Party of Canada has the policies and the values, the leader and the team to turn our country around and get it back on track.

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