

# Canadians for Tax Fairness

## Our Vision / Our Programme

### Our Vision

*Canadians for Tax Fairness* wants governments to be able to raise the revenues needed to build a better Canada.

The current federal government is working hard to lower people's expectations of government -- we want to raise their expectations.

When the government offers austerity, we will offer a positive alternative. This country is very wealthy, and we can afford to offer better health care, better education, better childcare, housing, public transit, and more.

The Conservatives encourage Canadians to be fearful, cynical and individualistic, but we can be just as realistic, more responsible, and still offer positive alternatives.

We will encourage hope and optimism, and channel young people's anger over growing inequality by showing how to achieve greater equality.

We'll show how much tax cuts have cost the country in terms of lost opportunities -- lost opportunities to create jobs, reduce poverty and educate a new generation.

We will offer Canadians the choice of "guns versus butter" – a choice of childcare, pharmacare and free tuition, rather than prisons and stealth fighters.

In short, we pit our values of optimism, sharing and caring against their values of cynicism, fear and anger.

We will seize the moral high ground and win the hearts and minds of Canadians.

We can do better - we can build a better world. Tax fairness is key to realizing this goal.

### ***We Need to Find the Revenue We Need to Build a Better Canada***

That familiar saying – ‘taxes are the price we pay for civilization’ – is now dramatically demonstrated in Canada, but in reverse. The Harper government’s tax cuts will cost the federal treasury over \$200 billion. We are becoming less civilized as a result. Canadians suffer unconscionable levels of inequality, declining social services, crumbling infrastructure, environmental degradation, and fearful social and economic insecurity. All of this radical transformation of Canada can be traced to governments dedicated to dismantling the social democratic state. The key to their strategy has been demonizing – and cutting – taxes.

At its best, government is what we do together, as a community. It is the things we do better together than we do individually: Medicare, education, parks, social security, pensions, mass transit, police and

fire protection and more. Imagine how difficult it was when individuals and families had to provide those things for themselves. Our civilization, our government, is worth protecting.

Those who want to dismantle the achievements of previous generations know that Canadians will not be easily persuaded to give up the incredible gains made through their democracy. They began to demonize both government and taxes. As government delivered less, trust in government declined. It has been an effective combination: lower expectations of unresponsive governments and relentless repetition of the message: “tax relief.”

Canadians for Tax Fairness seeks to challenge both these messages by appealing to Canadians’ values and reminding them that as a wealthy nation we can afford to build a better country. We are more than twice as wealthy today in GDP per capita than when Medicare was established. We have more than enough resources not just to keep what we have but to deliver what we want: child care, home care, Pharmacare, low tuition, a green economy, mass transit and more.

But we can only do that when the vast majority of Canadians accept paying their fair share of taxes with pride for what those taxes give us. Fair taxes clearly means reversing the unfair tax cuts provided the rich and super-rich and the large corporations. But it also means that middle class Canadians must accept their responsibility and embrace the notion that taxes are an investment in their community and their children’s future – and not a “burden.” As research shows over and over again, the value of what we get for our taxes far exceeds what most people pay.

But fairness is the key – and it is one of the core values held by Canadians. Canada’s richest 1% pays a lower rate of overall tax than the poorest 10%. Until people feel that what they pay in taxes is fair and that the revenue will be used for the things they need, their trust in government will not easily return.

The mechanisms for recovering the revenue lost to the massive tax cuts of the past twelve years are not new or secret. They include simply returning to fairer, more progressive income tax levels and the wealth (inheritance) taxes we once had. It means closing tax loopholes, eliminating unfair tax preferences and making corporations pay for the services they receive from government. They include new taxes to deal with changing times: green taxes to deal with climate change and financial transactions tax to curb the worst abuses of financial speculation and generate badly needed funding to help reduce poverty and fight climate change.

It also means Canada playing a leadership role in international efforts to tackle tax havens, ending financial secrecy and establishing rules that force corporations to pay fair taxes to the countries where they generate their profits.

But more important than the mechanisms for raising revenue is the recovery of community and the recognition that a few extra tax-cut dollars spent at the mall is not worth giving up the things that make communities strong. It’s about recovering government we can trust. That is at the heart of Canadians for Tax Fairness’s programme: enlisting Canadians in a positive campaign to support raising the revenue we need for the things we say we want and doing it based on the principle of fairness.