

This is the time of year that we think most of those less fortunate. As the MP for Willowdale, I want to ensure that our government helps those who are unable, for whatever reason, to help themselves. As such, I am very proud of our Liberal **Family Care Plan** proposal to help families take care of gravely ill loved ones, with time off work and additional money. In contrast, I am very concerned about the current government's priorities.

### ***Families or Fighter Jets? Preventing Crime or Mega-Prisons?***

Why is the Conservative government insisting on an untendered purchase of 65 stealth attack fighter jets? The cost will be at least \$16 billion (that's \$16,000,000,000.00!)--and the price could balloon to much, much more. But what for? None of these planes would ever have been used in Afghanistan. They can't do Arctic patrols, which are so necessary for our Arctic sovereignty. They are built for "*stealth attack fighting*". What is this government doing? Where has our proud foreign policy gone? This government lost, for the first time, a seat for Canada at the United Nations Security Council. What a shame!

I am a big supporter of the Canadian military, and of ensuring that our men and women have the best equipment to do what's best for Canada. But MY Canada is NOT a "stealth, attack, fighter" country. I want our foreign policy to continue in line with Lester Pearson's peacekeeping legacy and our Canadian focus on helping others.

We also do NOT need to spend billions on American-style super-prisons. ***Crime in Canada, including violent crime, has gone DOWN steadily over the last 25 years.*** Why is this Conservative government trying to frighten Canadians into spending so much money on prisons, instead of on more community crime *prevention*? We all believe in law and order, but to prevent crime from happening in the first place, we must be tough on the *causes* of crime: poverty, lack of opportunity, lack of community engagement.

We need to invest in our families.

Today, 2.7 million Canadians provide care for seniors and it is estimated that by 2017, the number of seniors with chronic conditions requiring home care services will increase ***by one-third***. Family caregivers are responsible for 80% of Canada's homecare services, providing over \$9 billion in unpaid care each year.

Despite their value to our economy, our health, our families and our communities, the important work done by family caregivers has gone largely unrecognized. To make matters worse, the long-term challenge of Canada's aging population is being ignored by the Harper government.

The Liberal Family Care Plan will introduce a new **six-month Family Care Employment Insurance Benefit**, similar to the EI parental leave benefit, so that more Canadians can care for gravely ill family members at home without having to quit their jobs. The current compassionate care program only allows for six weeks, and is highly restrictive. We can do better than that. Under this new program, families can claim the six months in blocks over a year long period, and share it with other family members.

The Liberal Family Care Plan will also offer a **new Family Care Tax Benefit**, modeled on the Child Tax Benefit, to help low- and middle-income family caregivers defray the cost of providing essential care to a family member at home. This will provide hundreds of thousands of families with a tax-free payment worth up to \$1,350 per year to help defray the costs of providing family care.

While the Conservatives are governing more and more by fear, suspicion, silence and control, MY Canada deserves to be governed with intelligence, integrity, truth, optimism and compassion.

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