

10 Questions for Candidates

Federal Election 2008



Focus on Foreign Affairs and International Trade in the Americas

Stephen Harper traveled to Latin America and the Caribbean in July 2007 and said on that trip that the Americas was now a foreign policy priority for Canada.

1. The Canadian government has said it would focus trade negotiations on countries that shared our fundamental values of human rights and democracy but then began negotiating a NAFTA-like deal with Colombia, arguably, the hemisphere's worst human rights violator. Parliament's International Trade Committee (CIIT) studied the situation in Colombia recommending that this deal not proceed before holding an independent human rights assessment.

If elected would you (and your party) follow the CIIT recommendations and stop the ratification of this deal with Colombia?

2. An astounding 67% of the Bolivian electorate supported the Morales government in the August 10th, 2008 Referendum. However, despite the strong vote of confidence in the national government, dissident governors in Bolivia's four eastern departments have since stepped up efforts to disrupt and destabilize the country. Over the past weeks acts of violence and sabotage have been carried out with the intent of bringing down the government.

On Sept 15th all 12 South American governments issued the La Moneda Declaration stating, *"Their complete and resolute support for the Constitutional Government of President Evo Morales whose mandate was backed by a large majority in the recent Referendum."* Canada has remained silent in the face of the mounting crisis in Bolivia leaving the impression that it is tacitly supporting the US evident meddling in Bolivia's internal affairs.

If elected would you (and your party) pressure Ottawa to issue an immediate public statement of Canadian support for an indivisible and sovereign Bolivia?

3. NAFTA has destroyed many manufacturing jobs, depressed wages, worsened poverty, eroded social programmes, and enfeebled governments in all three participating countries (Mexico, Canada, and the US) while vastly increasing the rights, power and wealth of the big corporations. An Angus Reid Poll done in July 2008 found that 52% said Canada should renegotiate. Renegotiation of NAFTA is the position of US presidential hopeful, Barack Obama. Massive protests in Mexico show that Mexican workers and farmers want out of this deal. NAFTA article 2205 says: "A party may withdraw from this Agreement six months after it provides written notice of withdrawal to the other parties."

If elected would you (and your party) work to have NAFTA either renegotiated, or go a step further and have Canada withdraw from NAFTA?

4. The restrictions on our sovereignty imposed by NAFTA's energy chapter are unique in all the world's treaties. NAFTA's proportional sharing clause (Article 605) obliges Canada to go on exporting non-renewable hydrocarbons to the United States even if these sales cause domestic shortages. Mexico wisely won an exemption from this clause.

Currently, Canada has only 13 years worth of conventional oil reserves and just 9.3 years of proven natural gas reserves. Yet Canada exports two-thirds of our oil production and 63% of our natural gas to the U.S.

NAFTA prevents us from reducing the share we export in order to preserve supplies for future generations, cut down on greenhouse gas emissions from the tar sands or set aside natural gas for higher value-added, job-creating petrochemical industries.

If elected will you (and your party) protect our future energy supply by working to eliminate the Articles in NAFTA that have turned Canada into an energy colony of the US?

5. The Alberta tar sands industry is the fastest growing and single largest green house gas emitter in Canada. Unchecked development of the tar sands has profound environmental, economic and social consequences for Canada and the world.

Are you (and your party) in favour of an immediate moratorium on new tar sands projects?

6. On February 14, 2008 US troops got the green light to enter Canada. The Canada-U.S. "Civil Assistance Plan" (CAP) was signed at U.S. Army North headquarters, Fort Sam Houston, Texas, by U.S. Air Force Gen. Gene Renuart, commander of NORAD and U.S. Northern Command, and by Canadian Air Force Lt. Gen. Marc Dumais, commander of Canada Command. This agreement allows the militaries of either nation to send troops across the other's borders during an emergency. CAP was never announced publicly by the Harper government despite the huge implications that it holds for our continued sovereignty.

If elected would you (and your party) introduce a motion in Parliament to have Canada pull out of the bilateral Civil Assistance Plan?

7. The Harper government has aligned us with U.S. foreign and defence policy world wide, with grave implications for the hemisphere we share with hundreds of millions of Latin Americans. Latin America has a long history of commitment to non-intervention and to a non-nuclear continent. But, the U.S. has been quietly extending its strategic power in the region by finding sites for new military bases. It has also taken the US 4th fleet out of mothballs (last used to hunt Nazi U-Boats in the Caribbean) to conduct war exercises in Atlantic waters in order to intimidate the growing number of countries in South America, like Venezuela, that are promoting people-centred development models that are frowned upon in Washington.

If elected would you (and your party) call on the US to cease it's backyard bullying tactics, mothball the US 4th Fleet, and would you work through Parliamentary channels and public hearings to forge an independent Canadian policy of respectful engagement with all countries in the Americas?

8. Farmers and workers gain vital benefits from the Canadian Wheat Board as the single-desk marketing agency for wheat and barley, but transnational grain companies want the Board destroyed so they can grab its business. The Harper government's is trying to dismantle the Wheat Board which represents a threat to farmers' collective marketing systems across this country.

If elected will you (and your party) immediately guarantee the Canadian Wheat Board's single-desk agency powers, and actively support farmer-controlled orderly marketing for Canadian agriculture?

9. Will you (and your party) move for immediate Canadian support for the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as passed by the U.N. General Assembly?
10. Will you (and your party) ensure that Canada implements to the fullest its commitments under the U.N. Convention against Torture, i.e. an absolute ban on the practice, and prosecution of those accused of torturing, whether in Canada or abroad?