

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION



CHEF DE L'OPPOSITION

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Speech to the Montreal Council on Foreign Relations

“Rebuilding Canada’s Leadership on the World Stage”

Montréal, Québec

Thank you for welcoming me today. It is a great honour to speak to such a prestigious forum.

For the last 25 years, the Montreal Council on Foreign Relations has been a place for serious debate about Canada’s place in the world.

We have just seen the most embarrassing moment for Canada on the world stage in more than 60 years. Last month, for the first time since 1948, Canada failed to win a seat on the UN Security Council.

This was a great disappointment for Canada – and a clear condemnation of our foreign policy.

If Canada had a seat on the UN Security Council, we would be at the table where major decisions are made, where the use of force is authorized, and where the Responsibility to Protect is upheld.

We have wasted a rare opportunity to lead.

This was a wake-up call for all Canadians. The world forced us to look in the mirror, and we don’t like what we see.

We are not the Canada we thought we were. We don't have as many friends as we thought we did. We don't command the same respect that we once took for granted.

Now we must choose: Will we turn away from the world, or embrace it? Reject Canadian leadership, or restore it?

The Conservative government wants to change the subject, to escape accountability for their failure. We cannot let them get away with it.

As soon as the votes were counted, Stephen Harper started searching for excuses.

First, he tried to blame me. Next, he blamed the secret ballot. Then he said he didn't win because he has principles.

But six other Prime Ministers have won a seat on the Security Council. Does Stephen Harper expect us to think that none of them had principles?

The fact is that every Prime Minister who has tried to win a seat for Canada on the UN Security Council has succeeded – except for Stephen Harper.

And if you think that this was just a bad day at the office for Mr. Harper, think again: Canada may not have a chance to sit on the Security Council for another 10 years.

But the Harper government has chosen to wear our failure as a badge of honour. 'What the world thinks doesn't matter,' they say. 'We don't want to join the club, anyway.'

But the Security Council is a club that Canada helped to create. We were present at the founding of the United Nations. For six decades, we have helped to prevent conflict, promote development, and advance peace.

We are committed to the United Nations – and we will not let Stephen Harper put Canada on the sidelines.

So why did we lose the vote on October 12th? It's no mystery.

For five years, the government has had no other vision for foreign policy than to get Conservative MPs elected. They have made the foreign policy of Canada an extension of domestic politics.

Just last week, there was a credible threat against targets in North America, and Stephen Harper decided that this was the moment to launch a partisan attack against the Opposition. It was beneath his office – and completely predictable.

This is a government that plays politics with everything, including national security.

They ignored China and India, froze our friendships, and let our share of new markets fall behind.

They have walked away from our partners in Africa and abandoned our role as a respected mediator in the Middle East.

They have ignored climate change, withdrawn from UN peacekeeping, and forgotten the Responsibility to Protect.

And, they have done all this while they have muzzled any group that dares to oppose their policies.

For decades, we have had a bipartisan consensus about foreign policy in this country. Liberals and Progressive Conservatives earned Canada a place of leadership in the international community.

But then Stephen Harper threw away our principles – of balance, moderation, defence of human rights, and commitment to the UN. This is why, on October 12th, we suffered our worst setback in 60 years.

So let's stop trying to change the subject. Instead, let's learn from what has happened, and decide how to move forward together, and rebuild Canada's leadership on the world stage.

There are three areas in which we must focus our efforts: multilateralism, development, and diplomacy.

First, multilateralism.

Canadians have shaped the way the world comes together to confront our common challenges.

Since Pearson, Canadians have been proud peacekeepers. A blue beret is on our 10-dollar bill. And we have held a seat on the Security Council each decade in part because of our passion for peace.

But things have changed. Canada used to deploy more than 3,000 troops to UN missions each year. Last year, we sent 57.

We are not the peacekeepers we once were.

We must return to UN peace operations – to a role that is written into our values and our traditions, a role that is ideal for a country of our size and strength.

Canada must wear the blue beret again, and restore our commitments to make the world a safer place.

Once, we fought to ban landmines. Now, we should be fighting to ban cluster munitions, nuclear proliferation, the transfer of fissile materials, and that latest weapon of war, the child soldier.

When the current government took office in 2006, one of the first things they did was cut words like “human security” and “public diplomacy” from the vocabulary of the Department of Foreign Affairs.

For a while, they cut “the Responsibility to Protect.”

The Responsibility to Protect says that governments have an obligation to protect their citizens from harm. And when they cannot or will not do so, then the international community can step in.

And where does the Responsibility to Protect matter most? On the UN Security Council, of course.

We must renew our commitment to the Responsibility to Protect – a humanitarian principle that was invented by Canada. The world must know that Canada will stand ready to protect the innocent and the voiceless from barbarism.

We must also restore our commitment to international humanitarian law and human rights – especially the rights of every Canadian citizen.

For four years, the Conservative government did nothing to protect Omar Khadr, a Canadian citizen and a child soldier. Now, the government won’t even admit that they’ve made a deal to bring him back to Canada.

Canadians deserve a foreign policy that is consistent, truthful, and truthfully communicated.

For four years, our government was the only one in the Western world that refused to bring our own citizen home from Guantanamo Bay.

The government can’t choose which citizens to protect, and which to abandon. The government can’t choose which laws to respect, and which to ignore.

The Conservatives can’t claim to defend the human rights of people around the world, if they don’t defend Canadians at home and abroad.

Another example: the death penalty.

For years, Government of Canada would intervene to prevent Canadian citizens from being executed abroad. Our government would ask foreign governments to replace the death sentence with life in prison. Not anymore.

If we believe that the death penalty is unacceptable in Canada, then we must say so abroad, and prevent the execution of Canadians. The Conservatives have refused to do so.

The Conservatives have tarnished Canada's reputation as a defender of human rights.

In recent years, the world has watched in disbelief as the Canadian government has wilfully ignored reports of torture in Afghanistan, then tried to cover them up. They even shut down Parliament to escape accountability.

How did the Government of Canada, with its traditional passion for justice, fall so far?

We must restore Canada's reputation, as a proud defender of human rights in the international community. That is the Canada we hope to be. And that is the Canada we will be again.

We must also rebuild Canada's leadership on the environment.

At the UN climate change conference in Copenhagen, Canada was even mocked as the "Fossil of the Year." What shame! While provincial leaders, like Premier Charest, offered strong leadership, the federal government sat in silence.

In Copenhagen, the message from the international community was, 'Canada, please leave the room so we can get something done.'

Then, last week, it happened again. At the UN Biodiversity summit in Japan, Canada's only noteworthy contribution was blocking the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, earning us the "Dodo of the Week" award from international NGOs.

That has never happened before, and it must never happen again.

We must return to the global fight against climate change, and our party has a plan to do so.

We must commit to international targets to keep climate change within 2-degrees Celsius, invest in clean energy and energy efficiency at home, and stand for enforceable targets abroad.

This will allow Canada to create new green jobs, while doing our part to get climate change under control.

We have always worked well with other countries. We have been an honest broker, a steadfast friend, and a strong ally. Canada has commanded respect.

Nowhere has this been truer than in the Middle East.

The Conservatives have tried to turn our policy into a wedge issue, to divide Canadians. But the foreign policy debate in Canada should not be about who is Israel's best friend. It should be about how we bring peace and security to Israelis, Palestinians, and the region.

For fifty years, until the Conservatives took over, Canada's policy in the Middle East had been consistent and clear. We support a two-state solution. A safe, secure and democratic Israel, beside a viable, secure and democratic Palestinian state. Two states for two peoples – that is Canada's position.

We have never compromised our commitment to peace. We have never been neutral between terrorists and democratic states. Equally, we have defended the rights of two peoples to have a state and live in peace.

We have been a friend to Israel – and also a friend to the Palestinians. But our friends need friends who have friends.

Think what we could have done as a member of the UN Security Council. We could have stopped the parade of one-sided resolutions, restored balance to human rights monitoring, and pushed for tougher sanctions against Iran – which remains the single biggest threat to the entire Middle East.

Instead, Stephen Harper turned foreign policy into a tool of domestic politics – and now Canada will spend the next decade on the sidelines.

We can return to the field. We can lead again. We can rebuild Canada's leadership on the world stage – and we can begin with a new commitment to multilateralism.

We've also got to focus on development. In the last five years, Canada has walked away from our partners – in developing countries and here at home.

The Harper government has muzzled Canadian organizations that are devoted to international development.

Think of the ongoing controversy at Rights and Democracy. What remains of that organization's independence?

Women's groups, like MATCH International. Faith groups, like KAIROS. Umbrella groups, like the Canadian Council for International Cooperation. All have had their funding cut for political reasons.

Democracy should be at the heart of our foreign policy. And democratic debate should be part of our foreign policy at home.

Instead of showing the world what respect for democracy looks like, the Conservatives have muzzled any group that dares to disagree with them.

This is no way to conduct our foreign policy. The world needs more Canadian voices, not less. We must empower the organizations that have been silenced by the current government – so we can engage and celebrate Canadians who make a difference in the world.

And we must make a difference where it is needed most – in the poorest countries on earth.

In the last five years, the Conservatives have walked away from Africa.

Cuts have replaced commitments. Overall development assistance has been frozen for the foreseeable future. Pledged aid to Africa has been cut by \$700 million. We are falling short of the Millennium Development Goals.

Eight African countries were removed from the list of priority aid recipients – five of them members of la Francophonie. They found out about the cuts in the newspaper.

17 African ambassadors came to Parliament Hill to beg the government not to abandon these countries that need our help. The government was indifferent.

That indifference must end.

Canada must return to Africa. We must rejoin the fight against extreme poverty, malaria, HIV/AIDS, and the effects of climate change. And we must empower women—in Africa and across the developing world.

We will return to Africa not to hand out charity, but to build new partnerships that raise living standards, increase capacity, and expand freedom.

Africa will be an engine of the global economy in the coming decades. China is there. India is there. The EU is there.

When the world has finally started to pay attention to Africa, Canada has walked away.

We must build partnerships with African countries – and with China and India in Africa – not only to fight poverty and disease, but also to promote prosperity and sustainable economic growth.

We must return to Africa. We must return democracy to our development work. We must be a better partner, at home and abroad.

But all of this will require us to rebalance the three Ds of our foreign policy: development, defence, and diplomacy.

For nearly a decade, we have fought to bring peace and security to the Afghan people. Our combat mission ends next year – when the brave Quebecois soldiers of the Royal 22e Régiment will come home.

The incremental cost of the Afghanistan mission is now \$1.7 billion per year. When the combat mission ends, we will use these costs to restore balance to the three Ds.

The Conservatives want to continue to push defence ahead of diplomacy and development. They want to keep the three Ds out of balance, by spending \$16 billion on stealth fighter jets without a competitive bid.

These are the wrong choices for the future of our foreign policy.

We must always have a capable military, but we can't afford to sacrifice defence or diplomacy. Indeed, the purpose of our military should be to support our diplomatic and development efforts around the world – as it will do in Afghanistan after 2011.

We need a strong military to defend our sovereignty and to protect our citizens. But we also need Canadians digging wells and building schools, and Canadian diplomats working for peace and humanity's interests.

An obvious example of where we need balance is in the Arctic. We need diplomacy in the Arctic, to protect our environment. We need development for Arctic peoples, to establish our presence. And we need defence capabilities, to assert our sovereignty.

The Conservatives think that defence is all that matters. They are wrong.

We have to get back in balance. I've talked about development. We also need a new commitment to diplomacy.

In every aspect of our foreign policy, Canada's image has suffered – in part because our hard-working diplomats have suffered under the current government.

10 embassies and consulates have been closed. Budgets have been cut. And our diplomats have been robbed of the tools of public diplomacy.

Canada's representatives need resources, so they can promote trade and investment that will create jobs at home, so they can support partnerships in research and post-secondary education, and so they can share Canadian culture with the world. We need our diplomats to do all of this — and there's only so many times we can ask them to do more with less.

One of the current government's worst mistakes has been to cut federal programs that share Canadian culture with the world. Culture is the soul of a people. Quebecers prove this every single day.

We will reverse the funding cuts to PromArt and Trade Routes.

Last week, the Minister of International Trade said that he didn't think that culture was something to worry about in free-trade negotiations with the EU. He is wrong. We must protect culture, we must promote culture, and we will do as a key element of our foreign policy.

The current government has failed to understand that supporting our artists on the world stage is part of a strategic vision of promoting our interests around the globe.

A high-calibre artist like Robert Lepage, whose work is celebrated around the world, must know that his government recognizes how his success benefits his country.

People used to say, 'the world needs more Canada.' The Foreign Service can make that a reality. Let's give them the tools to do the job.

By rebalancing diplomacy and development with defence, and by renewing our commitment to multilateralism, we can rebuild Canada's leadership in the world — so that what happened at the United Nations on October 12th never happens again.

Of course, the objectives of our foreign policy are much bigger than the Security Council.

Instead of resisting the decline of the G8, Canada should lead the way to the G20. And we should host a permanent G20 secretariat in Canada.

We should push for international financial reforms that will promote stability and help keep jobs in Canada.

What Canada can't afford are embarrassing gaffes when the world is watching, like the \$1.3 billion G8/G20 Conservative photo-op that produced no lasting results.

We also can't afford to alienate our friends. Last year, the government imposed harsh new visa restrictions on Mexico. Canadian tourism suffered, and so did our reputation in Latin America.

Meanwhile, our border with the United States remains an obstacle to greater tourism and trade. We need to be thinning the border, not thickening it.

We should be building bridges, not burning them. The world is more connected than it has ever been, and so is Canada.

We are tied to the world not only by economic forces, but also by our citizens, whose networks of family and culture, business and trade span the globe.

This is why the Liberal Party's foreign policy platform, which I announced in June, is called *Canada in the World: A Global Networks Strategy*.

We believe passionately that a citizen of Canada is a citizen of the world. We are citizens of the world because of what we do: nearly three million Canadians live and work outside our borders. We are citizens of the world because of our origins and our family histories. And we are citizens of the world because of our interests: millions of us travel all over the globe every year. We are the most international society on earth.

This is how we will build new relationships with emerging economic powers – first with China and India, then with Brazil and other countries. We will bring the full range of our connections together in a new kind of bilateral accord, called Global Network Agreements. This will promote not only trade and investment, but also collaboration in research and education, energy and sustainability, health, immigration, culture, and tourism.

But none of this will be possible without the talents of every Canadian. Foreign policy is no longer reserved for diplomats, development workers, and soldiers. We used to talk about a “whole-of-government” approach. Our *Global Networks Strategy* requires a “whole-of-Canada” approach instead.

The next generation of Canadians will be the most international ever. Young people studying and working abroad will be Canada's best ambassadors, and their experiences will shape the future of our country.

We must rebuild Canada's leadership on the world stage for them, so they can get good jobs in a competitive world economy, and so they can look back, as we

do, at a tradition of Canadian leadership that sets the standard for the whole world.

We must rebuild our leadership in the world so that our young people can be proud again to live in a country that helps to improve our world.

And we must always support the youth of this country, when they go abroad to serve Canada. They are our finest representatives.

In the centre of our engagement with the world, we must restore our finest Canadian traditions, inspired by peace, justice, and mutual aid. We must show the world – and ourselves – that Canada can inspire us again.

It is time to earn back our place in the world.

Vive le Canada!

- 30 -

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