

December 4, 2006

The Honourable Stephen Harper  
Office of the Prime Minister  
80 Wellington Street  
Ottawa  
K1A 0A2  
Telephone: (613) 992-4211  
Fax: (613) 941-6900  
EMail: Harper.S@parl.gc.ca

Dear Mr. Prime Minister:

I am writing to reiterate and extend the points I made in writing to your Minister of Finance (in a letter to him dated November 28, 2006).

The great Canadian Pierre Berton, who has written so much on our history and our prospects, said in his 1968 book *The Smug Minority*, that:

“The march of social progress is like a long and straggling parade, with the seers and prophets at its head and a smug minority bringing up the rear.” *The Smug Minority*, (1968), 157.

You may know that Berton’s advocacy of the concept of an Unconditional Basic Income is clear from that book.

It seems to me that not only is the Conservative Party bringing up the rear but also it is marching steadfastly in the opposite direction seemingly wanting more of a long gone past. Instead of being a progressive party it is now a regressive party, to which the epitaph — *They create a desert and call it stability* — applies.

I suggest that you reverse course, exit the smug minority, and step to the head of the progressive parade.

Reports highlight your Government’s plans to use any surpluses that accrue to the federal treasury to pay down the national debt, and to be a *minimalist government*.

As I said to your Finance Minister, the words *minimalist government* are not just mean minded they mean that your government has no intention of proceeding to govern in any way that would extend those programs that progressive policies of other Canadian governments have put in place.

In other words – yours is a blatant attempt to avoid new social programs, and to avoid extending and improving those already in existence. Indeed it seems any governance that you intend to do will be devoted to destruction rather than creation.

My friend and a true conservative Dalton Camp put it clearly in his lecture *Neo-*

*Conservatism: How to Wreck a Country Without a Hammer* that neo-Conservatism leads to destruction of Canadian institutions, the castration of the proper functioning of Government, and to the installation of the American market values of that *failed state*.

I suggest that you re-think your policies and use the Bank of Canada so as to affect your cherished debt reduction. This can be accomplished, as you well know, at near zero cost to Canadians.

At the same time you could use the surpluses to accomplish those advances that Canadians want and need—some desperately. Most importantly you could focus on poverty reduction as the major systemically generated social cost.

People in poverty are not free! Face it!

Putting in place an unconditional basic income (UBI) for all—or a LIVEABLE INCOME FOR EVERYONE—would constitute a direct attack on the existence of poverty as the most vicious inconsistency with the notion of *equality rights of citizenship*, that is built into the Canadian constitution. A UBI is, of course, also consistent with Canada's support and acceptance of the UN UDHR and related covenants.

Rather than shirk social responsibilities I suggest you embrace them and introduce an UBI for every man woman and child in Canada. You might find this an area for reducing bureaucracy, creating social efficiency, expanding real freedom and creativity.

Generally, on this and other matters, I am suggesting that you and other members of your party step back from perversity exit the smug minority and install progressive policies of good citizenship in the sense of Adam Smith:

“... he is certainly not a good citizen who does not wish to promote, by every means in his power, the welfare of the whole society of his fellow-citizens.” Adam Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*

Yours sincerely,

W. Robert Needham  
197 Alexandra Avenue  
Waterloo, On  
N2L 1M6