

Please Mr. Ignatieff, do not appease Harper.

There is only one reason, Mr. Ignatieff, worthy of dignity, for you to give Stephen Harper your vote of confidence and allow him to remain as Prime Minister. The reason is you've judged that, in these times threatening all Canadians, they will be safer led by Stephen Harper than by you. Is that your judgment?

All other reasons, however rationalized, will be partisan opportunism, borne of the same species as Stephen Harper's 27 November 2008 *Economic and Fiscal Statement*. Such Harper-like reasons are contrived to advance personal ambition and political party fortunes with little regard for the cost exacted from the common needs, rights, and expectations of Canadians.

Stephen Harper engineered a general election on 7 September, 2008 in contempt of his own fixed election date law. Since then he has revealed himself more than merely uninterested and incapable of helping Canadians; he has revealed himself a present and future danger to us all. It's not only that Stephen Harper deceives us, and denied the enormity of the dire economic threats endangering Canadians. No, not only that. In the week before Parliament was prorogued, Stephen Harper raised hate between Canadians – risked rending Canada apart – to keep his clutch on power. During a national emergency when the only safe course was to bring Canadians together, Stephen Harper wreaked an assault on Canadian unity. Would you, Mr. Ignatieff, abandon Canadians to him?

In further deception, Stephen Harper would have us believe that the coming confidence vote concerns his latest budget attempt – a budget crafted not to help Canadians, but to keep him in power by assuaging you and your Opposition colleagues. In truth, the only confidence matter at issue is Stephen Harper himself: a man whom Canadians can neither trust nor depend upon.

Tellingly, Stephen Harper appointed eighteen new Conservative Senators and is not preparing his caucus or party for an election. Stephen Harper is acting as someone who believes – perhaps as a consequence of his

discussions with the Governor General – that the pending confidence vote can produce only one of two outcomes: either he will remain Prime Minister or the Governor General will ask you to form a government.

Do not appease Harper, Mr. Ignatieff, under the illusion however convincing or comfortable that you can help Canadians or rebuild the Liberal Party, even in the short-term, from the Opposition bench. From that weak and impoverished obscurity, you may be able to soften some of Stephen Harper's worst inclinations, but Canadians nonetheless will suffer from them.

The worst of the present crisis will have abated three, perhaps four, years from now. Fears will have calmed. Recovery will be reality. And, the hyper-amplified political ephemera of this time will be long forgotten. Then, the Prime Minister – either Stephen Harper or you – will ask the people for a mandate in order to continue improving the lives of Canadians. The history and nature of elections, campaigns, and voters argues that the Prime Minister of that day will be reelected, likely with a majority that will endure for a decade or more. The Opposition leader's campaign claim at that time will be that he would have led Canadians better through the crisis. Even if true, it will have insignificant resonance. The claim will truly beat hollow if you are the Opposition leader: the man who, when it mattered most, declined the call and opportunity to lead, inspire, and give Canadians hope.

**Canadians will rightly ask you,
"If you were unwilling to help us
to your full measure in the worst
of times, what reason can there be
to let you lead us in better times?"**

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