



Liz White: It's not the economy, stupid. It's ethical government in Canada

By Liz White

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The Animal Alliance Environment Voters Party of Canada campaigns to elect candidates who will fight for effective animal and environmental protection policies. In this election, however, our candidates are campaigning for something more fundamental to the Canadian way of life: a government that respects the rule of law, the principles of democracy, and the values of most Canadians. Little progress can be made on protecting the environment and animals, or on other issues that worry most Canadians, if our country is run by a prime minister and members of Parliament who rule by deceit, lawlessness, vendetta, favouritism, election rigging, and contempt of Parliament.

Among the world's wealthy nations, Canada has one of the worst environmental and animal protection records. For Stephen Harper and his Conservatives, however, that's not good enough. Harper is striving to be dead last. And even that, it seems, isn't his ultimate goal. He is reducing the scope and effectiveness of the few, mostly ineffective animal and environmental protections that Canada still has, and he's trying to undermine the environmental and animal protection policies of other nations.

Globally, Harper is sabotaging efforts to protect us from the most dangerous environmental threat humankind has ever faced—climate change. In Europe, Harper is spending over \$10 million on a World Trade Organization challenge to force European countries to trade in the cruel and bloody spoils of the largest authorized marine mammal slaughter in the world: Canada's money losing, environmentally destructive, commercial seal hunt. In Ottawa, Harper named former journalist Peter Kent his environment minister. Kent's first act as environment minister had nothing to do with protecting the environment. He appeared on CBC Television's *Power and Politics* to shill for oil from Alberta's greenhouse gas spewing tar sands.

AAEV has worked on animal and environmental protection issues with most political parties. While fielding its own candidates, AAEV has also actively supported and opposed candidates of other parties. What's important to AAEV is not party affiliation, but policies. Most parties have a mixed record on environmental and animal protection. What's important politically is that on election day voters reward parties with good records protecting animals and the environment and punish those with bad ones.

Until now, all of our political partners and opponents have shared a fundamental value: a belief in ethical government that serves the interests of all their constituents; government founded on the rule of law; on openness and transparency; on reaching consensus between political friend and foe; on making our cities, provinces, and country better places for everyone. The exception is the Harper government.

Harper aides, advisors, Conservative party colleagues, and senators have been charged with offences or are under active investigation by the RCMP. Harper senators and fundraisers are charged with breaking Canada's election laws. Critics of the Harper government's treatment of veterans have had their personal, confidential medical records illegally accessed and distributed, and used in vendettas against them. The Harper government has been found guilty by the Speaker of the House of Commons of misleading Parliament about the costs of multi-billion dollar fighter jets and jails.

The issue in this election is not the economy or criminals or taxes, as Harper is trying to scare Canadians into wrongly believing. The issue in this election—the issue AAEV candidates are talking to voters about—is Stephen Harper's and the Conservatives' morals. To solve any issue, we need to first elect ethical politicians.

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