

LEADER OF CANADA'S OFFICIAL OPPOSITION
SPEECH BY TOM MULCAIR



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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

This is Our Moment: Building the Canada of Our Dreams

Thank you very much.

Look at this crowd. What energy.

Thousands of New Democrats from coast-to-coast-to-coast.

From the Northwest Territories to Southern Ontario.

From Victoria to Labrador.

From the centre of Manitoba to all across Quebec.

This is the party that speaks for Canadians.

This is the party that fights for Canadians.

And this is the party that gets results for Canadians.

The last time we all met like this was two years ago in Vancouver.
In a hall very much like this one.

We met at the dawn of a new day in Canadian politics.

In the wake of an Orange Wave that spread right across this country.

But of course, our journey didn't begin on May 2nd, 2011.

It began out west nearly a century earlier, with a group of farmers
and labourers who struggled through the Great Depression and envisioned
a better Canada for everyone.

Our journey took us through Weyburn, Saskatchewan, where a Baptist
preacher named Tommy Douglas resolved that every Canadian should have
access to health care, regardless of their ability to pay.

It took us through the Yukon and through Halifax, where Audrey McLaughlin
and Alexa McDonough showed us that gender should never be a barrier to
helping shape this country.

And it took us through Hudson, Quebec, where Jack Layton taught us that with some love, hope and optimism, we can change the world.

My friends, the roots of our movement run deep through the Canadian soil.

And today we meet to write the next chapter of our history—together.

Let me tell you, we may have come from humble beginnings those many decades ago.

But in a few short years our journey—and our work together—will take us to new heights, to the first ever New Democratic government in Canadian history.

The work we do this weekend—the work you do every day—is more important than ever.

Because in Ottawa we face a Conservative government whose vision isn't based on what we can achieve—but rather on what we cannot.

How else can we explain that in one of the richest countries in the world, 250,000 seniors live in poverty, 800,000 children go to school hungry and a full generation of First Nations youth grow up without even the basic necessities, and without hope.

Today our country faces levels of income inequality not seen since the Great Depression and the middle-class is struggling like never before.

Canadians are taking on record debt.

Good-paying manufacturing jobs are disappearing.

The cost of living is rising.

And for the first time in our nation's history, middle class wages are consistently on the decline.

Yet the Conservative solution is to demand even more from you, and to leave even less to our children and grandchildren.

Conservatives are gutting the very institutions that Canadians count on—institutions that define who we are as a country.

Universal public health care to help the sick.

Employment Insurance to give each other a hand when we need it most.

Old Age Security to protect our seniors.

Instead of retiring with dignity, our seniors are now told to work two years longer.

Instead of getting the support they deserve, unemployed Canadians are now denied the benefits they've paid for their whole lives.

Instead of getting the care they need for a sick child, parents are now told there isn't enough money for frontline health services.



Simply put, under this government, the Canada we've known for generations is becoming unrecognizable, both to ourselves and to the world.

The values that once served as the foundation on which we built for the common good no longer drive the actions of our government.

What we see instead from Mr. Harper is the defining element of the Conservative approach—where we're told we just have to accept less.

Well, I'm here to tell you today that we can do better.

Every day I hear from Canadians who know what it's like to be on the outside, looking in.

There's no place for them in Stephen Harper's Canada.

People like John from Corner Brook, who wrote to tell me his utter frustration about having to move back in with his parents because he couldn't find a decent job—despite having a university degree and a college diploma.

Or Amy, a substitute teacher from Lindsay, Ontario, who was denied sick-leave benefits because her treatment for a congenital heart defect left her just 14 hours short of qualifying for EI.

Now she's worried about losing her home.

There's no room for the mother of two in Lavaltrie who's worked so hard to help her kids get ahead, only to see them fall behind, in debt and without opportunity.

Or the businesswoman from Calgary who looks at Crown corporations and sees that more than 80% of executives on their boards are men.

Or for the transgendered Canadian in MetroVan who wants to live a life free from discrimination.

For the veteran in Halifax who seeks nothing more than to grow old with dignity.

Or for the First Nations teen on a reserve who wonders why her school doesn't get the same funding as a provincial school just a few kilometres away.

There's no room for them in Mr. Harper's Canada.

The fact is, this isn't the Canada we inherited from our parents, and it's not the Canada we should leave to our own children.

Canada is—at its heart—a wonderful and a progressive country.

We're a country that understands we are all better off when we take care of one another—when we lift each other up.

We live in an age of unparalleled innovation.

We have greater human potential than ever before and a greater ability to put that potential to work.

What confronts us isn't a failure of ability, but a lack of political will.

Leaders who have no hope, no confidence, no vision, tell us that we have to accept less. They tell us that our children have to accept less.

That the services and benefits we've relied on for generations have suddenly become unaffordable.

For decades, Liberal and Conservative governments have done nothing on daycare, nothing on climate change and nothing to protect workers.

In fact, every time anti-scab legislation has come before Parliament, Liberals and Conservatives have conspired to defeat it.

While Conservatives are attacking collective bargaining rights, Liberals are encouraging Canadians to cross picket lines.

Despite 13 years in power, Liberals did nothing on transit, nothing on housing, nothing on student debt—except make things worse—until Jack Layton forced them to cancel \$4.6 billion in corporate tax cuts and put that money to work for all Canadians.

We know we can do better. We will do better.

And we will fight to put shared hope and a generous vision back at the heart of Canadian politics.

Our vision is based on the conviction that there is more to unite us than there is to divide us.

Whether you live in Moose Jaw or in Montreal, our future, as Canadians, is interconnected.

And the solution to today's challenges isn't to lower our expectations for our country, but to raise them.

It's time to rise above the cynicism that Mr. Harper relies on and it's time to get our country working again.

To make Canada a beacon of economic, environmental and social justice.

To serve the public interest, not just the well-connected interests.

And to build lasting prosperity, not just for a few of us but for each and every one of us.

You've often heard me say that we will be judged by what we leave to future generations.

And that economic, social and ecological sustainability is the fundamental issue of our time.

From coast-to-coast-to-coast, I've met bright young Canadians who understand this.

Who understand that we can't wait any longer to act.

Young people understand that building growth and prosperity is about more than putting all our eggs in the resource basket.

They understand that fostering a balanced, 21st century economy isn't just a debate about politics, it's a debate about their very future.

Young Canadians understand that if we gut environmental assessments, if we retreat from our international obligations, their generation will be stuck paying the price.

But if we invest in education and skills training, if we create jobs for youth and in our small businesses, then we can all reap the benefits.

Today we face challenges on a global scale, and our leaders will need to respond.

Our parents and grandparents faced the scourge of war with courage—in service of the common good.

Now it is up to us to tackle our 21st century challenges.

In the face of rising sea levels and more violent natural storms, will we act to combat global warming—or will we continue with our empty promises?

All we have to show for decades of Liberal and Conservative failure is one of the worst greenhouse gas production records in the world.

Years from now, will our children ask what we did to help, or will they ask why we refused to act?

Together, we must answer these questions.

That's the NDP commitment: to face these problems and find real solutions.

For 50 years, New Democrats have fought against inequality.

In 2013, we must fight the most serious inequality of all—the growing gap between generations.

If we don't, we will leave the next generation with the largest economic, social and environmental debt in our history.

We will continue our fight because this is the one battle that will determine the future of our planet.

New Democrats believe in a Canada where we take care of our responsibilities today, and protect our future.

That means protecting our air, our soil and our water.



It means living up to our responsibilities on climate change, not just talking about them.

It means building a more prosperous Canada for everyone.

The choices before us won't always be easy. Sometimes these challenges will seem too great.

But if we stay true to the principles that unite us and define us, instead of being distracted by those who seek to divide us, there is no challenge we can't meet.

Because it's the choices we make—not the challenges we face—that will define our future.

You know, I remember the first time I sat down for a meal with Jack Layton to discuss running for the NDP in Quebec.

The party didn't have a single seat in the province.

Our critics told us we were foolish to think we could ever win here, that there was no place for a New Democrat in Quebec.

But we both knew that our shared values were the values of Quebecers.

And we both knew it was possible to create winning conditions for Quebec in Canada.

I remember the 2011 campaign, when the pundits and pollsters said we were way behind.

They had us in fourth place, even in Quebec. They said we'd be wiped out.

Our opponents arrogantly told Canadians they had to choose between the red door and the blue door.

Instead, Canadians showed them the door.

In every election since 2000, more and more Canadians have turned to the New Democrats.

After each vote, our voice has gotten stronger.

In the last election, four-and-a-half million Canadians rejected the old debates that divided them and rejected the old parties that ignored them.

They voted for the unifying vision of our party.

One that respects Quebec.

One that's committed to working together and building a better Canada for everyone.

In 2011, four-and-a-half million Canadians said loud and clear: the NDP is on our side.

All across this great land, New Democrats are putting forward a positive and optimistic vision based on the shared values that unite us as Canadians.



But even today, those same critics doubt what our party can achieve.

You think they'd've learned their lesson by now.

The fact is, in Ottawa Conservatives are facing the strongest Opposition they ever have.

If you don't believe me, ask Bev Oda, ask John Duncan, ask Peter Penashue.

Thanks to the vigilance and hard work of our team in Parliament, in just the last year, not one, not two, but three Conservative ministers have been forced to resign for ethical lapses.

That's something Canadians had never seen before under Stephen Harper.

New Democrats will continue to hold this government to account.

A government so arrogant that it attacks the Parliamentary Budget Officer for daring to tell the truth, yet so incompetent that it has managed to turn the largest military procurement in our history into a complete fiasco.

A government that's given \$50-billion in across-the-board corporate tax cuts to oil companies and big banks—telling Canadians it'll create jobs—only to watch RBC use Conservative loopholes in the Temporary Foreign Worker program to give away Canadian jobs.

Here in Quebec, New Democrats have won the first federalist majority in a generation, and that is good news for all of us.

In Nova Scotia, Manitoba—and coming soon in BC—New Democratic governments are setting the standard for good public administration.

My friends, make no mistake:

We've got the vision to unite progressives.

We've got the vision to unite Canadians.

We are the party best positioned to defeat Stephen Harper in the next election.

And in 2015, that's just what we're going to do.

In a few short weeks, the Conservatives will begin the third year of their disastrous majority mandate.

That's why it's all the more important to begin preparations to replace them.

The road to 2015 starts today.

And each and every one of you in this room will have a vital role.

From raising funds to making phone calls.



From reaching out to new communities to strengthening ties with our most ardent supporters.

We'll have to work harder than we ever have, and we'll have to work together.

But I know we're up to the task.

In the next campaign, Conservatives will face an NDP election machine unlike anything they've ever seen.

We're strong, we're united and we're determined.

We're going to take on Conservatives in every riding and in every region because, unlike Mr. Harper, our vision for Canada excludes no one.

And in the next election, we're going to present Canadians with a clear choice.

A choice between a government that puts lobbying interests ahead of the public interest and a government that builds a balanced, sustainable 21st century economy.

Between a government that spies on Canadians without jobs and a government that creates good quality jobs for all Canadians.

Between a government that tells Canadians they have to settle for less and a government that knows we can strive for more.

We don't have to accept less. We can strive for more.

The choice before us is in our hands, if we want it.

Our future is in our hands, if we work for it.

Every step of our great journey over the past 50 years, every hope of every Canadian who longs for a better future for their children, has led us to this day.

Now it's up to us.

My friends, this is our moment.

To work together and build bridges.

To show Canadians that they can vote for the change they want and actually get it.

This is our moment to build the Canada of our dreams—not just for today, but for generations to come.

Thank you.