



A Policy Accord to Address the Present Economic Crisis

Preamble

The new Government is supported by parties that share a commitment to fiscal responsibility, a progressive agenda and a belief in the role of Government to act as a partner with Canadians and Quebecers. Where appropriate, these goals should be pursued in full partnership and consultation with the provincial and territorial governments.

Fiscal Principles

This policy accord is built on a foundation of fiscal responsibility. All three parties agree that the Canadian economy and the fiscal framework of the federal government have severely weakened since the last federal budget.

As the Parliamentary Budget Officer concluded, due to the policy choices of the Conservative government, the starting point of the federal government is deficit. This new reality does not reduce the necessity to stimulate the economy consistent with the understandings arrived at by all nations in the G20.

The following plan describes common goals and sets out an outline to provide active stimulus for the economy over the next two years, with a shared commitment to return to surplus within four years.

Economic Stimulus Package

The top priority of the new Government is an economic stimulus package designed to boost the domestic economy beginning with (but not limited to):

- Accelerating existing infrastructure funding and substantial new investments, including municipal and inter-provincial projects (such as

- transit, clean energy, water, corridors and gateways). This would certainly include addressing the urgent infrastructure needs of First Nations, Métis and Inuit;
- Housing construction and retrofitting; and
- Investing in key sector strategies (like manufacturing, forestry and automotive) designed to create and save jobs, with any aid contingent on a plan to transform these industries and return them to profitability and sustainability.

Rapid Support for those affected by the Economic Crisis

The new Government is committed to ensuring that the federal government has the appropriate programs in place to assist those most affected by the economic crisis so that all citizens will be in a position to fully participate in the economic recovery to follow, including the following measures:

- Facilitate skills training to help ensure Canadian workers are properly equipped to keep pace with the rapidly changing economy, while respecting provincial jurisdiction and existing agreements;
- Amend the current law establishing a new crown corporation for employment insurance in order to guarantee that all revenue from EI premiums provides benefits and training for workers. Eliminate the current two week waiting period;
- Lower the minimum required RRIF withdrawal for 2008 by 50 per cent;
- Reform bankruptcy and insolvency laws to better protect pensions; and
- Implement an income support program for older workers who have lost their jobs in order to help them make the transition from work to receiving retirement benefits.

Other Priorities to Stimulate the Economy

- Support for culture, including the cancellation of budget cuts announced by the Conservative government.
- Support for Canadian Wheat Board and Supply Management
- Immigration Reform

- Reinstatement of regional development agency funding to non-profit economic development organizations.

Families

As finances permit, we are committed to moving forward with improved child benefits and an early learning and childcare program in partnership with each province, and respectful of their role and jurisdiction, including the possibility to opt out with full compensation.

Working with our North American Partners

We will work with our North American Partners to pursue a North American cap-and-trade market with absolute emission targets, using 1990 as the base year.

Working with our International Partners

The new Government is committed to working with the international community, particularly with G-20 partners, in pursuit of an effective new global financial architecture.

Confidence Votes

The Government will not request a dissolution of Parliament during the term of this agreement, except following defeat on an explicitly-framed motion of non-confidence presented by the Opposition; or any vote pertaining to the speech from the throne; or on a budget vote at any stage in the House; or on any bill to implement a budget at any stage in the House; or on any motion in the House to concur in, restore or reinstate any Estimates; or on any supply bill at any stage in the House.

The Bloc Québécois will neither move nor will it support any motions of non-confidence in the Government during the term of its support for this agreement, and will vote in favour of the Government's position with respect to all matters referred to in the immediately preceding paragraph.

Term of this agreement

The Liberal Party of Canada and the New Democratic Party of Canada will adhere to this agreement until June 30, 2011 unless renewed.

The Bloc Québécois will adhere to this agreement until June 30, 2010 unless renewed.

Agreed on December 1, 2008

Hon. Stéphane Dion
Leader, the Liberal Party of Canada

Hon. Jack Layton
Leader, the New Democratic Party of Canada

Gilles Duceppe
Leader, le Bloc Québécois