

# Protecting your rights as a worker

NDP **BACKGROUNDER**

**As the gulf between the rich and the rest in this country** blows open wider, our rights as workers have never mattered more—yet we have a Prime Minister who couldn't care less.

For 25 years, while profits soared and the economy grew, average real wages stagnated. When Stephen Harper boasts about lower unemployment, he hides the stark reality: hundreds of thousands of quality manufacturing jobs are being shipped overseas, replaced by non-union service work that's lower-paying, if not temporary.

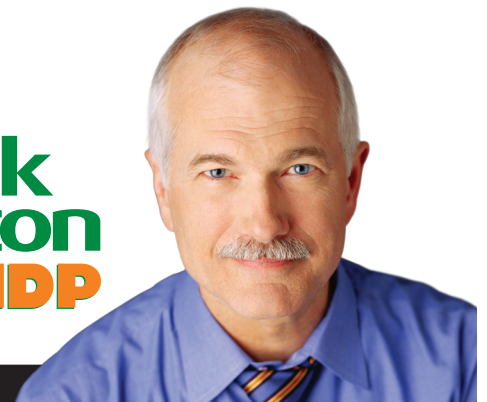
But Stephen Harper thinks it's not his job to protect yours, or to help make your life more affordable. He opposed all initiatives to ban strikebreakers and set a fair minimum wage. And his budgets confiscated \$52-billion of the Employment Insurance surplus amassed by disqualifying two in three workers from benefits—while bragging about spending \$50-billion on corporate tax cuts with no strings attached.

It doesn't have to be this way.

It's time for a Prime Minister who will bring in policy for the kitchen table, not the boardroom table. It's time for a Prime Minister who will put working families first. Jack Layton will be that Prime Minister.

**Don't let them tell you it can't be done.**

**Jack  
Layton**  
NDP



## Stephen Harper can't be trusted

- He opposed initiatives to protect workers—including legislation banning the use of strikebreakers and the NDP motion to reinstate a fair federal minimum wage.
- His most recent budget permanently confiscated \$52-billion of the \$54-billion Employment Insurance surplus been run up since 1996 by excluding two in three workers from receiving benefits.
- He committed \$50-billion to untargeted corporate tax cuts—with no plan to protect good jobs or create new ones, and no vision to protect public services or to make life more affordable for working families.
- When he signed a free trade deal with Colombia, he negotiated a clause that would have that nation pay a fine each time corporate-linked paramilitaries kill a trade unionist.
- He refused to implement the recommendations of 2004 Pay Equity Task Force to extend fairness at work to women, Aboriginal people, visible minorities and people with disabilities.

## Stéphane Dion is not the change we need

- On March 21, 2007, Dion and 51 other Liberal MPs voted with Harper to defeat legislation outlawing strikebreakers in federal workplaces.
- By having his MPs skip key votes, he rubber-stamped Harper's plans to confiscate \$52-billion from the Employment Insurance fund and direct \$50-billion to corporate tax cuts.
- It was Liberal governments in the 1990s that abolished the federal minimum wage and changed Employment Insurance rules, leaving two-thirds of workers unprotected. That's not the change we need.

## Jack Layton's New Democrats: Putting working Canadians first

This election, Jack Layton and his team of New Democrats will release a plan to protect your rights and quality of life as a worker. Layton's team has already led the way in Parliament:

- Tabled **Workers First legislation** to ensure that your wages, pensions and benefits receive top priority for payment when employers go bankrupt—ahead of banks and other creditors.
- Tabled legislation to **reinstate the federal minimum wage**, setting it at the inflation-indexed \$10/hour needed to hold a full-time above the poverty line.
- Tabled legislation to **restore fair eligibility for Employment Insurance** benefits for the two-in-three workers who've been unfairly excluded since 1996.
- Celebrated the launch of the **Wage Earner Protection Program**, securing \$3,000 of your unpaid wages if an employer goes bankrupt—a measure Layton secured when he rewrote the 2005 federal budget.
- Exposed how the **flawed Temporary Foreign Worker Program** is undermining labour standards by creating a separate class of workers more vulnerable to exploitation.
- Led the fight to **protect family-supporting jobs** that are being shipped overseas by the thousands; and supported the national campaign for a Made-in-Canada jobs strategy.
- Led the **fight to close the growing income gap**—with legislation to launch national affordable child care, make training more accessible, and crack down on gouging by banks and oil companies.
- Introduced legislation to create a **new national holiday in February**—a break for working families who spend nearly an hour less time together each day, compared to 20 years ago.