

Protecting the average consumer

NDP **BACKGROUNDER**

With prices for essentials soaring and average wages stuck in neutral, families like yours can struggle to make ends meet—but Stephen Harper has abandoned you to powerful corporations that don't treat you fairly.

Home heating fuel prices have tripled since 1998. This year, families like yours will spend \$4-billion on prescription drugs and \$400-million more on unfair ATM fees. Credit card interest rates of 18-26% are abusive, and you're paying some 50% more for cell phone service than Americans do. No wonder the average family's savings rate has collapsed to 2% of income—not nearly enough to retire on.

It doesn't have to be this way. But instead of looking out for consumers, Stephen Harper delivered a \$50-billion tax giveaway to those price-gouging drug companies, cell phone giants, big banks and big oil. Worse, he is endangering your family by moving to let airlines, meat packers and other industries police their own safety standards.

It's time for a Prime Minister who's ready to stand up to the country's most powerful corporations. It's time for a Prime Minister who will put you and your family first. That Prime Minister is Jack Layton.

Don't let them tell you it can't be done!

**Jack
Layton**
NDP



Stephen Harper can't be trusted.

- He squandered \$50-billion on corporate tax giveaways for big oil, the banks and cell-phone giants without adding one condition to stop them from gouging you.
- His Bill C-7 leaves the airline industry to police its own compliance with passenger safety standards—putting the fox in charge of the henhouse—and now Harper's moving to do the same for the food industry.
- Instead of addressing runaway drug costs, he expanded brand-name drug companies' monopoly rights by three more years—making it harder for you and your family to access cheaper generic drugs.
- After admitting that consumers are hurt by unfair ATM fees, high credit card rates, and fees for incoming wireless text messages, his government did nothing more than politely voice "concern" to his corporate friends—empty gestures.
- His digital-copyright legislation (Bill C-61) is a total capitulation to US lobbyists who want to criminalize perfectly reasonable consumer behaviour to maximize profits for the world's largest media conglomerates.

Stephane Dion is not the change we need.

- By instructing his MPs to skip crucial votes, he rubber-stamped Harper's economic agenda that rewarded corporations for gouging consumers to make record profits.
- With Dion at the cabinet table, the former Liberal government walked away when the provinces called for national leadership on runaway prescription drug costs. That's not the change we need.

Jack Layton's New Democrats: Putting you and your family first.

This election, Jack Layton and his team of New Democrats have a plan to deliver fairness for the average consumer. Already, Layton's team has led the way in Parliament:

- Promoted a plan to phase in **universal prescription drug coverage** to protect you and your family from soaring costs.
- Promoted a plan to **cap credit card interest rates** at 5% above prime and to end a variety of abusive billing practices.
- Tabled legislation to **end unfair ATM fees** and stop banks from gouging consumers just to access their own money.
- Tabled bills to **stop gas price gouging** by creating an ombudsperson to investigate complaints—and called for mandatory auto efficiency rules so drivers burn less gas.
- Called on government to give regulatory agencies the power to **protect wireless phone users** from abusive contracts and unfair fees—such as new fees for unwanted incoming text messages.
- Called for an **airline passenger bill of rights** to protect you from being exploited by hidden fees and unfair treatment.
- Targeted **unsafe products** by passing a bill controlling toxic phthalates, by calling for an outright ban on asbestos, and campaigning against toxic toys.
- Fought for your **digital rights** by exposing data "throttling" by Internet providers and leading the opposition to Harper's copyright bill that tramples on consumers