



# ECONEWS



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Promoting the Vision of a Vibrant Sustainable Vancouver Island

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## CANADA'S DISTRESS – AND FUTURE HOPE

There is a palpable sense of distress across Canada, as Canadians see their country being dragged and bullied down a path they do not like to a future they do not recognize.

The Conservative government was elected in May 2011 with an electoral majority supported by only 40% of Canadians, with 60% strongly opposed.

In the fourteen ridings which the Conservatives won by the slimmest majority, where a different result would have overturned the Harper majority, just 6,848 votes made the difference – and we have since learnt that some non-Conservative votes may have been suppressed by illegal Robocalls from Conservative party offices misdirecting them to non-existent ballot-stations.

In the eyes of many, the Harper government is not democratically legitimate. It did not win a popular mandate to govern, and it may have won its majority by electoral fraud.

Now the government is showing its true colours by jamming an enormous number of major changes into a 425-page Budget Implementation Bill C-38 that amends 70 different laws, and by trying to force the legislation through in days. Full list - see [www.bit.ly/LOGCru](http://www.bit.ly/LOGCru)

By so doing it is denying Parliament the ability to debate the huge number of changes contained in the Bill, everything from the elimination of fisheries habitat protection to pensions reform, from ending farmers' grazing rights to giving cabinet the power to overturn any future National Energy Board ruling that blocks a resource development on environmental grounds.

As a concession, the government set up a subcommittee to review the environmental changes but then sent three cabinet ministers to the session who took up most of the allotted time, limiting question time to 20 minutes.

So detrimental is the Bill to Canada's environment that it has been called the Environment Destruction Act, and on Monday June 4<sup>th</sup> websites across Canada are joining the national

BlackOutSpeakOut campaign to protest this assault on Canada's democracy. We are all being urged to call our nearest Conservative MP to protest both the Bill and the way democratic debate being suppressed. For details go to [leadnow.ca](http://leadnow.ca) and [blackoutspeakout.ca](http://blackoutspeakout.ca).



And all this when the government is also determined to sell Canada's oil to China by piping it across BC and shipping it through some of Canada's most dangerous waters, and when the CO<sub>2</sub> level in the Arctic has reached 400ppm, the highest it has been for fifteen million years. No wonder the frogs are worried.

What are we to do? That's the critical question. Persistent protest and political pressure are the immediate answer – but what about the long term? How can we stop Canada from being forced down this path to an American-style corrupted democracy that promotes a militaristic, tough-on-crime, rah-rah for the oil industry who gives a shit about climate change future?

And yet we have only ourselves to blame. By splitting the vote three ways (four ways in Quebec) we have handed the Conservatives their majority, and now we are suffering the consequences.

There are three ways through the impasse. The first is that two of the three non-Quebec parties should merge.

Realistically, this doesn't appear to be happening, but three years is a long time in politics before the next election in October 2015.

The second is that either the Liberals or the NDP should make a strong enough commitment to proportional voting to persuade progressive Canadians to give them their support for the sole purpose of changing the way we vote. This the New Democrats have done:

*"We're committed to a fair, mixed-member proportional system. This will be a fundamental plank of our next election platform."* – Thomas Mulcair ([www.ndfv.ca](http://www.ndfv.ca))

Giving our full support to the New Democrats would mean abandoning the Liberals and Greens except where a candidate clearly has the best chance of defeating the Conservative. As soon as Canada has proportional voting, each party can flourish, and Green-Liberal or Green-New Democrat coalitions will become the norm, as they are in Europe.

The third solution is that the Greens, who can command up to 7% of the vote, should agree to a temporary political alliance with the New Democrats and consciously choose not to run candidates against them except in ridings such as Elizabeth May's where they have a clear chance of winning.

For Green Party loyalists this might seem like a disaster, but for Canada as a whole it would be a triumph.

This line of thinking tells me that it is Green Party members who hold the key to change. If the Greens would endorse such a strategy, knowing that an NDP victory in 2015 would bring proportional voting and a chance for the Greens to win many seats at future elections, it would greatly increase the chance that this could change everything, and end this deeply troubling period of Conservative rule.

All that we are calling for is fair, proportional democracy – and the Greens may have the key to make it happen.  
-Guy Dauncey