



PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Overview of the fall sitting

“STEPHEN HARPER IS PUSHING A CONSERVATIVE IDEOLOGY THAT RUNS COUNTER TO QUEBEC VALUES”

- Michel Gauthier

Ottawa, Wednesday, December 13, 2006 – Ever since Parliament resumed sitting this fall, Stephen Harper has been pushing a conservative ideology that runs counter to Quebec values, said Bloc Québécois House Leader and MP for Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, **Michel Gauthier**, in his look back over the fall sitting.

“The *Clean Air Act*, which was supposed to be a green plan for Kyoto but is in fact a black plan for the environment, the Conservatives’ obsession with law and order, and Harper’s refusal to say how he intends to correct the fiscal imbalance, are all aspects of the sitting that pose serious concerns for Quebeckers,” Mr **Gauthier** added.

The House Leader also criticized the \$2 billion in budget cuts made by the Conservatives. The cuts have deprived language minorities, and groups that defend the disadvantaged, of the support of the Court Challenges Program. The cuts also targeted funding for Status of Women Canada, support for volunteer groups, and literacy programs.

Correcting the fiscal imbalance

For the Bloc Quebecois House Leader, there can be no doubt that Stephen Harper is trying by every possible means to reduce Quebeckers’ expectations of the promised correction of the fiscal imbalance.

“Stephen Harper has no choice,” **Michel Gauthier** explained. “He has to confirm in the 2007 budget that Quebec’s share of the correction will be ultimately equivalent to \$3.9 billion a year. If he doesn’t do this, he will have to explain to the people of Quebec not only why he doesn’t want to correct the imbalance, but also why he increased it by axing the daycare agreement.”

The federal government has to renounce the spending power that it has arrogated to itself over the years and transfer taxation areas equivalent to the minimum for making up Quebec’s annual foregone revenue, \$3.9 billion.

Quebeckers form a nation

The Bloc Quebecois has tried a number of times to have Quebec recognized for what it is: a nation. **Michel Gauthier** is delighted to have finally brought this about by introducing a motion in the House of Commons calling for such recognition.

“The Harper government’s reply to our motion on the recognition of the Quebec nation has enabled us to achieve our objective,” Mr **Gauthier** said. “That’s why we voted for the Prime Minister’s motion. We’re proud to have been the catalyst for this symbolic recognition of the Quebec nation.”

Good news for workers

“The fall sitting produced two tremendous victories for workers,” Mr **Gauthier** noted, “with the passage at Second Reading of our anti-strikebreaker bill, C-257, and our bill to improve the employment insurance system, C-269.”

The House Leader described as “crucial” the October 25 vote in the House of Commons on the Bloc Québécois anti-strikebreaker bill (Bill C-257). It was an historic victory for workers, and hailed as such by unions like the FTQ, the CSN, the CSD and the CLC.

“We convinced a majority of MPs to support the bill,” Mr **Gauthier** said. “This means that all workers will benefit from the determination of the Bloc Québécois, which has for a long time been demanding a ban on strikebreakers in the Canada Labour Code. The Harper government must now act on the majority will of the Commons.”

Toward a more generous and more accessible employment insurance system

The House Leader explained that Bill C-269 on improving the employment insurance system will make it possible to increase benefits by five weeks in all regions, whatever their unemployment rate. It will also increase the benefit rate from 55% to 60% and make the system more accessible.

Allowing Quebec to achieve the Kyoto targets

With respect to the environment, the Bloc Québécois made sure that Bill C-288, brought in by the federal Liberals to enforce compliance with the Kyoto Protocol, was based on a territorial approach that respects Quebec’s jurisdiction over reduction of greenhouse gases.

“In addition to making a major amendment to the committee’s report on the Bill, the Bloc Québécois is still hammering away at the Harper government to obtain the \$328 million it promised so that the Quebec government could carry out its own greenhouse gas reduction plan,” Mr **Gauthier** said.

Saving the firearms registry

In a report by the Standing Committee on Public Accounts released in December, the Bloc Québécois demanded that the Harper government order a moratorium on the dismantling of the firearms registry.

“All the Committee’s members were insistent that the report propose an evaluation be done on the effectiveness of the firearms registry,” **Michel Gauthier** said. “So the Bloc called for a moratorium, since it would have been illogical to go ahead with the dismantling of the registry before hearing the results of the evaluation.”

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