



PRESS RELEASE

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One year after Stephen Harper's Quebec City promises, Gilles Duceppe looks at the record:

“THE CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENT HAS NOT FULFILLED ITS PROMISES, AND IT IS UNDOING ANY PROGRESS QUEBEC HAS MADE”

Quebec City, Monday, December 11, 2006 – Speaking to the members of the Quebec City Chamber of Commerce, **Gilles Duceppe** gave a negative assessment of the Conservative government's performance, one year after the speech in Quebec City where Stephen Harper made a number of promises to Quebecers.

“In his speech, Stephen Harper made four major promises: to eliminate the fiscal imbalance; to make a place for Quebec in UNESCO, similar to the role played by Quebec in the Francophonie; to adopt a charter on open federalism and to reform the Constitution to reintegrate Quebec. Now one year almost to the day after his Quebec City speech, the Prime Minister has not kept a single one of these promises,” said **Gilles Duceppe**.

The fiscal imbalance: moving backward

Although Stephen Harper reiterated his commitment to correcting the fiscal imbalance in the Speech from the Throne, as well as in the last Budget speech, where he even said that he would resolve the imbalance with the next budget, **Gilles Duceppe** emphasized that the Conservative government is going from bad to worse.

“Stephen Harper cancelled the First Ministers' conference where the issue was to be discussed and basically his statements about the fiscal imbalance have aimed at reducing expectations. On September 26, 2006, the Prime Minister finally told Bernard Derome that he would no longer be eliminating the fiscal imbalance in the next budget. Not only has he not started the work, but he has even increased the tax imbalance by tearing up the agreement on child care,” said the Leader of the Bloc Québécois.

“Stephen Harper knew what he was getting into when he promised to correct the fiscal imbalance. For Quebec, that means increasing transfer payments for postsecondary education, reforming the equalization system, compensating for the shortfall for day care and keeping the federal government's promise to increase its contribution to health spending to 25%. All that comes up to at least \$3.9 billion annually for Quebec. In the next budget, the government must also make a suggestion on transferring tax room to Quebec in addition to providing a framework for federal spending power, as it promised, meaning the unconditional right to opt out with full financial compensation,” said **Gilles Duceppe**.

The other broken promises

Gilles Duceppe also pointed out that Stephen Harper had promised to offer Quebec seat in UNESCO, along the lines of the Francophonie, which means status as a full participating State in its areas of jurisdiction. “What Quebec has in fact been offered is status that only supports that of the Canadian delegation,” said **Gilles Duceppe**.

“In Quebec City, Stephen Harper also promised to adopt a charter on open federalism, but has anybody heard anything about it over the past year? The final promise in this package was to maintain an open attitude toward reintegrating Quebec in the Constitution, although he was careful to add ‘...when the circumstances are appropriate.’”

“I am wondering when exactly the circumstances will be appropriate, as it is clear that the overwhelming majority of Canadians object to the House of Commons motion on the Quebecois nation. The answer is probably never!”

The Conservatives in Quebec City

Gilles Duceppe criticized the Conservatives' sad record in the Quebec City area. "Stephen Harper promised to resolve four major problems in Quebec City. The mail-sorting centre has moved, the zoo is closed, and the Quebec City Bridge is still only half-painted. Only the airport received funds to move ahead with its expansion. The Conservatives wiped out the positive impact of that funding on the Quebec City economy just a few months after that announcement when it decided to abolish the GST rebate for foreign tourists, which dealt a direct blow to the tourism industry and specifically the convention industry."

"Stephen Harper had promised to have a very strong team of candidates in Quebec City. But the Conservative team in Quebec City is stuck: it has run out of ideas, leadership and ambitions for Quebec," said **Gilles Duceppe**.

"One year ago, Stephen Harper said: "[*translation*] *the Liberals do not want to, the Bloc cannot, only the Conservatives will.*" One year later, we have to say: the Liberals do not want to, the Conservatives are not, only the Bloc Québécois is standing up for Quebec. On December 19, 2005, Mr. Harper raised a great deal of hope among Quebecers. One year later, all this hope has turned into enormous disappointment. The Conservative government has not fulfilled its promises, and it is undoing any progress Quebec has made," said **Gilles Duceppe**.

The ideological right

"However, what Stephen Harper did not talk about in his speech in Quebec City was the extent to which his party is still being influenced by the ideological right. For instance, he never implied that he was going to cut budgets for the most vulnerable groups, such as the status of women or francophones outside Quebec. Nor did he ever say anything about extending the Canadian mission in Afghanistan so hurriedly and that in doing so he would be giving an essentially military and offensive role to the mission," said the Bloc Québécois Leader.

The survival of the Government: what is essential for the Bloc

"Over the coming weeks and months, there are three basic issues on which the Bloc Québécois will not compromise. First, an overall solution to the fiscal imbalance must be found, or the Bloc Québécois will not support the budget. Then there is compliance with Canada's international commitments regarding the Kyoto Protocol. An equitable territorial approach must be taken in implementing the measures and \$328 million must be transferred to Quebec for the implementation of the Quebec Green Plan. Finally, the Canadian mission in Afghanistan must be rebalanced before Canada is bogged down there, a fate it seems to be heading toward. If Stephen Harper refuses to make these changes, and remains incapable of obtaining reinforcements from NATO, we will not hesitate to withdraw our support and bring down his government on the Afghan issue," said **Gilles Duceppe**.

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