

## Editorial A “Yes” to Housefather is a “No” to Harper on Oct. 19

It's been a long ten years with Stephen Harper and his Conservatives running the country and it is high time to change direction. First with his minority government and the last four years with his majority, Harper has transformed public policy in Canada in a frightening way. It is alien to the liberal and progressive values that have been the hallmark of this country under Liberal and Progressive Conservative governments. The transformation has been slow but inexorable, and long in consequence. It is rooted in an ideology that harkens back to Harper's days as a prime mover in the Unite the Right movement that is committed to reducing the role of government in protecting vulnerable citizens and the environment from the excesses of capitalism. It kicked off its ten-year rule with such seemingly innocuous moves as scrapping the compulsory long-form Census, which has seriously compromised the value of essential data, in the name of protecting individual rights not to participate. The Conservatives have inflicted harsher sentences and longer waits for parole, choosing repression over rehabilitation, and forcing the provinces to build more jails, even as violent crime is receding. They scrapped the compulsory long-gun registry over the opposition of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, who said it was an essential tool. They refused to turn over the data to Quebec. They imposed gag orders on government scientists talking in public and put strict controls on MPs and ministers giving interviews to the media. Regular press conferences with the Ottawa media have been cancelled. It's all controlled from The Centre, the all-powerful “boys in short pants” who run the Prime Minister's Office. Omnibus bills were introduced covering a broad range of subjects, making detailed examination impossible before time limits were imposed. The Canadian Bar Association representing 36,000 lawyers denounced provisions of Bill C-51, the anti-terrorism legislation as a threat to civil rights, yet every suggestion it made for changes was dismissed. There is no Parliamentary oversight. The Privacy Commissioner was not allowed to testify at the Conservative-controlled Parliamentary committee examining the bill. Under Harper's watch, Canada's foreign policy has shifted from that of honest broker and peacekeeper to active participant, such as in the Iraqi quagmire. Many applaud Harper's embrace of Israel, but many also question his failure to balance traditional Canadian support for the Jewish state – a policy feature of all major parties – with calls to advance efforts to end its Occupation of lands captured in 1967 and allow for creation of a Palestinian State. Finally, the Duffy Affair so far has shown that Harper's closest advisers did everything they could to sweep Duffy's alleged transgressions under the rug and make it look like he was paying back the \$90,000 he owed even though the money came from Harper's Chief of Staff, Nigel Wright. Duffy faces 31 counts of fraud, breach of trust, and bribery. A Harper appointee, he has been suspended from the Senate along with fellow Harper appointees Patrick Brazeau, who faces two charges for false housing claims, and Pamela Wallin. Meanwhile, Ray Novak, Harper's current chief of staff, was told in an email that Wright paid Duffy's \$90,000, even as Harper was saying Duffy paid back the money on his own. Harper's former issues manager, Chris Woodcock, was also told in an email, but claims he didn't read it. Is it plausible that Harper, who is known as a control freak, did not know about Wright's role? If accepting the money was a crime, is giving it not also a crime? Not everything that happened in Canada under Harper's watch was negative. When the price of a barrel of oil hovered around US\$100, our economy boomed. Now that it's down to around US\$40 and the Canadian dollar is down to US 75 cents, we are on the verge of recession. All of which brings us to Mount Royal riding, where Côte Saint-Luc Mayor Anthony Housefather is seeking to hold the seat for the Liberals, while the town's former mayor, Robert Libman is running for the Conservatives. Libman has said he resisted

running in the past because he did not want to oppose Irwin Cotler, who is retiring as Liberal MP for the riding. Cotler is a quintessential liberal, former justice minister, distinguished law professor, a lifelong fighter for human rights and veteran Zionist. Libman, an architect, channeled Anglo discontent over the language law in 1989 when he staged an upset victory in d'Arcy McGee riding as leader of the Equality Party. He later served on Mayor Gérald Tremblay's executive committee. The issue in Mount Royal, however, is not about Libman's competence, it is about the party he now represents. Anthony Housefather is a success in all he's undertaken — in business, politics, as a supporter of Anglo rights, and as a committed Liberal. He is honest, hardworking, a good listener, and a trusted leader. The Conservatives would dearly love to win Mount Royal, the last riding in Canada with a substantial Jewish population (about 35 per cent) that has yet to switch to the Tories. That is why Harper launched his 72-day campaign in the riding; his wife visited there in previous weeks. They hope Libman can improve on Saulie Zajdel's score in 2011. Zajdel has pleaded guilty to two of five charges of breach of trust and corruption in connection with land deals while he was on council. The Conservatives' best hope to win an island seat in 2011 was given an 18-month suspended sentence, has to perform 240 hours of community service and donate \$10,000 to various groups. The NDP is running Mario Rimbao, an outstanding candidate who is known in Mount Royal as The Coach because of his work with basketball teams. Unfortunately, since the results are expected to be close, a vote for Rimbao in this riding is a vote for Harper. Strategic voting is called for to ensure that Anthony Housefather wins the riding and helps contribute to what, according to the polls, may be a possible coalition of Liberal and NDP MPs to run the country