



JOBS

WHEN POLLSTERS ASK voters about their priorities, employment is always at or near the top of the list. The Conservatives pitch their annual budgets as plans for “jobs, growth and long-term prosperity.” Finance Minister Joe Oliver habitually framed his budget last spring as coming after the Tories created “1.2 million net new jobs” since the depths of the last recession. But the NDP points to vanishing manufacturing jobs, while Liberals stress high youth unemployment rates.

CAMPAIGNING IN A WEAKENED ECONOMY

Early this year, it was still possible to see a political upside for Stephen Harper in the economic outlook. Sure, Bank of Canada governor Stephen Poloz saw the plummet in oil prices hurting Canada. But he also predicted, back in January, that the Canadian economy would, by the second half of 2015, “emerge from this much more strongly.” That hasn’t happened. In July, Poloz cut his prediction for 2015 economic growth to a dismal 1.1 per cent, down from 1.9 per cent just three months earlier. Rather than banking on a rebound, Harper now needs to campaign on the notion that his Tories are a better bet to weather hard times than either Tom Mulcair or Justin Trudeau.

WHERE THE PARTIES STAND

CONSERVATIVE When it comes to jobs, the Conservatives’ most consistent talking point in the House is their record on creation. Every few months, the party’s lines are updated to reflect the latest information. The last number before the House rose for the summer was 1.2 million net new jobs, a stat backed up by the number-crunchers at Statistics Canada.

NDP They say the “1.2 million net new jobs” claim doesn’t reflect the true nature of the

jobs—that is, many are short-term, precarious and unable to support families. The NDP also points to the long-term decline, since 2006, of manufacturing jobs in Canada—a number that tops 400,000. Those data are also backed up by Statistics Canada, and the NDP says the sector requires more help from Ottawa—including its proposed innovation tax credit.

LIBERAL They pledge to make it easier for young people who graduate into a bleak economy to find a secure job. The party criticizes the Tories for slashing youth summer employment programs, and otherwise failing to tailor policy directed at young people. They also warn that an emerging generation of young adults will end up poorer than their parents.

GREEN The Greens’ plan for job creation rests on a suite of sustainable-development pledges, wage increases and targeted tax cuts. The party would encourage clean tech and commit more early-stage financing to Canadian entrepreneurs. They’d also create a department of tourism to create more jobs in that sector. The party would set a \$15 minimum

wage for federally regulated industries, and establish a Youth Community and Environment Service Corps, which would support jobs for 160,000 young people over four years at the new minimum wage.

EXPERT OPINION

“Governments always take far too much credit when the economy is doing well, and far too much blame when the economy sputters. The federal government has almost no control over day-to-day economic fluctuations, but it can create the conditions for economic growth. Parties will need to explain how they will create broad-based economic growth, given the challenges brought by automation, globalization and an aging population. Canada is almost certainly in a recession, which will take billions out of federal coffers due to declining tax revenues. Every party will need to explain how they will make up the lost funds: cut spending, raise taxes or run a deficit.”

—Mike Moffatt, economics professor at the Ivey Business School

BY THE NUMBERS

National unemployment rate, 2005-15



A decade of manufacturing jobs in Canada

