

Layton would axe corporate tax cut [CA] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Pitching himself as a "positive alternative," NDP Leader Jack Layton has promised to eliminate the GST on family essentials like diapers and children's clothing, expand access to universities and colleges and invest billions of dollars in health care and cities.

Layton said the measures, part of the eight key platform planks he unveiled yesterday, "will help make life better for people." To help pay for it all, Layton promised as a first step to roll back the "reckless" \$1 billion corporate tax cut that took effect at the start of this year.

Yesterday's announcement of the key election planks was short on details and contained no breakdown of costs. Layton said it was only the "table of contents" and promised that more details would be revealed tomorrow in Toronto.

But he said the spending initiatives wouldn't produce a deficit. "Our commitment is to do all of this within the context of a balanced budget," he said.

He doesn't think he would have to raise taxes on families or individuals but reiterated his pledge to reverse corporate tax cuts.

"When you're leaving deficits on the shoulders of students, women, cities, communities, the environment, we couldn't afford it," Layton said.

His eight "key commitments" are:

Fostering a "green" economy by investing in the development of fuel-efficient vehicles and cleaner energy. "It's time to dispel that myth that we have to choose between jobs and protecting the environment," Layton said.

Improving public health care with innovation, "not privatization." That includes billions of dollars in new investments, party officials say.

Layton said the party would offer an alternative that "improves care and costs less and will stop privatization." Measures being considered include bulk buying of prescription drugs and improving home care programs.

Investing in cities. The former Toronto councillor ridiculed Martin's promise, as yet unfulfilled, to give urban regions a share of federal gas tax revenues.

Layton promised to implement a permanent infrastructure program and hand over 5 cents per litre -- totalling \$2.25 billion -- for investments in urban infrastructure.

Expanding access to post-secondary education. Layton is promising to ease student debt, make college and university tuition affordable and expand training and apprenticeship programs.

Making life more affordable for Canadians by protecting pensions, removing the GST on family essentials such as diapers, children's clothing and medicine.

As well, the NDP would expand child-care programs. Measures like these are especially important for women, Layton said, who "take on the lion's share of child-rearing and head most of Canada's single-parent families."

Strengthening Canada's voice "for peace, human rights and fair trade." Being good friends with the United States doesn't mean being "obedient victims" on issues like softwood lumber, Layton said.

Restoring integrity and accountability in government, starting with tough, new guidelines to halt the "cozy culture where lobbyists and insiders commute between corporate boardrooms and jobs in the PMO." That's a swipe at Martin's close relations with the Earncliffe consulting firm.

Balancing the federal budget. Layton boasted that as a city councillor, he was part of a team in Toronto that delivered 17 balanced budgets.

The NDP has high hopes in British Columbia. In 1988, the party won 19 seats in the province, helping to propel it to its best-ever showing of 43 seats nationwide.

- reprinted from the Toronto Star

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