

POLITICS

PM asks voters to choose 'security over risk' ← "Safety over democracy"! -cjk

Harper slams foes' views on Bill C-51, Syria mission

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CALGARY — Prime Minister Stephen Harper is warning voters that a victory by the New Democrats or Liberals in this fall's election would bring European-style economic calamity to this country and open the door to an increased security threat from jihadist terrorists.

Harper predicted voters will opt to return his party to power with another majority in a speech delivered to Conservative supporters Saturday evening.

"I'm confident that this October, Canadians will choose security over risk."

But with no guarantees in politics, Harper also unveiled some of the key themes he will bring on the road to persuade voters in the weeks leading up to the Oct. 19 election.

In particular, he portrayed his party as the only one seeking votes that is truly prepared to protect Canadians from terrorists.

"As we were brutally reminded last October, Canada is not immune to the threat of jihadist terrorism," Harper said in reference to the attack by a lone gunman on Parliament Hill.

Harper blasted the Liberals and NDP for opposing Canada's aerial combat mission against ISIL in Iraq and Syria, and for their positions on Bill C-51, which provides more powers to security agencies and the police.

He said Tom Mulcair's NDP has an "ideological aversion" to making decisions on whether to send the military into combat and said Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau only backed C-51 for electoral reasons and will "gut" the law if elected.

"These guys just don't get it," said Harper. "We're living in a dangerous world. We have a responsibility to act, to lead, to protect. Our government will stay the course, because that is what is in Canada's best interest."

"When the most despicable people in the world brag about their mass murders, when they threaten to carry out further attacks against Canadians, we will not back down, we will not weaken our law-enforcement agencies, we will not pull our troops out of the fight."

Instead, said Harper, a re-elected government led by the Conservatives "will meet these jihadist threats with vigilance, with resolve and with determined action."



LARRY MACDOUGAL/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Prime Minister Stephen Harper speaks at the annual South West Stampede barbecue in Calgary on Saturday.

Harper said Canadians are "rightly proud" of Canada's participation in an international coalition to send military aircraft to the Middle East to drop bombs on ISIL targets.

"Sending people on such a mission is a tough decision, but these are the decisions a government has to make," he said.

"Our (NDP and Liberal) opponents can't take such decisions."

Harper delivered his speech at the start of a long summer of political jockeying between him and his political rivals.

The unofficial campaign seems to have begun as Harper, Mulcair and Trudeau came to Calgary for the annual Stampede and to press the flesh with voters.

Mulcair and Trudeau both criticized Harper's economic record, saying he has failed to produce policies that promote the manufacturing sector and also ensure there is a balance between extraction of natural resources and environmental protection.

Before Harper even delivered his speech, they were striking back at his approach to security.

"We also believe that it's

important to protect the country from terrorist attacks," said Mulcair.

"Mr. Harper says we can't do that without compromising our rights and freedoms. It's not either or. You have to do both."

Trudeau, who visited an Islamic prayer centre, said he wants to ensure Canada is not marred by "divisive" rhetoric from political leaders.

"I demonstrate every step of the way, every day that I'm politicking, that I'm about pulling people together — not about highlighting fears or insecurities."

Harper, who is seeking a fourth mandate, said his Conservative government has delivered on its promises such as tax cuts for families and for those saving for retirement.

He said the Tories have a proud record on the economy, and of taking stands in the world, "confronting evil and danger where it is found (and) keeping us safe here at home."

Public opinion polls show the NDP is in first place, though pollsters also caution it's far too soon to pick a winner in the election.