

BULLETIN

Unreal

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AS PART OF THE UNION DELIVERING MODERN HEALTH CARE, HSA members are proud of their expertise. This expertise is based on a profound dedication to learning and applying the most recent research and most objective facts of their disciplines. We work in a world based on reality, where respect for the facts is a life-or-death matter.

It is therefore especially rankling to be governed by an individual who so wilfully ignores and denigrates facts in favour of narrow and short-sighted ideology. Who wants to turn our country into a place that is no longer realitybased.

Im referring of course to Prime Minister Stephen Harper. Whether hes denying falling crime rates and insisting on spending billions on new prisons or undermining international efforts to combat global warming so as to assist oil companies, he seems constantly to be dismissing the facts which must govern a modern society, even going so far as to attack those who insist on them.

Add to this list the matter of pensions for middleincome Canadians. Still riding the coattails of an economic stability established by the government he defeated, Harper was invited to address government and business leaders at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. There he admonished them to embrace austerity measures (ignoring the warnings of a majority of economists, who warn that austerity will only diminish fragile economic growth), and announced that Canadas Old Age Security program is unsustainable. People may have to work until they turn 67, he pronounced.

Only a few days later, the independent Parliamentary Budget Officer stepped in to assert some facts: there is no sustainability crisis facing OAS. Costs are rising but within acceptable levels relative to Canadas GDP. Furthermore Ottawas finances are in such good shape we could afford to cut taxes, boost spending and cut cheques to all the retiring baby boomers. Other economists and pension experts made the same case, including a 2009 report released by Harpers own Finance Ministry.

The fact is the pension system isnt doing too much ... its not doing enough. But the facts have never stood in Mr. Harpers way.

Thats why HSA supports the Canadian Labour Congress campaign to enhance the Canada Pension Plan. The CPP was designed to cover just 25 per cent of average lifetime earnings because back then, many employees were covered by company pensions. Now that those pensions are relatively rare, an expanded CPP offers the most efficient and straightforward way to provide increased security to more Canadians in a sustainable manner. Taking action now will pay off in the future ... by avoiding the massive costs related with helping seniors impoverished because they couldnt save for retirement.

Its a good plan, based on solid facts, and if we pull together we can convince this government to get real. 

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