

# Rhetoric and Reality: The Economic Record of the Harper Government

Stephen Harper's Conservatives are emphasizing economic issues in their quest for re-election on October 19. But there is a huge gap between these claims of good economic management and the statistical reality of Canada's economy, which has disappointed for years and which now seems to have slipped back into recession.

To further investigate Conservative economic claims, Unifor's researchers conducted a detailed empirical examination of the economic record of each government in Canada's postwar history. The economic performance of each Prime Minister was compared on the basis of 16 conventional indicators of economic well-being, including job-creation, unemployment, labour force participation, youth employment, job quality, GDP growth, business investment, exports, productivity, personal incomes, inequality, debt, and more.

All were measured using annual data from 1946 through 2014, from Statistics Canada and other public sources. The full Unifor paper (available at [www.uniforvotes.ca](http://www.uniforvotes.ca)) lists all statistical sources and methodology details.

The results were sharply at odds with Stephen Harper's economic messaging. In seven of the 16 indicators, the Harper government ranked last (or tied for last) among the nine postwar Prime Ministers. In six more cases, it ranked (or tied) second last. Among the remaining three indicators, the Harper government never did better than sixth out of nine (see table on other side).



## 16 Measures of Economic Performance

Indicator	Description	Harper Gov't Score (2006-14)	Ranking (out of 9) <sup>1</sup>
<b>Job Creation</b>	Average annual growth in employment	1.0%	Worst
<b>Employment Rate</b>	Change in employment as share of population	-1.4 points	8th
<b>Unemployment Rate</b>	Official unemployment as share of labour force	7.1%	4th highest (6th of 9)
<b>Labour Force Participation</b>	Change in labour force participation as share working age population	-1.0 points	Worst
<b>Youth Employment</b>	Average annual growth in under-25 employment	-0.3%	8th
<b>Job Quality</b>	Average score, CIBC Employment Quality Index (1988=100)	87.2	Worst
<b>GDP Growth</b>	Average annual growth in GDP after inflation	1.6%	Worst
<b>Real per Capita GDP Growth</b>	Average annual growth in real GDP per capita	0.4%	Worst
<b>Business Investment</b>	Average annual growth in real business non-residential investmt.	2.5%	8th
<b>Exports</b>	Average annual growth in real exports	0.3%	9th
<b>Labour Productivity</b>	Average annual growth in real GDP per hour	0.9%	8th
<b>Personal Incomes</b>	Average annual growth real personal income per capita	0.9%	2nd worst (tied)
<b>Inequality</b>	Average share of top 1% in personal income	12.7%	8th
<b>“Social Wage”</b>	Average ann. growth real federal non-military program spending per capita	0.6%	6th
<b>Household Debt</b>	Change in personal debt as share of GDP	+20 points	Worst (tied)
<b>Government Debt</b>	Change in federal net debt as share of GDP	+0.9 points	7th
<b>OVERALL RANKING</b>	<b>Average rank across 16 indicators</b>	<b>8.05</b>	<b>Worst</b>

Source: “Rhetoric and Reality: Evaluating Canada’s Economic Record Under the Harper Government,” July 2015, [www.unifor.org](http://www.unifor.org).  
<sup>1</sup> Includes all Prime Ministers serving at least one full year from 1946 through 2014.

On average, the Harper government came last among the nine postwar governments, and by a wide margin – falling well behind the second worst government (the Mulroney Conservatives of 1984-1993).

In summary, *Canada’s economy has never performed worse, since the end of World War II, than under the present Conservative government.*

Alternative policies (emphasizing job creation, investment, exports and economic equality) are needed to build shared prosperity in Canada. October 19 is our chance to win those alternative policies.

Please see the full report, and a 4-minute video explaining the results, at [www.uniforvotes.ca](http://www.uniforvotes.ca).