

Dear Andrew...

By LAURA CAMPBELL

Dear Andrew Scheer,

A few weeks ago, I wrote a little note to our Prime Minister, admonishing him for approving a pipeline and attempting to 'fix' the climate crisis at the same time (and for his failure to pass electoral reform). In all honesty, it was a lot easier to explain my grievances to Trudeau than it is you. That's because despite all of the shortcomings of his party, and his willingness to go along with the mediocre politics of status quo, I believe that he respects every Canadian. I won't vote for him, but I don't outright fear his re-election.

In contrast, I feel your world view is so out of touch with my own reality as a young mother, environmentalist and small business owner, that I don't even know where to begin. That's terrifying on a visceral level, and also for the politics of compromise. How are you going to connect with millennial voters? Or are we just going to be written off by your campaign in October? It's arrogant of you to assume that we don't matter. I suspect your response would be that the workers of Alberta don't matter to me, either. But that's just it. They DO matter. As an environmentalist, one of my main concerns is re-employing energy sector workers in clean tech, because I know those green energy jobs will be safer and more sustainable, and closer to home and family for so many of them. Don't you want that for them?

Many Canadians don't know you, and you could very well become our Prime Minister. You have told us nothing substantial of your values, (because I suspect your handlers know they would be unsavoury to a majority of us). For instance, and most defining, how do you feel about Canada remaining a safe haven for asylum seekers around the world? Do you respect conventions of the United Nations? Do you understand them? On all three of these questions, evidence suggests that your positions would fall grossly out of line with my own expectations for the office you seek to hold (example: non-binding conventions aren't going to undermine our sovereignty).

Your plan to tackle climate change isn't a plan at all. The policy was written for you by energy industry consultants and lobbyists, no doubt. Why even bother? But you do have to bother with it because there are many folks in your party who respect the scientific method, and are therefore also deeply concerned about taking action on climate change. Will they be satisfied by your plan? I highly doubt it. Scrapping the carbon tax is an absurd proposal from a conservative - you must know that. It's a small-government-friendly idea, and it has been endorsed by a chorus of centre-right strategists, economists, and planners.

Instead, your single best line of attack against the three opposition parties is that they have an anti-oil agenda. Even when a pipeline is being built, against the wishes of Trudeau's biggest supporters, you still believe that the Liberal Party has an anti-oil agenda. This is how bizarre your talking points sound to people like me.

Indeed, what you must recognize, if you think about politics as much as I do, is that we are moving into a place and time where we are so divided that it is hard to even 'hear' the other side, let alone understand one another. When I try to listen, all I hear is hatred, indifference to human suffering, disregard for our natural world.

Have you noticed that we've reached a point where far too many of us simply feel nothing when they see an image of a dead migrant child floating in a river? Worse still, some blame the victims: 'they shouldn't have attempted to go the United States.' And the most terrible part? You, Mr. Scheer, are capitalizing on that same apathy, and that scorn.

Your position on asylum seekers and migrants coming into Canada is heartbreaking: 'Get in line,' you say. Even when you must know that desperation hardly facilitates order. How do you square your christianity, your love of Jesus, with policy positions that turn Canada's back on human beings seeking safety from persecution? Seeking freedom? Seeking a better life?

You'll say: 'we have an immigration system with rules, and asylum seekers have to respect those rules.' My question is, have you been asleep? This is what climate change, economic chaos, and decades of destabilization in the global south has created: a breakdown of established systems. We must adapt to a new reality. We must change the rules, not our moral compass.

This is why I have my doubts about your ability to lead this country. You might have what it takes to lead a 'movement' (I'm not even sure of what kind), but you can't seem to recognize changing international realities and adapt to them. I ask you to please wake up to our collective human crises and instead of gaining political capital from them, guide your supporters into the direction of compassion, and collaboration on the biggest issues of our time.