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Let?s not wait and see

Dear editor:

?Let's wait and see,? said townspeople in Ursula Hegi's magnificent novel, Stones from the River, about a fictitious German town before and during World War 2. Many townspeople saw some immediate benefits of the Nazi regime, and preferred not to look as civil rights were gradually taken from them. ?They didn't know that they were giving their power away, didn't know that by the time the Nazi regime would become bloated and monstrous with that power, it would be too dangerous for the people to reclaim that power,? writes Hegi.

In Canada, we still live in a democracy; together we do have power in this election. So please consider this list of actions by our current Conservative government. They are not Nazis, but these Conservative actions are alarmingly against democracy, against civil rights.

1. The Conservatives, supported by the Liberals, passed Bill C-51, the Anti-Terrorism Act.

? C-51 gives government power to call a very wide range of activities a security threat. A threat to physical safety is one thing, but C-51 says threats to economic and financial security can be terrorism! Even peaceful protests can be called a security threat. The government can now easily find ways to charge people it doesn't agree with.

? C-51 seriously violates our privacy. All government offices can now share information with any other government offices. For example, Health Canada and Revenue Canada can share your information with the RCMP.

? CSIS is Canada's spy agency and not accountable to Parliament. Before, CSIS could only collect information. C-51 lets CSIS arrest and question people, in secret.

? They didn't show C-51 is needed. Terrorism crimes are already included in the criminal code!

2. The Conservatives' new voter ID rules make it more difficult to vote for tens of thousands of Canadians. Aboriginal people, students, seniors in care homes and homeless people are especially unlikely to be able to vote when they get to the polls. We don't need these rules; voter fraud is not a problem in Canada.

3. The Conservatives dismissed over 2000 government scientists in the last five years. Conservatives cut or eliminated hundreds of programs that monitored things like smokestack emissions, food inspections, oil spills, water quality, and climate change.

4. In 2012 this government began cutting $115 million from CBC, our precious public broadcasting station. Other stations' first priority is to make money, but CBC by law must serve Canadians. With further cuts this year, there is risk we could lose CBC.

5. In 2012 the Conservative government used a 443 page budget bill to reduce the public's ability to take part in environment decisions, weaken rules for projects like pipelines, eliminate protection of fish habitat, weaken the Canada Labour Code and change many other laws and policies.

6. Using the budget bill that way kept Parliament from asking questions and debating all those changes.

7. The Federal Conservatives passed Bill S-6, which gives the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs in Ottawa power to direct the Yukon's environmental assessment process. Bill S-6 also means changes to existing projects won't get assessed. But the rules for Yukon environmental assessment are part of the Umbrella Final Agreement signed by Yukon First Nations, Yukon and Canada.

8. Canada's census information is now much less useful for making laws that are based on facts, because the Conservatives made the Census Long Form optional.

Let's NOT wait and see where these Conservative actions might be headed. Laws can be repealed, cut funding can be restored. Let's think and vote!

Mary Amerongen
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