



## How to put women's rights and gender equality front and centre in the federal election campaign!

Wondering how you can help put women's rights and gender equality front and centre in every debate, and at every stop on the campaign trail?

**ASK** - When candidates or their canvassers knock on your door, phone you, or when you see them at events in your community, let them know about the women's rights and gender equality issues that matter to you, and ask them questions about what their party will concretely do to address these issues.

**REACH OUT** - Find out which candidates are running in your riding. Try to set up a meeting with them or have phone chats about women's equality and human rights issues. Not able to reach them by phone? Email candidates and ask them our questions about women's rights and gender equality.

**ORGANIZE** - Organize and/or participate in "all candidates" meetings and ask questions about women's rights and gender equality. Contact organizers in advance and suggest questions that could be asked. Not possible? Try to ask a question from the floor. Looking for something more informal? Consider partnering with a local establishment to host "politics in the pub/café" nights for candidates and community members to have informal discussions.

**BE VISIBLE** - Put a note to canvassers on your front door with a list of women's rights and gender equality issues you want to see all parties address. Hang a banner outlining these issues somewhere prominent. Share your concerns and details about the events you are organizing with local media.

**GO ONLINE** - Ask our questions to candidates using their Twitter feeds or Facebook pages. Post comments in the interactive sections of national media websites such as the CBC, Globe and Mail, or Maclean's magazine.

This guide was created to help members and supporters of the Alliance for Women's Rights raise awareness about issues related to gender equality and women's rights, in part by bringing questions about these issues to political candidates across Canada.

What follows is a list of questions you may wish to pose to candidates. They are a summary of questions that have been crowdsourced from people across Canada, but are not exhaustive. **The questions do not reflect the views of all members of the Alliance for Women's Rights.**

For more information visit [www.upfordebate.ca](http://www.upfordebate.ca)  
Questions? Contact [info@upfordebate.ca](mailto:info@upfordebate.ca)  
#upfordebate

# Gender Equality

- It's no secret that women, men, and transgender individuals don't have equal opportunities to realize their human rights and potential. Rates of violence against women aren't dropping. Men continue to make more money than women for similar work. And transgender people continue to lack the most basic protections from harassment and violence. **What do you think are the most pressing women's rights and gender equality issues domestically and internationally, and how concretely, will you address them?**
- The new Sustainable Development Goals being negotiated at the United Nations are designed to apply to both developed and developing countries—and that includes Canada. **What steps will you take to address Goal #5: "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls"?**
- First Nations, Métis and Inuit women experience some of the highest rates of poverty, violence, and incarceration in this country. At the same time they are significantly less likely to graduate from high school and receive post-secondary degrees than non-Indigenous Canadians. **What will you and your party do to promote equity for First Nations, Métis and Inuit women and their communities?**
- While racism and Islamophobia are affecting all Canadian Muslims, women are particularly impacted, including their job prospects, safety, and general inclusion in society. **What will you and your party do to address racism in Canada, particularly as it affects racialized women?**

# Violence against Women and Girls

- Rates of violence against women and girls are not going down, and Canada does not have a national action plan to address this issue. **How will you concretely work to lower rates of violence against women and girls?**
- For many reasons, many women do not report sexual assault and harassment. This includes women in the military, law enforcement, and government. **How will you create a safer environment for reporting sexual assault and harassment, as well as better access to justice for survivors?**
- Families of Indigenous women and girls who have been lost to violence continue to press the federal government for real action to stop the violence. **How will you support a comprehensive response to violence against Indigenous women and girls—including an inquiry and action plan? How will you make sure the voices of Indigenous women and girls are at the heart of this process?**
- The trafficking of women and girls—including for the purpose of sexual exploitation—is a growing concern to service providers and communities across Canada. **How will you address the root causes of trafficking, hold traffickers to account, and provide assistance to survivors?**
- Since October 25, 2012, Citizenship and Immigration Canada has required spouses or common-law partners in a relationship of two years or less, who have no children with their sponsor, to live with their sponsor for two years from the day they receive their Permanent Resident status in Canada. If they do not meet this two-year requirement, their permanent residency can be revoked. Service providers have noted that this policy places immigrant women experiencing violence at increased risk of staying with an abusive partner. **What measures will you take to ensure that immigrant women experiencing violence in the home are exempt from this two year cohabitating rule without risk of losing their immigration status?**
- In some cases, extreme cases of violence against women may amount to torture. Torture can be carried out both by state and non-state actors. Non-state torture is not recognized as a specific crime under Canada's Criminal Code. **How will you ensure that victims of non-state torture have access to justice?**

# Economic Equality

- On average, women continue to earn 20% less than men, and make up the majority of minimum wage and part-time workers. **How will you address women's income and employment inequality, particularly women from racialized communities?**
- Women and men continue to work in different sectors of the economy. Barriers to women working in traditionally “male” occupations include inaccessible childcare, a lack of skills training and education opportunities, gender stereotyping, and a lack of mentoring and coaching. **How will you make sure Canada's economy works for women?**
- Women are less likely to take on leadership roles. According to the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), Canada's economy could grow between 9-16% in the next two decades if gender inequality in employment and income is addressed. **How will you promote women's leadership and empowerment as part of a strategy to grow Canada's economy?**
- Indigenous women and girls experience some of the highest rates of poverty and have some of the lowest education levels in Canada. These factors contribute to high levels of violence and incarceration. **How will you address the root causes of poverty and violence experienced by Indigenous women and girls, and promote reconciliation and equity with Canada's Indigenous peoples?**
- Women are disproportionately responsible for unpaid caregiving. And a lack of affordable early learning and childcare programs limit women's full participation in the workforce. **How will you ensure that all women in Canada have access to early learning and childcare opportunities?**
- After taxes, close to four million people in Canada live below the low income cut-off, an internationally recognized measure of poverty. More women than men live below this poverty line, which also has clear implications for child poverty. **How will you reduce poverty and support the social and economic independence of women?**
- An estimated 250,000 people are homeless in Canada, with another 1.5 million individuals unable to access satisfactory housing. Lack of access to safe and affordable housing continues to be a concern for many Canadian women, as poverty, intimate partner violence, and lone parenting are more common among women. Most affected by housing issues are women who face multiple forms of discrimination, and are often Aboriginal, racialized, immigrants or refugees, living with a disability, seniors, or youth. Homelessness and housing insecurity also puts women at increased risk of violence, exploitation, health issues, and premature death. **How will you reduce homelessness, increase access to affordable housing for women, and keep women in Canada secure?**
- Many women in Canada lack access to full-time earnings and continue to work past the age of 65 due to a lack of liveable pensions and old-age security. **How will you ensure that older women in Canada have access to adequate pensions and retirement security?**
- Affordable, accessible and quality home care, long term care, and palliative care for older people in Canada are essential to making sure that younger generations, particularly women, are not unduly burdened with unpaid care for aging parents and friends, and remain in the workforce. **How will you ensure that everyone in Canada has access to quality, accessible, and affordable elder care?**

# Leadership

- Women are over 50% of Canada's population, yet currently comprise an average of just 25% of Canada's municipal councils, provincial and territorial legislatures, and the House of Commons. **How will you support women's leadership in politics?**
- Women hold just 35.7% of managerial positions across all sectors and remain poorly represented in leadership positions in corporate Canada. Of the 1,180 judges in all Canadian courts, just over 30% are women. Studies have concluded that women choose to remain at their current level in

the workplace, or move to another organization despite their confidence and desire to advance, because they feel that they lack role models, are excluded from informal networks, and do not have sponsors in upper management to create opportunities. **What steps will you take to support equal opportunities for women to take on leadership positions in both the public and private sectors, including the judiciary?**

- Community organizations working with women deliver essential services, carry out critical community driven research, strengthen democracy, and provide important employment opportunities. However, funding sources for these organizations to carry out their operations and programs are scarce, particularly for research and advocacy activities. **How will you strengthen support for community organizations providing these vital services?**
- Status of Women, the main government institution promoting gender equality, has sustained heavy financial cuts in the last decade, is not a full ministry, and does not fund research or advocacy. **Will you establish Status of Women Canada as a stand-alone ministry? How will you increase support for Status of Women Canada and ensure that funding covers frontline service provision, research, and advocacy?**

## Foreign Policy

- Sexual violence in conflict, early and forced marriage, and a lack of access to sexual and reproductive health services - these are just a few of the issues facing women and girls around the world. **What do you think are the most pressing women's rights and gender equality issues facing the global community and how would your foreign policy concretely address them?**
- UN Security Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security calls on all states to include women in peace processes. **How would you encourage and support the participation of women in peace negotiations to help resolve the numerous armed conflicts the world is currently facing?**
- From Iraq to the DRC, women and girls continue to face rape and gender-based violence in conflict zones. **How would you help end rape and gender violence in conflict?**
- Research shows that investing in women's rights organizations and women human rights defenders is not only a smart investment but one that contributes to lasting change. **What steps will your government take to support women human rights defenders and women's rights organizations?**

## Health

- Not all young people have access to much needed comprehensive sex education that includes discussions of healthy relationships, sexual consent, equity, and inclusion. **How will you support provinces in establishing these important education programs across the country?**
- Many women in Canada have difficulty accessing abortion services, particularly in rural and remote areas, as well as the entire province of Prince Edward Island, where there are currently no clinics or hospitals that will perform the procedure. **How will you ensure that all women in Canada have access to safe and legal abortion services, regardless of where they live?**
- Some physicians in Canada are denying women contraception, abortion, and assisted reproduction on the basis moral or religious beliefs, also known as "contentious objection." Reports of physicians refusing to refer patients to alternative providers have also emerged in the past year. In one such case, a physician in Prince Edward Island refused to provide emergency care or referral to a woman experiencing post-abortion complications. **How will you make sure all women in Canada have access to health services and information, without discrimination or fear of physicians' refusal to provide information and services based on moral or religious grounds?**