

OXFAM
ELECTION
GUIDE 2019



THE
POWER
OF
PEOPLE

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The Power of People

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Oxfam is a global movement of people working to end injustice and poverty. Our mission is to build lasting solutions to poverty and injustice while improving the lives and promoting the rights of women and girls.

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THE POWER OF PEOPLE

INTRODUCTION

Oxfam is part of a global movement for change, one that empowers people to create a better future for us all. We believe that unequal power relations are the underlying driver of inequality, poverty and suffering. Oxfam seeks to confront these imbalances of power in order to improve the lives of people living in poverty and advance gender equality.

Since our creation in 1942, influencing has been a core part of our mandate. From working with social movements in South Africa to build national resistance to Apartheid, to supporting women's movements in Central America to secure legal protection against violence, to securing a global Arms Trade Treaty, we have always used influencing strategies to help build a better world.

Addressing unequal power relations is deeply political. That is why we see elections as a crucial opportunity to engage in conversations about the root cause of poverty and injustice, and to press politicians to take deliberate steps to reduce inequalities and tackle poverty.

REPRESENTATION AND LEADERSHIP

At the current rate of progress, it will take another century to hit parity between women and men in Canada's House of Commons. This under-representation, together with the strong influence that economic elites have over political decision-making, means that policies and public spending decisions often reinforce women's economic inequality and social marginalization. This is even worse for women facing multiple forms of discrimination, such as immigrant, racialized or Indigenous women.

The changes we want to see:

- » All parties should commit to appointing a gender-balanced cabinet should they form the next government.
- » The federal government should enact legislation to incentivize political parties to increase the number of women recruited and elected in Canada and support women candidates to run.
- » The federal government should recommit, in its next budget, to increasing funding for the Canadian women's movement, by allocating \$100 million per year to support diverse women's rights organizations across the country.

Questions for candidates in your riding:

- » What actions has your party taken to encourage more women to run for office?
- » If your party forms the next government, will you have a gender-balanced cabinet?
- » If your party forms the next government, will you increase funding for the Canadian women's movement?



The best policies are informed by the people they affect, yet women and other marginalized groups are under-represented in politics and decision-making around the world.

INTERNATIONAL AID AND FOREIGN POLICY

Religious fundamentalisms, economic and political turmoil, nationalism and backlash against gender equality are rolling back the gains made by feminist and women's movements in many regions. Yet we know that ending global poverty begins with women's rights.

The changes we want to see:

- » The federal government should champion women's rights in all foreign policy areas: aid, trade, diplomacy, and defense.
- » The federal government should uphold a feminist approach to Canadian international assistance and dedicate substantial resources to feminist movement building and sexual and reproductive health and rights.
- » The federal government should develop a 10-year plan to achieve the UN aid target of 0.7% of gross national income.

Questions for candidates in your riding:

- » If your party forms the next government, will you hold Canadian companies to account for human rights violations in their global supply chains?
- » If your party forms the next government, will you uphold a feminist approach to international assistance or propose major changes to Canadian aid?
- » If your party forms the next government, will you increase Canada's aid budget?



Women around the world disproportionately experience poverty and discrimination; they earn less than men, have unequal access to resources and education, and are underrepresented in decision-making.

GENDER BASED VIOLENCE & SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS

Around the world, it is becoming harder for women, young people and LGBTQI+ to access essential sexual and reproductive health services. One in three women worldwide continue to experience sexual abuse or physical violence. It is estimated that intimate partner violence and sexual violence cost the Canadian economy \$12.2 billion annually. Women living in poverty, racialized and Indigenous women, transgender people, women with disabilities and elderly women face even higher levels of violence.

The changes we want to see:

- » The federal government should launch a national campaign on healthy relationships and sexuality.
- » The federal government should develop a National Action Plan to end gender-based violence, to ensure women across Canada have equal access to services and protection.
- » The federal government should continue to spend \$700 million per year on sexual and reproductive health and rights as part of its international aid budget.

Questions for candidates in your riding:

- » What is your party's position on comprehensive sexuality education?
- » If your party forms the next government, how will you work with all jurisdictions to address the staggering high levels of violence against women across Canada?
- » If your party forms the next government, will you continue to fund all aspects of sexual and reproductive health and rights within Canadian international aid?



The rise of religious fundamentalisms and populist movements has led to increasing attacks on women's rights and attempts to control women's bodies.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Indigenous Peoples (First Nations, Inuit and Métis) face innumerable barriers to achieving their right to self-determination, to adequate housing, to food security and clean water, and to live free from violence and discrimination. Indigenous women and girls experience the highest rates of violence of all women in Canada, which led to the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. The inquiry released its final report in June and contained 231 recommendations to bring justice to the families and put an end to the violence.

The changes we want to see:

- » The federal government should commit to implementing all 231 Calls for Justice of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.
- » The federal government should commit to increasing dedicated funding for Indigenous women's organizations.
- » The federal government should investigate allegations of forced sterilizations of Indigenous women and girls, and apply measures to ensure criminal accountability, justice and reparations to survivors and families.

Questions for candidates in your riding:

- » If your party forms the next government, how will you address the Calls for Justice of the National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls?
- » If your party forms the next government, will you investigate allegations of forced sterilizations of Indigenous women and girls?
- » If your party forms the next government, how will you ensure Indigenous women and girls are included in all policy decisions that affect their lives?



Indigenous Peoples, and in particular Indigenous women and girls, are one of the most vulnerable and marginalized groups within Canada struggling to overcome the impacts of colonization and the long-lasting wounds of residential schools and forced sterilization.

CONFLICT, DISPLACEMENT AND HUMANITARIAN CRISES

At the end of 2018, 70.8 million people were displaced – the highest number ever. Eighty percent of the world’s refugees live in neighboring developing countries that are already struggling with high levels of poverty, while a rise in xenophobia has led to a hostile political climate for refugees in most industrialized countries. Displacement and humanitarian crises are particularly difficult for women and girls, who face increased risk of violence, exhausting workloads, and lack full control over decisions that affect their lives and their bodies. But in many crises they are also taking on leadership roles in delivering aid and building peace in their communities.

The changes we want to see:

- » The federal government should welcome more refugees and continue to prioritize groups who are most vulnerable to harm, such as women, children and members of the LGBTQI community.
- » The federal government should dedicate \$100 million per year of Canadian international aid to programming that focusses on women’s rights and leadership in fragile and conflict-affected countries.
- » The federal government should repeal the arms deal with Saudi Arabia, which is waging war on neighboring Yemen and deliberately targeting civilians.

Questions for candidates in your riding:

- » If your party forms the next government, will you commit to increasing the number of refugees to be resettled in Canada?
- » If your party forms the next government, how will you ensure Canada’s response to humanitarian emergencies protects and empower women and girls?
- » If your party forms the next government, will you suspend Canada’s arms deal with Saudi Arabia?



Violence, persecution and extreme weather events have led to unprecedented levels of displacement and humanitarian crisis, which put women and girls at increased risks, but can at times offer women new leadership opportunities.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

The least developed countries, as well as poorest and most marginalized in society, including women, already suffer the greatest consequences of climate change despite having least contributed to the problem. Canada, which is among the largest per capita emitters, must do its fair share to help the most vulnerable adapt while simultaneously reducing its emissions. The oil, gas and mining industries often put the human rights of local communities at risk.

The changes we want to see:

- » The federal government should set new and more ambitious national commitments for greenhouse gas reductions, and enforce carbon pricing in all provinces.
- » The federal government should increase the amount of Canadian international aid it dedicates to helping poor countries and vulnerable groups adapt to the effects of climate change.
- » The federal government should eliminate fossil fuel subsidies and stop using public funds to support oil and gas companies, and hold those accused of violating human rights accountable.

Questions for candidates in your riding:

- » If your party forms the next government, what steps will you take to transition to a low-carbon economy?
- » If your party forms the next government, will you increase Canadian international aid to help developing countries adapt to climate change?
- » If your party forms the next government, will you stop subsidizing the fossil fuel industry and instead invest in green energy?



Climate scientists have issued a dire warning: the world has only 12 years to avert runaway climate change, and women are at the forefront of providing solutions and adapting to changes.

POVERTY

The number of poor has increased by 25% over the past 25 years and families are struggling to pay for basics like food, utilities, winter clothing, housing, child care and extended medical care. Homelessness, often the result of domestic violence, costs Canada billions of dollars each year, and puts women at an increased risk of violence, sexual assault and exploitation. Public services and social protection are key to preventing women from falling into poverty and to supporting their escape out of poverty.

The changes we want to see:

- » The federal government should work with anti-poverty experts and those experiencing poverty to put in place a plan to reduce poverty by at least 50% by 2030, especially for the most marginalized groups and Indigenous peoples.
- » The federal government should allocate significant resources to develop safe and affordable housing and work with the provinces, territories and Indigenous governments to ensure that the specific needs of the most vulnerable are met.
- » The federal government should put in place a pharmacare plan to ensure all people in Canada have coverage for the medicines they need, including contraceptives.

Questions for candidates in your riding:

- » Does your party have a plan to end poverty?
- » If your party forms the next government, how will you ensure the most vulnerable people in Canada have access to safe and affordable housing?
- » Does your party support national pharmacare? Would it include coverage for contraceptives?



Nearly five million people in Canada currently live in poverty, and racialized, immigrant, Indigenous, trans women and single mothers are disproportionately represented among the poor.

WORK AND WAGES

The gender wage gap in Canada has not decreased in decades, hovering at 32% on average and as much as 45 to 55% for Indigenous women, immigrant women and women with disabilities. Over 670,000 women who want to work full-time are stuck in part-time, casual and temporary jobs. Precarious employment makes it difficult for many women to access employment insurance, forcing them to move from one low paid job to another.

The changes we want to see:

- » The federal government should raise the minimum wage for workers under federal jurisdiction to a living wage and use federal government procurement to support women-led businesses and incentivize companies to pay living wages.
- » The federal government should ensure women earn as much as men for work of equal value by implementing the 2018 Pay Equity Act.
- » The federal government should modernize the employment insurance system by lowering the eligibility threshold and tying access to need rather than just earnings.

Questions for candidates in your riding:

- » If your party forms the next government, will you raise the federal minimum wage and be a champion for living wages with provincial and territorial governments?
- » If your party forms the next government, what will you do to ensure women earn as much as men for work of equal value?
- » If your party forms the next government, what steps will you take to ensure low-wage workers have access to employment insurance?



Nowhere in the world do women earn as much as men do. Women are concentrated in the lowest paid and most precarious jobs making it hard to escape poverty.

UNPAID CARE

Women everywhere do three to seven times more unpaid care work than men do, and often face difficult decisions when it comes to balancing work with care responsibilities. Affordable child care is particularly important for women to remain in the labour market and grow their careers. Too many families in Canada cannot afford quality child care, and this challenge is particularly pronounced for marginalized women who struggle to make ends meet with precarious and low-paid employment. Care work is one of the most undervalued professions in Canada: one quarter of all child care providers need a second job to make ends meet.

The changes we want to see:

- » The federal government should commit to building a public child care system that is affordable for all families in Canada and ensure decent work for care workers.
- » The federal government should work with the provinces to uphold the labour rights of caregivers and domestic workers, including living wages.
- » Canada should ratify the International Labour Organization Convention 189 on the protection of domestic workers.

Questions for candidates in your riding:

- » Does your party have a plan to make childcare affordable for all families across Canada?
- » If your party forms the next government, what steps will you take to ensure workers in the care sector make living wages and have decent working conditions?
- » Will you ratify the International Labour Organization Convention 189 on the protection of domestic workers?



Responsibility for unpaid care work is one of the biggest barriers to women's economic equality, keeping many women trapped in poverty by preventing them from pursuing employment and educational opportunities.

TAXATION

Women and girls are hit twice as they lose access to public services and are left to fill the gap with many hours of unpaid care work. Canada's tax system has become less progressive in the past two decades with cuts to corporate tax rates, regressive income tax measures and growing tax evasion. Progressive taxation coupled with gender-based analysis can help close the gap between the rich and poor, and between men and women.

The changes we want to see:

- » The federal government should continue to implement the 2019 Gender Budgeting Act.
- » The federal government should commission an independent review of the tax system to find a better balance between personal and corporate income taxes, close inefficient tax loopholes, identify regressive income tax measures that hurt women and others living on low incomes, and allocate the tax burden according to the principles of ability and fairness.
- » The federal government should increase its revenues by raising the corporate tax rate back to 21% and cracking down on tax loopholes, aggressive tax avoidance and tax evasion by the wealthy and corporations.

Questions for candidates in your riding:

- » If your party forms the next government, how will you use the tax system to reduce inequality?
- » Is your party committed to doing gender budgeting?
- » Is your party open to increasing the corporate income tax rate?



Tax dodging and the global race to the bottom on taxation are driving the inequality crisis and cost governments billions of dollars every year, undermining their ability to provide essential public services, which are particularly important for women.

