

2019

An Election Toolkit





Welcome to Our Election Tool Kit

The federal election is an important time.

In our experience, investment and engagement from political candidates makes a big difference in prevention programs, response policies and better resources for survivors of sexual violence – and for other issues connected to these concerns: for example, reproductive rights, the experiences of marginalized communities, addressing community violence and systemic inequalities.

Learning and talking about these matters can help to foster the changes we wish to see.

Here are some ways you can make a contribution during the election season.

- 1. Communicate what's important to you to your candidates, and ask candidates if these issues are important to them.**
- 2. Communicate key issues. It's important to let leaders know what's important to Canadians right now.**
- 3. Attend a local all-candidates' meeting in your riding.**
- 4. Consider what candidates or parties have said about sexual violence response, reproductive rights, the experiences of marginalized communities and ways to address systemic inequalities when deciding on your vote.**
- 5. A few more ideas...**
 - Talk to others in your community about what the parties have said so far about issues important to you.
 - If you are with a community organization, plan to share this toolkit with your team.
 - Invite your friends and colleagues to communicate on social media on the important issues mentioned in this toolkit.

Tools on how to make the above points happen are included in the election toolkit, below.



1. Communicate what's important to you to your candidates, and ask candidates if these issues are important to them

Making contact with candidates

When reaching out to local candidates, have a strategy. Bring a question on their position on a subject, and any “asks” – that is, what you are asking candidates and parties to do.

- Be brief: candidates, party offices and news reporters are extremely busy during election campaigns.
- Be personal. People remember stories, as well as statistics. Do feel free to share a bit about your own work or thoughts.
- Be accurate. Many people are unaware of how certain issues actually impact folks in our community. Some facts about sexual violence, reproductive rights, Indigenous communities in Canada, immigrant and refugee experiences in Canada, and the environment are included in this toolkit.

How to contact a candidate

- Email is a quick and easy way to get your message to candidates. If you want to be sure you're reaching the candidate him/herself, it is best to email them and then phone their campaign office.
- In your email, be sure to identify: who you are, the issue or issues you are interested in, your question, and who you plan to share their responses with:
- Social media such as Twitter or Facebook are also widely used by candidates and parties. Search for and follow your candidate's social media. This will help you keep up with their activities in the community, appearances at events, and positions on different social issues.
- You can also respond to social media posts by candidates and parties, and ask questions of candidates. Social media correspondences are visible to the public.
- Strategically connect with others who are tweeting about issues you care about on Twitter: follow your local community Sexual Assault Centre (see a list of [Ontario Sexual Assault Centres on Twitter](#) here), as a start!



2. Communicate key issues: It's important to let leaders know what's important to Canadians Some Key Issues for 2019

Gender-based violence

The last few years have seen the Canadian public extremely interested in on issues related to gender-based violence. When a government is invested in addressing gender-based violence, services and supports are easier for victims of violence to access.

Did you know?

- The #MeToo and #TimesUp movements on sexual violence and harassment have become very active, highlighting sexual violence prevalence and its impacts on survivors
- Many femicides (women killed by men) occurred in 2017-2018 – 48 recorded in Ontario by Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses alone.
- The prevalence of sexual assault in Ontario alone rose from 7,434 police-reported incidences in 2016 and 8,782 in 2017 to 10,634 in 2018 —revealing a year over year increase of almost 19%¹.

Reproductive rights in Canada

Even 30 years after the Morgentaler ruling, access to safe reproductive health support is not always easy in Canada. Violations of women's and trans people's right to self-determination persists. Reproductive justice includes: Access to information on reproductive health, birth control and safer sex options; quality healthcare for pregnancy and childbirth; access to fertility supports (i.e. through in-vitro fertilization, artificial insemination, intra-uterine insemination and fertility preservation programs); and safe access to abortion services.

Did you know?

- 1 in 6 Canadians will experience fertility problems²
- Many people in Northern areas of Ontario have to be flown from their communities to give birth, especially if they have complicated pregnancies. This can mean being separated from their families, or, for Indigenous peoples, being removed from their culture and connection to the land, or receiving culturally inappropriate care³
- Despite abortion being legally permissible in Canada, obtaining an abortion can still be a difficult task, particularly in rural areas and in the North. Only one in six hospitals across Canada provide abortion services, with most providers located in major urban centres⁴

Indigenous communities in Canada

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada led a multi-year process to listen to Survivors, communities and others affected by the Residential School system. The resulting collection of statements, documents and other materials now forms recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Despite this, few Recommendations have been implemented in Canada.

Did you know?

¹ Statistics Canada. *Incident-based crime statistics, by detailed violations, Canada, provinces, territories and Census Metropolitan Areas. Data release* - July 22, 2019. Online: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=3510017701&pickMembers%5B0%5D=1.16&pickMembers%5B1%5D=2.16>

² Public Health Canada. Online: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/fertility/fertility.html>

³ Action Canada for Sexual Health & Rights. *A broad vision for reproductive justice.* Online: <https://www.actioncanadashr.org/a-broad-vision-for-reproductive-justice/>

⁴ Action Canada for Sexual Health & Rights. *A broad vision for reproductive justice.* Online: <https://www.actioncanadashr.org/a-broad-vision-for-reproductive-justice/>

- Poverty, poor health and a lack of social supports continue to impact Indigenous communities decades after this foundation of inequity was laid
- A national inquiry found that Indigenous women and girls are *12 times more likely to be murdered or to go missing than members of any other demographic group in Canada* — and 16 times more likely to be slain or to disappear than white women⁵.
- Today, the public education systems that Canadians experience today reflect the marginalization of Indigenous people – most often through narratives in which Indigenous people, values, contributions to Canada, labour and culture are either minimized or completely invisibilized.

Our government has an important role in recognizing the impacts of this history, and implementing concrete strategies to address these issues, moving forward.

Newcomers to Canada

Canada has a long history in welcoming immigrants and refugees from across the globe to make Canada their new home. Newcomers to Canada, in turn, have a long history of significant contributions to labour in Canada, businesses, and fostering our vibrant, ever-changing communities.

Did you know?

- According to 2016 data from Stats Canada, immigrants make up approximately 22 per cent of Canada's population⁶
- In 2018, Canadian government's economic advisory council recommended boosting immigration from 300,000 to 450,000 people annually over time —“a number which a previous Conference Board of Canada report suggests is both achievable and necessary”⁷
- Intolerance, fear and hatred of difference – fostered by historical inequities and negative myths about newcomer communities and racialized communities – still continue today. These perspectives can exclude newcomers, and create barriers to their participation in the community.

LGBTQ+ community in Canada

Canada includes the LGBTQI2S communities. Canadian policies and protections must reflect the lived realities of diverse sexuality, gender identity, gender expression and diverse bodies in our country.

Did you know?

- When the experiences of LGBTQI2S people are not intentionally included, many in our communities become socially *excluded*. This can mean internal and external stigmatization, discrimination, victimization by others, secrecy or concealment within social environments^{8, 9}.
- LGBTQI2S people experience sexual violence differently than others: for example, young women from marginalized groups, including sexual minorities, are more vulnerable to being targeted for sexual violence¹⁰; and according to TransPulse, half of all trans persons experience sexual violence.

⁵ National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG). Report released June 2019. Online: <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/>

⁶ Conference Board of Canada, as cited in: If immigration was slashed, Canada's economy would feel the pinch: report by J. Vomeriero (Global News). Online: <https://globalnews.ca/news/4211243/immigration-canadian-economy/>

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Meyer, I. H. (2003). Prejudice, social stress, and mental health in lesbian, gay, and bisexual populations: conceptual issues and research evidence. *Psychological Bulletin*, 129(5), 674-697. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037%2F0033-2909.129.5.674>

⁹ Everett, B. (2015). Sexual orientation identity change and depressive symptoms: a longitudinal analysis. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 56(1), 37-58. doi:10.1177/0022146514568349

¹⁰ Wolfe and Chiodo, CAMH, 2008, p. 3.

Community violence: Gun violence and access to firearms in Canada

There have been troubling trends in community violence in recent years in Canada: From 2013 to 2016, criminal incidents involving firearms were up 30%, gun homicides increased 60%, and intimate partner and gender-based violence involving the use of a firearm was also up by one-third.

Did you know?

- Firearms, most often long-guns, are frequently an element of domestic violence impacting women and children, particularly in rural communities
- After decades of decline, rates of firearm suicides have increased year over year since 2012.
- Police in Canada are strongly supportive of sensible gun control measures, recognizing its importance to both protecting Canadians and to protecting police officers doing their jobs¹¹.

Safer communities include strong policies and political commitment to gun control.

Environment and Climate change

Environmental degradation and climate caused by human activity is a reality. It is a growing concern to scientists, climate experts, younger populations globally and Canadian public health professionals.

Did you know?

- In 2018, Montreal experienced 70 heat-related deaths as the city dealt with unusually hot temperatures with humidity that made it feel close to 40 C, British Columbia experienced its worst fire season on record, and Toronto saw widespread flooding due to thunderstorms and torrential rain
- Indigenous communities are experiencing a loss of their way of life because of climate change in Canada (Climate Action Network)
- From 1983 to 2008, the cost of catastrophic insurable events annually ranged from \$250 million to \$500 million. Since 2009, however, in eight out of nine years, these costs have been \$1 billion or more a year¹².

With a warming planet, we can expect to see more patterns like these, experts say. Now is an important time to take policy action and see political leadership on the environmental, before these changes are irreversible.

¹¹ The information in this section thanks to the Coalition for Gun Control (Canada). Founded in the wake of the Montreal Massacre in 1989, the Coalition for Gun Control was formed to support strategies to reduce gun death, injury and crime. The Coalition is supported by more than 200 health, crime prevention, victims, public safety, women's and community organizations from across Canada. For more information, go to: <http://guncontrol.ca/>

¹² Mortillaro, N. for CBC News. 2018. Here's what climate change could look like in Canada. Online: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/technology/climate-change-canada-1.4878263>



Questions for Candidates: Key issues

Gender-based Violence

A Justice Canada study examined the economic cost of violent crime and found that the largest single cost -- \$4.8 billion in one year -- was attributed to sexual assault and other sexual offences.

Q: If elected, how do you plan to further the positive work of the #MeToo movement -- that is, addressing the impacts of sexual violence on our communities, and supporting prevention?

Q: In what ways will your party support organizations working with survivors of sexual violence?

Sexual Violence: Mandatory judge training on Sexual Assault

In the last year, a Bill was tabled that would have mandated federal judges to undergo mandatory training on the realities of sexual violence. In June of this year, however, the Bill was significantly amended. Some senators felt the proposed law could create "the perception of judicial bias in favour of victims". As a result -- and despite recent high profile cases of judges reproducing victim-blaming myths -- Canada did not mandate sexual assault training for judges.

Q: Does your party support mandatory judge training on sexual assault? If yes, what would you do to foster support on this issue?

Reproductive rights in Canada

Health Canada publishes a range of health-related information. Meanwhile, anti-choice organizations continue to publish and disseminate misleading information about abortion.

Q: If elected, what would you do to make sure everyone could access accurate, evidence-based information about abortion? What steps, if any, would you take to eliminate the barriers created by anti-choice organizations on access to abortion care?

Indigenous communities in Canada

A national inquiry found that Indigenous women and girls are 12 times more likely to be murdered or to go missing than members of any other demographic group in Canada -- and 16 times more likely to be slain or to disappear than white women. The report, released in June 2019, calls on government and police to address endemic violence.

Q: What is your party's strategy to address violence against Indigenous women in Canada?

Q: How will you implement the Calls for Justice outlined in the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Report? Please be specific in your plans.

LGBTQ+ community in Canada

Canada includes members of the LGBTQI2S communities, and Canadian policies and protections must reflect the realities of diverse sexuality, gender identity, gender expression and diverse bodies in our country.

Q: If any province or territory attempted to roll back their sexuality education curriculum to remove gender diversity, what would you do as a federal MP?

Newcomers to Canada

Immigrants and refugees have a long history of significant contribution to labour in Canada, businesses, and fostering our vibrant, ever-changing communities.

Q: What will your party do to support immigrants and refugees?

Q: What will your party do to support the immigrant and refugee serving-sector to deliver accessible, helpful settlement services to immigrants and refugees?

Community violence: Gun violence and access to firearms in Canada

Canada has seen a rise in gun violence and shooting deaths in the last five years. More, firearms are too frequently an element of domestic violence, impacting women and children¹³.

Q: Where does your party stand on gun control? What are your plans, if any, to address firearm violence in Canada?

Environment and Climate change

Environmental degradation and climate caused by human activity is a reality. It is a growing concern to scientists, climate experts, young populations globally and public health professionals.

Q: How will you work with youth, Indigenous communities and environment experts to create and implement a plan to address these problems?

Q: What is your party's strategy for addressing climate change, moving forward? Please be specific.

¹³ The information in this section thanks to the Coalition for Gun Control (Canada). Founded in the wake of the Montreal Massacre in 1989, the Coalition for Gun Control was formed to support strategies to reduce gun death, injury and crime. The Coalition is supported by more than 200 health, crime prevention, victims, public safety, women's and community organizations from across Canada. For more information, go to: <http://guncontrol.ca/>



3. Attend a local all-candidates' meeting in your riding. If there isn't one taking place, you can plan one.

What is an All-Candidates Meeting?

An All-Candidates Meeting is a public meeting that candidates running for elected office to engage with citizens on their policies and party platforms. It can have a specific theme related to the work of the organizations, or may be general and open to discussion of all issues.

If you are with a group or organization, consider to host or co-host with another group or organization. It's a great opportunity to increase public awareness about your agency, ask pertinent questions to politicians and engage citizens in debate about issues. It may also motivate people to vote.

Advance planning: Some things to consider

What's the focus of your meeting? Identify the issues that are important to you and your community, to guide the planning of your meeting.

Where should you hold it? Your group may cover more than one riding. Consider where your meeting might have the most impact in advancing the issues.

Involve people from diverse demographics, genders and ages. This is an excellent opportunity for different people to learn about politics and the democratic process, provide valuable support organizing and fresh voices at the event. Ensure that your event is accessible: choose a venue that is wheelchair accessible, accessible by local transit (i.e. city bus), and use clear and easy to read language and font in all your marketing materials.

Planning the event

Create a team: The team can be internal only or go external as well. Partners expand resources for promoting and running the event, and with more groups involved, it's harder for candidates to say no to your invitation.

Select a date and contact the candidates: The last three weeks before voting day are best for impact. Invite the candidates early. If you can't get all of the major parties represented, your event will be less effective and might see lower attendance from the public.

Draw a crowd: Start getting the word out as soon as possible. Publicize the meeting the same way you would any announcement, press conference or community event, including notifying local media and using social media.

Who will do what at the event?

Here are a few roles you will need to assign.

Moderator

The moderator emceeds the event and moderates audience questions; experienced and non-partisan, well-known in the community and able to stay neutral, calm and firm.

- Introduces the candidates and any other formal participants
- Outlines the plan for the meeting
- Sets up ground rules for candidates and the audience
- Keeps to the time limits
- Invites candidates to deliver time-limited opening remarks

Timekeeper

The timekeeper monitors time limits and notifies the moderator or speakers of timing.

Meeting Monitor (optional)

One option is to have someone monitor candidates' answers and summarize them for the meeting. This person also creates a record of candidates' answers for your future use in policy work.

Questions from the public

Do you want to identify themes for audience questions; or encourage questions on all issues? Your team will decide this in advance.

Tabling/Information at your event

Decide how to handle campaign materials at the event and be clear with candidates. Create clear rules on information table, posters, banners and leafleting.

After the meeting

You may wish to follow-up with some people after the event...

- Media: Follow up with reporters that attend your event to provide additional information on the issues and share your contact information.
- Candidates: A thank you to candidates reiterates commitments they made to your goals can build relationships.
- Newly elected Member of Parliament: A thank you to your MPs after the election, restating any commitments they made to your goals, may be beneficial. You might also request a meeting.



4. Consider what candidates or parties have said about sexual violence prevention, reproductive rights, the experiences of marginalized communities and addressing other systemic inequalities when deciding on your vote.

Share what you've learned with others.

About Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres (OCRCC)

OCRCC's membership includes 29 Anglophone community-based sexual assault centres from across Ontario.

Member centres have been supporting survivors of sexual violence and offering prevention education since 1977: Centre services include counselling to survivors of recent and historical sexual violence, accompaniment to hospital, police and court, advocacy and crisis support. In one year alone, Ontario's sexual assault centres responded to over 50,000 crisis line calls.

Comprehensive community awareness and public education programs on sexual violence, prevention of sexual violence, responding to sexual assault disclosures training for professionals, sexual harassment in the workplace, online/digital sexual violence, human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, impacts of sexual violence on survivor-victims, and other related subjects are offered by all member centers of our Coalition as part of their core services in Ontario communities.

OCRCC's work also includes partnering with various community and academic allies to develop training for professionals to improve their skills in respectfully responding to sexual assault disclosures. Our public education campaign "Draw The Line", developed in partnership with Action ontarienne, challenges common myths about sexual violence, and equips bystanders with information on how to intervene safely and effectively.

Email: ocrccadvocacy@gmail.com

Web: www.sexualassaultsupport.ca

Campaign: www.draw-the-line.ca

Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres (OCRCC) is a network of community-based sexual assault centres in Ontario. Member centres have been supporting survivors of sexual violence and offering prevention education since 1977: services include counselling to survivors of recent and historical sexual violence, accompaniment to hospital, police and court, advocacy and crisis support.

If you or someone you know has experienced sexual violence, go to <https://sexualassaultsupport.ca/support/>.