



Up for Debate 2019 Platform for Action

1) Goal

In the lead-up to the 2019 federal election, all federal political parties respond to the Up for Debate Platform for Action by clearly articulating public policy positions in support of women's rights and gender equality and by participating in a federal leader's debate on women's rights and gender equality.

2) Objectives

- a. Ensure that women's rights and gender equality are prominent during the 2019 federal election.
- b. Mobilize and unite women's rights and gender equality activists, equality-seeking organizations, networks, and allies across Canada in the lead up to the federal election
- c. Ensure people in Canada are equipped with tools, resources, and feel supported to organize local events that raise awareness of women's rights and gender equality issues in local ridings.
- d. Increase the likelihood that all political parties will include strong positions in support of women's rights and gender equality in their party platforms.
- e. Ensure that all federal party leaders clearly articulate their policy positions on women's rights and gender equality.

3) Desired Outcomes

- a. A national leaders' debate on women's rights and gender equality, focused on Up for Debate's core campaign issues.
- b. Integration of strong women's rights and gender equality policy statements in the platforms of all federal political parties.
- c. Public statements from all political party leaders in response to the Up for Debate platform.

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- d. Community debates and engagement with local candidates on women's rights and gender equality in ridings across Canada.

4) Platform

Globally, one in three women have experienced physical or sexual violence in their lifetime. In Canada, one in two women have experienced harassment in the workplace. Those facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, including women of colour, gender diverse and transgender people, women with disabilities, sex workers, and elderly women, experience disproportionately high levels of violence. First Nations, Métis, and Inuit women and girls are six times more likely to be murdered than non-Indigenous women.

The struggle for affordable, accessible, and quality childcare is the biggest contributor to the gap between men's and women's labour force participation and to the gender wage gap. It hurts women's earnings and opportunities, and poor women and gender diverse people experiencing multiple forms of discrimination face even greater barriers to participating in the labour force. When women and gender diverse people live in poverty, they are less likely to have access to adequate shelter and are more likely to experience ill health.

Despite abortion being legal in Canada, too many women and gender diverse people in Canada lack access to comprehensive sexual education and sexual health services including contraception and abortion. This lack of access disproportionately impacts people living in northern and rural communities, including Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit people. Abortion services are almost non-existent outside of major urban centres.

Women living in a criminalized context—including women without legal immigration status in Canada, sex workers, and drug users—are some of the most marginalized people in Canada and are more likely to experience poverty, violence, and have less access to affordable housing and health information and services.

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Despite very welcome increases over the last four years in Canadian government funding to support women's rights and equality-seeking organizations in Canada and around the world, existing funding levels are insufficient, and too many organizations, and in particular grassroots social movements, are scrambling to provide services to help support women's rights and gender equality, without having access to core funds to sustain their operations.

Up for Debate advocates for a world where every woman and gender diverse person lives in freedom, safety, and dignity with their human rights fully respected, protected, and upheld.

We are concerned about serious threats to the rights of women and gender diverse people in Canada and around the world, from staggeringly high rates of gender-based violence, to the persistence of the gender wage gap. We recognize that current policies and programs to end human rights violations against women and gender diverse people are insufficient.

During the 2019 federal election campaign we expect all federal political parties in Canada to concretely address the human rights violations experienced by women and gender diverse people, publicly articulate their plans to take action in support of women's rights and gender equality, and participate in a federal leader's debate on women's rights and gender equality issues.

Up for Debate is advocating for federal leadership to create a world where...

Women's rights and equality-seeking organizations and social movements are supported

The rights of women and gender diverse people are increasingly at risk with the global rise of populism and shrinking space for civil society to peacefully advocate for human rights. The shrinking space for women's rights and equality-seeking organizations and social movement, including the criminalization of human rights defenders, is compounded by chronic under-funding for organizations and social movements to carry out critical and often life-saving work to safeguard justice and equality, often in the face

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of harassment and violence of activists because of who they are and the rights they are peacefully advocating for. A thriving, active, and supported civil society able to participate in democratic debate and protect human rights is vital for a healthy, democratic society. Women's rights and equality-seeking organizations in Canada and around the world must be able to carry out their critical work without having to spend the bulk of their time seeking funding.

Call to action: We call on all political parties to commit to increased, long-term, core funding for women's rights and equality seeking organizations as well as grassroots activists organizations, to enable them to carry out their vital work which is proven to have a positive impact on the lives of women and gender diverse people.¹

Every person is free from poverty

Every person has the right to economic equality. Every person has the right to be free of poverty. But because of systemic discrimination, women and gender diverse people in Canada and around the world are more likely than men to live in poverty. This is particularly so for women and gender diverse people facing multiple and intersecting forms of violence, and especially women living in criminalized contexts (i.e. sex workers, drug users, migrant women).

Call to action: We call on all federal political parties to commit to removing barriers to economic equality by funding public services and social programs in Canada that help lift women and gender diverse people out of poverty. This begins with explicit commitment to the right to an adequate standard of living; right to food; right to housing; right to work and access to childcare; right to social security; and right to health. These fundamental human rights must be the framework to implement critical programs, laws, and policies for women and gender diverse people including universal childcare, affordable housing, and immigration policies. This must be coupled by a commitment to

¹ Batliwala, Srilatha et al (2013). *Women Moving Mountains: The Collective Impact of the Dutch MDG3 Fund*. Toronto: AWID. Htun, Mala and Lauren Weldon (2012). "The Civic Origins of Progressive Policy Change: Combating Violence against Women in Global Perspective, 1975–2005." *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 106, No. 3 August 2012. Sawyer, Marian (2012). "What Makes the Substantive Representation of Women Possible in a Westminster Parliament?" *International Political Science Review*.

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significantly increase Canada's international assistance budget, continue to increase funding for programmes that specifically aim to advance gender justice and women's empowerment, including supporting grassroots women's rights and feminist organizations, and to fund comprehensive and inclusive sexual and reproductive health and rights initiatives.

Women, girls, and gender diverse people live free from violence:² Levels of violence against women, girls, and gender diverse people remain high, and more so for Indigenous peoples, gender diverse people, newcomer women, migrant women, women with disabilities, sex workers, and all women and gender diverse people whose multiple and intersecting identities lead them to experience disproportionate levels of violence. Everyone has the right to live free from violence.

Call to action: We call on all federal political parties to commit to creating a National Action Plan to prevent and address all forms of violence against women, girls, and gender diverse people, including the extreme levels of violence against Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit people.

² The Ad Hoc Steering Committee seeks guidance from the Advisory Committee on what language we will use. For example, are we using violence against women or gender-based violence? To be gender-inclusive will we use the phrase "women and non-binary people" in our communications, "women and non-binary people in all their diversity," or something else?