

What to Expect on Women's Equality: Comparing National Party Platform Promises for Women

Early in 2008, the Coalition of Provincial and Territorial Advisory Councils on the Status of Women set out their expectations of the federal government on selected women's equality issues. The issues they selected were these:



- Fund quality early childhood care and education
- Ensure livable income for women and families
- Commit to affordable housing
- Eliminate violence against women
- Fund legal support for family break-ups
- Improve maternity and parental benefits
- Act for women's reproductive choice
- Reinstatement of the Court Challenges Program of Canada
- Increase female political leaders
- Ensure equal rights for Aboriginal women
- Support women's equality worldwide
- Support women working towards equality

All federal parties have now released their platforms.
Here's what they tell women in Canada they can expect if they are elected.

Fund quality early childhood care & education			PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women Analysis	
EQUALITY IDEAS	CONSERVATIVE	GREEN	LIBERAL	NDP
Support women to participate equally in the workforce and economy by supporting families with publicly funded childcare.		Ensure universal access to excellent childcare and early childhood education and support parents who take time from their career for child rearing.	Increase child care funding over a four-year period to reach \$1.25 billion annually.	Create 150,000 new child care spaces in the first year, growing to 220,000 spaces per year in the fourth year.
Invest in a nationwide system for early childhood care and education that is built on principles of quality, universal access, affordability, and focus on children's development.		Restore and revamp the 2005 agreement reached between the federal government, provinces and territories to achieve a universal child care programme; ensure that a universal child care programme provides workplace child-care spaces wherever possible and accelerate creation of these through a direct tax credit to employers (or groups of employers in small businesses) of \$1500 tax credit/child per year.	Work to rebuild signed agreements the ten provinces had with the federal government on early learning and child care towards the goal of coast-to-coast high-quality, universal, community-based, early education and child care.	Establish and adequately fund a Canada-wide child care and early learning program to make high quality, accessible, affordable, non-profit and licensed child care available; enact the Early Learning and Child Care Act to establish the program in law.
Recognize that the current Universal Child Care Benefit (\$100 per month direct to parents for every child under six) does not provide equitable access to childcare for families.	Enhance the Universal Child Care Benefit, by indexing the Benefit to inflation, ensuring that the value of the benefit does not erode over time (\$50 million increase per year); make the benefit tax-free for sole-support single-income parents, (nearly \$50 million increase per year).	Value the decisions of parents who choose to stay home with children.	Maintain Universal Child Care Benefit in addition to investments noted above.	

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Other ideas		Tax shift to make advertising directed at children ineligible for corporate tax write-offs; promote and facilitate access to Roots of Empathy Programme to every Canadian child at some point in their elementary school years.		Develop a Children's Nutrition Initiative to support and expand provincial and local programs that provide healthy meals to school children.
<p>SUMMARY ANALYSIS: Here on PEI, the number of child care spaces isn't the main issue: the survival of child care centres, especially in rural PEI, is the concern. Their ability to provide quality care and education and their ability to pay educators livable incomes are at stake. When the Universal Child Care Benefit was introduced, many Island centres had to ask for that money from families through fee hikes, simply to survive. The lobbying group Code Blue for Child Care closely analysed promises from the parties, looking for indicators such as universal services, recognition of the inseparability of child care and early education, strong legislative/policy framework, adequate funding (defined as 1% of GDP as the goal), and supported by good economic policies for families. By their analysis, the NDP plan scores very high on universality and legislative framework, high on funding promises, and strong on policies to support families and recognize the inseparability of care and education. The Liberal plan scores very high on universality and inseparability of child care and education, high on policies to support families, and strong on policy framework; it is weaker in its funding promises. The Green plan has strong universality goals but doesn't address other specifics; some of its policies to support families are assessed as misguided. The Conservative plan does not meet Code Blue's standard on any of the indicators; even its strongest area, policies to support families, is assessed as far short of the NDP and Liberal plans. Code Blue sums it up this way: "The NDP, Liberal and Green parties are promising they will build a universal child care system. The Conservatives are not."</p>				

Ensure livable income for women & families		PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women Analysis		
EQUALITY IDEAS	CONSERVATIVE	GREEN	LIBERAL	NDP
Enhance women's economic equality and support citizens to attain livable income for their families.		Work towards a Guaranteed Livable Income; use the tax system to help meet societal and ecological goals; as a first step towards universal GLI, provide additional income support of \$5000/year to adults currently receiving provincial welfare cheques; augment the government's measurement of "progress" (our Gross Domestic Product-GDP) with a Genuine Progress Indicator that annually measures how well we are doing on quality of life indicators, including eliminating poverty.	30-50 Plan: Within first term, reduce the number of people living below the poverty line by at least 30% (affecting 1 million Canadians) and reduce the number of children living in poverty by at least 50 percent (affecting 400,000 children).	Introduce a Poverty Elimination Act to eliminate poverty in Canada by the year 2020; set firm targets (initial target: reduce child poverty by 50% and the overall poverty rate by 35% in the first five years), and make the government accountable for achieving these; require government to deliver an action plan, to be approved by the House of Commons; establish a poverty elimination office.
Enact pay equity.		Pass pay equity legislation as recommended by the Pay Equity Task Force; immediately implement full pay equity for women employed in the federal sector and develop tax incentives for companies to meet the highest standards of gender and pay equity.	While there is no mention of pay equity in platform documents, this party has elsewhere stated support for the recommendations of the Pay Equity Task Force.	Scrap the current complaints-based pay equity system in favour of a pro-active approach; implement full pay equity in the federal public service, and strengthen pay equity provisions in the Canada Labour Code as called for by the Pay Equity Task Force.

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EQUALITY IDEAS	CONSERVATIVE	GREEN	LIBERAL	NDP
<p>Tax measures . . . (such as child tax credits increased to relieve the poverty of families with children; fair taxation and policies that decrease the growing gap between the richest and poorest)</p>	<p>Tax credit for first-time homebuyers to claim up to \$5,000 in closing costs for a rebate of up to \$750; cut of 2¢ per litre in taxes on diesel and aviation fuel over four years to reduce the price of transportation by truck, train, plane, and ship, and to bring downward pressure on consumer prices; increase the Senior Age Credit by \$1,000, saving seniors up to \$400 a year; provide \$85 million in tax breaks for families where one spouse forgoes full-time work to care for a disabled family member; improve the Disability Savings Plan to allow the proceeds of a deceased individual's RRSP or RRIF to be rolled over on a tax deferred basis to the Disability Savings Plan of a financially dependent infirm child or grandchild; make the Children's Fitness Tax Credit refundable; create a new, refundable tax credit on up to \$500 of eligible fees for children under 16 who participate in eligible arts or cultural activities.</p>	<p>Remove taxes from lowest categories so that no taxes are paid by those below the poverty line (Canada's Low Income Cut-Off measure); allow income assistance recipients to keep 100% of the wages they earn up to the Low Income Cut-Off level; bring in income splitting and low-income support as part of a Green Tax Shift,</p>	<p>Cut the lowest income tax rate to 13.5% from 15%; cut the middle class tax rates to 21% from 22% and to 25% from 26%; create a new, refundable child tax benefit worth \$350 per child; provide an \$1,850 refundable employment credit targeted at those Canadians who earn less than \$50,000 per year; increase the Working Income Tax Benefit; make the Disability Tax Credit refundable; Green Shift tax shift to tax pollution and reduce income taxes.</p>	<p>Create a new Child Benefit, modelled on the existing Canada Child Tax Benefit. (See below.)</p>

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EQUALITY IDEAS	CONSERVATIVE	GREEN	LIBERAL	NDP
<p>Benefits . . . (such as seniors' incomes increased to livable income levels through the Guaranteed Income Supplement; child benefits increased to relieve the poverty of families with children; programs for Aboriginal Canadians and newcomers to Canada to address persistent, systemic low-income levels; Employment Insurance changes that increase Family Supplement benefits, lower work-time requirements to 720 hours, close the gap between the end of EI and the beginning of seasonal employment)</p>		<p>Increase Guaranteed Income Supplement for seniors by 25%; provide financial support to provinces that provide free public transit passes to people living below the poverty line; Ensure financial assistance for low-income spouses and relatives who provide end-of-life care at home for patients who would otherwise need to be hospitalized or in institutional long term care.</p>	<p>Create the Guaranteed Family Supplement, to help 500,000 of Canada's poorest families with children by providing up to \$1,225/year more per family; ensure all families with incomes up to \$26,000 keep all of the National Child Benefit Supplement; increase the Guaranteed Income Supplement by \$600/year for Canada's lowest income seniors and \$800/year for low-income senior couples; change CPP disability requirements to ensure that those with episodic illnesses can collect CPP or QPP disability benefits if they work when they are able to.</p>	<p>Create a new Child Benefit, modelled on the existing Canada Child Tax Benefit, which will expand in phases to \$5,000 a year per child, and consolidate the current system of benefits and tax credits for children into a single, non-taxable monthly cheque to parents; create incentives to help families and low-income citizens to become more energy-efficient.</p>
<p>Other ideas to enhance income and benefits derived from paid work</p>		<p>Expand industry-based job training and apprenticeship.</p>		<p>Establish a fair minimum wage beginning at \$10 an hour, indexed to inflation; reform the Employment Insurance system to ensure support; improve workplace standards and protect pensions; expand literacy and skills training.</p>

Ensure livable income for women & families

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EQUALITY IDEAS	CONSERVATIVE	GREEN	LIBERAL	NDP
Play an important role in funding and setting national standards for social programs.	Will establish a new Charter of Open Federalism; ensure that any new shared-cost program in an area of provincial or territorial responsibility has the consent of the majority of provinces to proceed, and that provinces should be given the right to opt out of the federal program with compensation, so long as the province offers a similar program with similar accountability structures.	Develop comprehensive plan to improve our social safety network so that it eliminates child poverty; negotiate with each province to ensure increased support payments to people on welfare will not be subject to claw back.	Work with provinces to increase supports for people in need in areas like public transit, child care, and social housing.	Work with provinces to eliminate the provincial claw-back of Child Supplement Benefits for families receiving social assistance.

SUMMARY ANALYSIS: “Livable income” means that citizens are able to live in good health and with dignity, regardless of whether their income is from salaries or pensions or social supports. It acknowledges the diversity of “work,” and the discrimination we make as a society about what work is paid and what work is not. At its heart, livable income also means recognizing the right of small, rural, and remote communities to retain their young people and maintain families and social support networks. In PEI, this means support so communities don’t lose their young people, especially their men, to jobs in Western Canada. It requires far-seeing, appropriate economic development that looks beyond the next election and that benefits both women and men. It requires an appreciation for work, workers, and excellence in the workforce. It acknowledges that income is the most important social determinant of health, so livable income must be recognized as a pillar of healthcare in Canada. Given all of this, it is hard to compare platforms. The **Green** plan to move to Guaranteed Livable Income most closely matches the spirit of livable income. It is good news to see a national party talk about guaranteed livable income. The **NDP** plan for Poverty Elimination, combined with commitment to pay equity and a national minimum wage, is very promising. Their promises suggest a shift towards guaranteed incomes through benefits and away from credits through the tax system. Their emphasis on “working families” is disappointing rhetoric, since so many families and individuals are working hard but not receiving salaries for their contributions. The **Liberal** plan mirrors the core elements of the NDP national poverty reduction plan and features concrete targets. The Liberals offer a practical combination of tax-based solutions and benefits to assist groups that struggle most consistently with the lack of livable income. Their Green Shift tax plan would mean up-front cost increases, balanced by income tax returns that families would have to wait for (a problem for all tax-based helps to families). The **Conservative** plan focuses very strongly on “working families,” and as a result their plans to help these “working families” focus almost exclusively on supports delivered through the tax system. They put provincial and territorial jurisdiction ahead of federally set national standards, which is tough on have-not provinces.

Commit to affordable housing

PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women Analysis

EQUALITY IDEAS	CONSERVATIVE	GREEN	LIBERAL	NDP
<p>Implement a comprehensive national housing strategy, coordinated across all provinces and territories, with goals to build universally accessible social housing units, increase housing subsidies, and meet Aboriginal people's needs both on- and off-reserve.</p>	<p>Maintain funding to deal with homelessness at least at the current levels; work with provinces, municipalities, and charities to look at ways to improve effectiveness of federal dollars spent on homelessness; continue funding for the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program to assist low-income Canadians in renovating their homes and for the Affordable Housing Initiative, which supports the creation of new rental housing units; tax credit for first-time homebuyers to claim up to \$5,000 in closing costs for a rebate of up to \$750.</p>	<p>Create six "Municipal Superfunds," including a Community Housing Options Promotion (CHOP) Fund to support a national housing program to build energy efficient co-ops and affordable housing units where there is a shortage of such housing options; fund a nation-wide program to energy upgrade all low-income rental housing on a phased, year-by-year basis by 2025, as Germany is doing.</p>	<p>Provide for 30,000 new social housing units, and refurbish another 30,000 existing units to make them more livable; look to expand subsidies for dedicated units for low-income Canadians in federally funded co-operative housing; renew the Residential Rehabilitation Program and the Homelessness Partnering Initiative; support the building and upgrading of affordable housing for low-income Canadians, to help them reduce their energy costs through high environmental standards.</p>	<p>Implement a comprehensive and fully funded affordable housing strategy that meets Canada's international obligations, as set out by the UN and that builds towards the 10-year goal of having 1% of federal spending allocated for affordable housing. Other programs to upgrade homes, expanding federal housing rehabilitation programs to maintain and retrofit existing substandard homes; and provide homelessness services and transitions.</p>
<p>Acknowledge women's specific, gendered housing needs, especially in cases where violence and abuse have compromised the safety of women's "homes."</p>		<p>Recognize access to affordable housing as basic to women's equality.</p>	<p>Recognize access to affordable housing as related to women's equality.</p>	<p>Build more affordable housing to assist women trying to escape violence. Other programs to build new homes (non-profit and co-operative homes) will include targets for groups, including women, that are most likely to have insecure housing; provide special needs funding for supportive housing for persons with disabilities.</p>

Commit to affordable housing

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SUMMARY ANALYSIS: We expect our leaders to recognize that investment in affordable housing for citizens across Canada is investment with social, health, and economic benefits for individuals and for government. We expect them to acknowledge that gender is a factor in affordable housing, and that housing is a women's equality issue. This election, the **NDP** offers the most comprehensive national plan for affordable housing; its highlight is the goal of dedicating 1% of federal spending to affordable housing for citizens. Their plan also recognizes the specific needs of women for housing, especially for women trying to leave violent situations. The **Green** plan puts affordable and environmentally sustainable community housing at the heart of their planning for municipalities in the Green Economy, and they also recognize housing as fundamental to women's equality. The **Liberals** make a solid and realistic commitment to increasing the number of social housing units in Canada, and they further recognize affordable housing as a women's equality issue. The **Conservatives** promise to continue with current housing and homelessness funding; however, current programs are widely considered inadequate to the need. They offer a tax credit to make buying a first house more accessible to those who have the money to buy, and the patience to wait for tax-return time. They do not frame housing as a gender or equality issue as the other parties do.

Eliminate violence against women		<i>PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women Analysis</i>		
EQUALITY IDEAS	CONSERVATIVE	GREEN	LIBERAL	NDP
Support funding increases for the equality-seeking organizations that are experts and leaders in eliminating violence in our communities. Include in decision-making workers, and especially front-line workers, in women's centres, shelters, and transition houses.				Increase federal government investment and support for family shelters for victims of violence and crime; restore funds for shelters and transition houses for women who are victims of domestic violence; support native women's efforts to develop healing centres and educational and training opportunities; build more affordable housing to assist women trying to escape violence.
Invest in violence prevention. Listen to women who have experienced violence and learn from them.		Revise laws to increase penalties for domestic violence and ensure protection for the victims and survivors of domestic violence, with a priority on reducing the risk of re-offending; set up a task force to investigate and address the disappearance of aboriginal women.	Request that the Law Commission evaluate whether there are sufficient provisions in the Criminal Code to protect and prevent violence against women in our society; create a nation-wide Violence Prevention Strategy for Aboriginal Peoples (in light of Aboriginal women being three times as likely to report domestic violence).	Collaborate with provinces and territories to give domestic violence cases higher priority in the administration of justice and to improve counseling and therapeutic services for abused women and other victims of crime; focus on crime prevention, with increased federal government funding for prevention and awareness campaigns focused on solutions to violence in our communities.

Eliminate violence against women		PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women Analysis		
EQUALITY IDEAS	CONSERVATIVE	GREEN	LIBERAL	NDP
Declare violence against women and girls unacceptable. Recognize that women and girls experience violence due to inequality.	Amend the Criminal Code to make the pregnancy of a woman an aggravating factor in sentencing if a woman is assaulted or killed; promise this new legislation will not open the issue of fetal rights.		Amend the Criminal Code to include "gender" in the hate propaganda provisions to help end societal acceptance for those who would incite hatred against women. Platform refers directly to "violence against women" as an issue (not just "family violence").	Re-institute the annual consultation between the Department of Justice and women's groups to monitor progress on ending violence against women; focus on root causes of violence in proposed native women's healing centres.
Other ideas . . .	Introduce maximum life sentences for offenders as young as 14 convicted of first- or second-degree murder; maximum 14-year sentences for youths who commit violent crimes; teens over 14 who commit serious crimes would no longer have their identities protected.		Prevent violence against children with robust internet luring provisions to address explicit on-line conversations with children and provisions that address cyber-bullying.	Eliminate landing fees for new immigrants, as well as processing fees for refugees and people fleeing torture or domestic violence.
<p>SUMMARY ANALYSIS: The first step to eliminating violence against women is acknowledging the women's inequality is a root cause of violence and hateful acts against women. The NDP responds to this fact with the most comprehensive promises to fund shelters and front-line services for victims of violence, invest in violence prevention, and work towards national standards on ending violence against women. The Liberal platform makes a landmark promise to include "gender" in anti-hate legislation. Their promise of a Violence Prevention Strategy for Aboriginal Peoples is also good news that addresses the double-discrimination of Aboriginal women. The unique highlight of the Green plan is a promise for a task force on the disappearance of Aboriginal women. The Conservative "tough-on-crime" agenda does not acknowledge the specific, gendered causes, effects, and meanings of violence against women or address root causes of violence. Their promise to increase penalties for violence against women correctly identifies pregnant women as particularly at-risk of violence, but it falls far short of acknowledging that all women deserve lives free of violence, regardless of whether they are pregnant or not.</p>				

Fund legal support for family break-ups

PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women Analysis

EQUALITY IDEAS	CONSERVATIVE	GREEN	LIBERAL	NDP
<p>Fund access to family law and other civil legal aid. Dedicate federal funding specifically for family law legal aid, to be transferred to provinces and territories. Hold all provinces and territories to national standards.</p>				<p>Re-institute annual consultation between the Department of Justice and women's groups to monitor progress on improving women's access to the justice system and legal services.</p>
<p>Amend the Divorce Act to protect the best interests of children and the equality and safety of all women.</p>		<p>Establish a consultation on overhauling the Divorce Act (with the legal community, family therapists and other experts) to seek ways to reduce, and preferably eliminate, the adversarial nature of family law.</p>	<p>Propose amendments to the federal Divorce Act, to include consideration of family violence in determining custody and access.</p>	

SUMMARY ANALYSIS: The majority of clients for family law legal aid are women. Funding and national standards are essential to this issue because criminal law legal aid, accessed mostly by men, is cost-shared by federal and provincial governments. Meanwhile, women across the country have varied and unequal access to family law legal aid, depending on where they live. Meanwhile, women across the country are saying that the Divorce Act fails to support equality and safety. The **Liberal** Women's Commission heard the word loud and clear on issues in the Divorce Act when they consulted women to develop their Pink Book on policy, and it is great news that these women Members of Parliament succeeded in making sure this issue became a priority in their platform. The **NDP** offers important steps towards national standards for legal services and strong collaboration with women's groups. The **Greens** offer consultation rather than action on the Divorce Act, but with a laudable (if ambitious) goal in sight. The **Conservatives** have been criticized by provincial and territorial justice ministers for giving family law legal aid too low a priority in federal-provincial-territorial discussion.

Improve maternity & parental benefits		PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women Analysis		
EQUALITY IDEAS	CONSERVATIVE	GREEN	LIBERAL	NDP
<p>Improve the current Employment Insurance–based system for maternity and parental benefits by increasing access to benefits for parents who are self-employed or in non-standard work arrangements. Improve the value and duration of benefits for families that welcome children into their families by birth or adoption. Implement the Standing Committee on the Status of Women's recommendations on parental benefits.</p>	<p>Give self-employed Canadians the opportunity to access maternity and parental benefits, through a voluntary program that requires opting-in to EI payments six months prior to receiving benefits; terms and rates to be set up following a review by the newly created Canada Employment Insurance Financing Board.</p>	<p>Extend maternity/paternity leave for new parents outside of Employment Insurance to two years and one additional year for other parents who pay into Employment Insurance; establish specific job re-entry programmes for women with children who want to restart their working life either part-time or full-time..</p>	<p>Introduce the choice to take a shorter parental leave at a higher benefit level, or a longer leave (up to 18 months) at a lower benefit level.</p>	<p>Improve federal employment standards and re-establish a federal minimum wage; act on the issues of work-life balance through leaves to meet family responsibilities; address the non-standard employment relationships like part-time, contract, and temporary work and variable schedules; recognize these as important to women, who often must shoulder the additional burdens of caregiving; increase access to Employment Insurance for women and improve parental and maternity benefits.</p>
<p>SUMMARY ANALYSIS: Studies by Women’s Network PEI show that more than 40% of Atlantic Canadian have difficulty accessing maternity and parental benefits due to part-time, non-standard, or seasonal work arrangements, so expanding access to benefits is top priority. The Conservative plan would extend access to a whole group of parents — self-employed parents — who are currently excluded. However, the plan is unlikely to encourage partners (mostly men) to share leaves with new mothers. The Liberal plan has the benefit of improved wage replacement (the current wage replacement of up to 55% is too low) and more flexible options, which may allow more people to take leaves — but only if they are eligible in the first place. However, this plan is more likely than the Conservative plan to encourage partners (mostly men) to share part of a leave. The NDP plan correctly identifies weak employment standards as a barrier to people seeking caregiving leaves, but no specifics are given on their policy options on maternity and parental benefits. The Green plan does not match the priority policy recommendations from women’s groups; income-splitting proposed by the Greens may create barriers for some, and promoting two years out of the workforce is risky given the importance and value of parents’, and especially women’s, attachment to the workforce.</p>				

Act for women's reproductive choice		PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women Analysis		
EQUALITY IDEAS	CONSERVATIVE	GREEN	LIBERAL	NDP
Ensure that women in all regions of Canada have access to medical care, as promised in the Canada Health Act.	Promise a Conservative Government will not initiate or support any legislation to regulate abortion.	Oppose any possible government move to diminish the right of a woman to a safe, legal abortion; support a woman's right to choose.	Pledge that the Liberal Party of Canada will not reopen the debate on a woman's right to choose.	Reaffirm public policies to ensure that women have the right to safe therapeutic abortion services, in consultation with their physicians.
Give women's health and gender analysis high priority in government's planning for the healthcare system.		Expand programmes in reproductive rights and education to avoid unwanted pregnancies; expand supports for low-income mothers.		
<p>SUMMARY ANALYSIS: As the Abortion Rights Coalition states, women have the right to receive a full range of reproductive healthcare options, services, and information, including (but not limited to) medical and surgical abortion, contraception, family planning services, and comprehensive sexual health education. Women have the right to access reproductive healthcare services safely and in a timely manner, in an atmosphere of dignity, privacy, respect, trust, and compassion. All abortions are medically required—not “elective”—and fall under the protection of the Canada Health Act (just like all childbirths). The delivery and funding of abortion and other medically required reproductive healthcare services must meet the Act’s five principles. Only the Green Party is unequivocal in support of a woman’s right to choose. The NDP invokes the idea of access to abortion as a “right,” but their emphasis on “therapeutic abortion” in “consultation with physicians” seems heavy-handed. The Liberals pledge not to reopen the debate, but if the debate gets opened, we know that many Liberal Members of Parliament are anti-choice. In PEI, where there is no access to abortion, no sitting Liberal MP takes a consistent pro-choice stance. The Conservatives have been widely criticized by pro-choice groups such as the Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada for supporting Private Member’s Bill C-484 which would have given rights to the fetus and risked seriously undermining women’s right to choose — under the guise of punishing violence against pregnant women more harshly. The Abortion Rights Coalition says it does not trust the Conservatives’ promise not to re-open the abortion debate, because a majority Conservative government would have enough votes to pass private member bills restricting abortion. A private member’s bill would not technically be “Government” initiated.</p>				

Reinstate the Court Challenges Program of Canada

PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women Analysis

EQUALITY IDEAS	CONSERVATIVE	GREEN	LIBERAL	NDP
<p>Reinstate the Court Challenges Program of Canada, which funded equality-seeking groups to bring cases to court to advance the language and equality rights guaranteed under Canada's Constitution.</p>			<p>Reinstate and double the funding for the Court Challenges Program.</p>	<p>Restore the Court Challenges Program.</p>

SUMMARY ANALYSIS: Former court challenges funded under the Court Challenges Program of Canada included cases seeking equal marriage for same-sex couples, pay equity for women, maternity benefits, the right of women to say no to sexual assault, and many other rights-based issues necessary to women's equal participation in our society. The **Liberals** make the strongest commitment to the Court Challenges Program and its principles, with a promise to restore it and double the funding. The **NDP** would also restore this important program. No specific promise from the **Greens** in their platform, though they have elsewhere criticized cancellation of this program. The **Conservatives** axed the program in 2006; in June 2008 a different court challenges program was created as the result of a negotiated settlement with minority official-language communities, but the new program does not extend beyond Constitutional linguistic rights.

Increase female political leaders		PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women Analysis		
EQUALITY IDEAS	CONSERVATIVE	GREEN	LIBERAL	NDP
Take immediate measures to support women to run for and serve in elected office to ensure that more than 21% of MPs will be women this Parliament.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 20% of nominations are women (60/307). - Women are nominated in 15% of ridings considered statistically "winnable" by Equal Voice Canada. - On PEI, 2/4 (50%) of Conservative Party candidates are women. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 29% of nominations are women (89/304). - No ridings are considered statistically "winnable" by the Greens in Equal Voice Canada's estimation. - On PEI, 3/4 (75%) of Green Party candidates are women. - The leader of the federal Green Party is a woman and proud feminist. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 37% of nominations are women (113/307). - Women are nominated in 28% of ridings considered statistically "winnable" by Equal Voice Canada. - On PEI, 0/4 (0%) of Liberal Party candidates are women. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 34% of nominations are women (104/307). - Women are nominated in 39% of ridings considered statistically "winnable" by Equal Voice Canada. - On PEI, 1/4 (25%) of New Democratic Party candidates are women.
Work proactively among all political parties to get women's names on ballots.		Advocate that all political parties nominate, train, and support more women candidates.		

Increase female political leaders

PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women Analysis

Examine democratic and legislative processes to eliminate barriers to women. Undertake electoral and democratic reform.

Work to ensure appointees to federal agencies, boards, commissions, and Crown corporations reflect the diversity of Canada in language, gender, region, age, and ethnicity; improve oversight and develop guidelines for federal appointments, and report publicly on compliance with guidelines; however - also promise to establish a task force to report within one year on unnecessary federally appointed positions to be eliminated, with a target of reducing appointments by 10%

Set criteria for an independent agency appointing members to public boards and agencies that includes equal opportunity for women; set up a Citizens' Assembly to study electoral systems, with a vote on reform during the next federal election; reduce the mandatory \$1,000 candidate deposit for elections.

Change the electoral system to implement a proportional representation system that mixes constituency representation with party representation; one express goal of this change would be to include more women in Parliament.

SUMMARY ANALYSIS: Groups such as Equal Voice Canada and the PEI Coalition for Women in Government report generally good news on the nomination front. The goals: to see all parties nominate at least one-third women candidates and ultimately to increase the percentage of women in Parliament above the 21% mark. The **Liberals** have the highest percentage of women candidates; the **NDP** has the highest percentage of women positioned in ridings estimated as statistically “winnable” by Equal Voice. The **Greens** have the only female national leader and the highest proportion of Prince Edward Island candidates. The **Conservatives**, while still having the smallest percentage of women candidates, increased its percentage of women candidates substantially over 2006. Half of the Conservative candidates on PEI are women. Only the NDP and the Greens espouse steps towards a fairer voting system with proportional representation. The Conservatives promise to make changes to appointments processes that would make gender a factor and may reduce barriers to women, but they would also reduce the number of such appointments. Only the Liberals offer no ideas for electoral or democratic reform.

Ensure equal rights for Aboriginal women

PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women Analysis

EQUALITY IDEAS	CONSERVATIVE	GREEN	LIBERAL	NDP
<p>Ensure Aboriginal women's rights keep pace with the rights of non-Aboriginal women.</p>		<p>Set up task forces to address the treatment of aboriginals in the Canadian justice system and address the disappearance of aboriginal women.</p>	<p>Create a nation-wide Violence Prevention Strategy for Aboriginal Peoples, partly to address the issue that aboriginal women are more than three times as likely to report being victims of domestic violence as non-aboriginal women,</p>	<p>Engage with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit women and appropriate organizations to ensure that their rights and personal safety are assured.</p>
<p>Ensure matrimonial property rights and take immediate action on Bill C-31, to allow Aboriginal women to pass Indian status to their children even if they "married out" in the past.</p>				
<p>Restore the Kelowna Accord, as a start.</p>		<p>Support the restoration of the \$5.1 billion commitment of the Kelowna Accord, with the proviso that the ensuing programs do not lead to greater infringement on aboriginal and treaty rights; fully implement the recommendations of the 1996 Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.</p>	<p>Restore the Kelowna Accord and renew the Métis Nations' partnership in Confederation.</p>	<p>Invest \$5 billion over five years in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities to improve health services, help provide adequate housing, water, and infrastructure to include traditional healing, nutrition, fitness, addiction treatment, and suicide prevention; this will meet the commitments of the Kelowna Accord.</p>

Ensure equal rights for Aboriginal women		PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women Analysis		
EQUALITY IDEAS	CONSERVATIVE	GREEN	LIBERAL	NDP
Ratify the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples		Ensure that Canada supports and implements the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.	Ratify the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.	Ratify the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; ensure its provisions are respected in Canada and incorporated into Canadian law.
Other ideas . . .	Improve Aboriginal education: work to complete tripartite educational agreements with provinces and First Nations organizations; pursue agreements with provinces to address wrongs of the residential schools era for Aboriginals attending similar schools not covered by the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement.			

SUMMARY ANALYSIS: Aboriginal women in Canada do not have equal rights compared to other Canadian women, let alone women in other parts of the world. The Native Women’s Association of Canada has been advocating on the issue of matrimonial property rights for aboriginal women for a very long time, and this organization was deeply concerned when, in March 2008, the federal government unilaterally introduced legislation, Bill C-47, the Family Homes on Reserve and Matrimonial Interests or Rights Act, that did not include acknowledgment of or support for the critical non-legislative measures to address systemic issues of violence, poverty, lack of housing, limited access to justice, and unequal power that underlie Matrimonial Real Property, as identified by Aboriginal women. **Despite long-time advocacy by Aboriginal women, no political parties address this issue specifically in their platforms.** There is little emphasis on Aboriginal people in election debate this year. The platforms of the **Greens**, the **Liberals**, and the **NDP** all commit to ratify the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and to restore the Kelowna Accord or equivalent (though Aboriginal women still express some discomfort with the process and final version of the Kelowna Accord.) The **Conservative** government’s apology to Aboriginal persons for the harm caused by residential schools has been very well-received. Their commitment to working with provinces on education issues is commendable, but limited. Overall, the Green Party’s vision is detailed and innovative in proposing ways for Aboriginal people to lead the way for a better Canada, and for Canada to commit to meeting the particular needs of Aboriginal people and redress years of injustice.

Support women's equality worldwide

PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women Analysis

EQUALITY IDEAS	CONSERVATIVE	GREEN	LIBERAL	NDP
Take leadership among nations in promoting women's equality and eradicating poverty.		Introduce legislation to begin holding Canadian corporations that are working overseas to the same environmental and human rights standards as they are in Canada; ensure Canada advocates internationally for an end to state-sanctioned discrimination and violence against LGBT people..		Support Stephen Lewis' call for international action on women's equality. Work for the creation of a UN Women's Agency to ensure that women's voices and concerns are represented at the highest levels of the international community; support gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans-gender and transexual equality internationally, as per the Montreal and Jakarta Declaration on Human Rights.
Meet commitments under the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.				Empower Status of Women Canada and other appropriate federal agencies to work to implement the recommendations of the report on Canada by the UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

Support women's equality worldwide

PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women Analysis

EQUALITY IDEAS	CONSERVATIVE	GREEN	LIBERAL	NDP
<p>Meet the UN Millennium Development Goals and commit at least 0.7% of Canada's Gross National Income to international aid.</p>	<p>Continue support for Overseas Development Assistance and continue efforts to make foreign aid more effective in achieving development goals. (States that Canada is on track to double aid to Africa by 2008-09, and by 2010 to double overall foreign aid over 2005 levels, but does not commit to achieving these goals.)</p>	<p>Increase Overseas Development Assistance by 0.05% of GDP (\$650 million in 2007) to reach the target of 0.7% of GDP by 2016;</p>	<p>Increase the International Assistance Envelope by \$500 million.</p>	<p>Work to ensure that Canada does its part to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, including commitment to meet the target of 0.7% of gross national income within ten years; accelerate and broaden Canada's pledges to forgive the debt of the world's poorest countries; ensure Canadian development assistance focuses on poverty alleviation and that priorities are determined in collaboration with those living in poverty and their legitimate representatives; ensure development assistance does not force privatization; channel aid through local civil society groups whenever possible.</p>

Support women's equality worldwide

PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women Analysis

EQUALITY IDEAS	CONSERVATIVE	GREEN	LIBERAL	NDP
<p>Play a part in improving the lives of women and girls worldwide.</p>		<p>Ensure that Canadian Overseas development assistance is focused on meeting the needs of women and girls (in support of the goal of curbing global population growth).</p>		<p>Work with international partners to create a United Nations agency to promote and support women's equality throughout the world; ensure that women and human rights groups in Afghanistan can access Canadian development dollars, and that corruption at all levels of government is addressed effectively.</p>
<p>Other ideas to address climate change and disease ...</p>	<p>\$250-million in pledges to Africa to fight the spread of HIV/AIDS</p>	<p>Revamp CIDA to focus more on developing community-based green economies, on poverty alleviation and programmes to combat and adapt to climate change; fulfill our commitments for the provision of HIV/AIDS retroviral drugs to Africa.</p>	<p>Do more to assist developing countries deal with climate change as part of our approach to Official Development Assistance; focus new attention on Neglected Tropical Diseases, conflict prevention in Africa, and corporate social responsibility..</p>	<p>Implement the Pledge to Africa legislation to send generic, affordable drugs to developing countries and support the fight against HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria; triple Canada's contribution to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria; recognize the massive negative impact of climate change on developing countries and support their efforts at adaptation and mitigation — while working hard to reduce Canada's greenhouse gas emissions.</p>

Support women's equality worldwide

PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women Analysis

EQUALITY IDEAS

CONSERVATIVE

GREEN

LIBERAL

NDP

SUMMARY ANALYSIS: According to the Make Poverty History Campaign, at the start of the 21st century 1.2 billion people live in abject poverty, most of them women. More than 800 million people go to bed hungry and 50,000 people die every day from poverty-related causes. Leaders of the **Greens**, the **Liberals**, and the **NDP**, have all subscribed to the Make Poverty History goals. The **Conservative** leader would not respond to questions from the Make Poverty History campaign. The **NDP** has the most comprehensive plan and approach to eliminating global poverty, with strong attention on supporting women's rights and civil society's direction. The **Greens** match their international development commitments with a deep commitment to peace, and they propose making girls and women the focus of Canada's overseas development assistance. The **Liberals** commit to similar goals to the NDP and the Greens, but on a slower time-line and making smaller adaptations to Canada's trade and aid agreements and priorities. The **Conservatives** promise to continue current development aid spending trends and have committed substantial aid to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS in Africa.

Support women working towards equality

EQUALITY IDEAS	CONSERVATIVE	GREEN	LIBERAL	NDP
<p>Make equality central to Status of Women Canada's mandate again. Make women's equality central to government budgeting and decision-making.</p>		<p>Use equality as a fundamental principle for policy-making; strongly criticize reduction of "equality" as part of Status of Women's mandate; apply a Genuine Progress Indicator in budgeting and planning that includes measures of unpaid and voluntary work by women.</p>	<p>Re-designate "equality" as the main goal of the Women's Program at Status of Women Canada; create an independent Commissioner for Gender Equality, reporting to Parliament, to ensure that legislation and policies of the Government of Canada are examined with an equality lens.</p>	<p>Strengthen Status of Women Canada's mandate to achieve equality for women; empower Status of Women Canada and other appropriate federal agencies to work to implement the recommendations of the report on Canada by the UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.</p>
<p>Increase Status of Women's funding for equality-seeking work. Make research and advocacy projects eligible for support again.</p>		<p>Re-establish funding for Status of Women Canada and for a Women's Program that funds not-for-profit women's groups that advocate for women's rights.</p>	<p>Overtake changes to the funding rules of the Women's Program, so that groups advocating for women's rights can again apply for resources; reopen Status of Women regional offices.</p>	<p>Properly fund Status of Women Canada, re-investing in women's programs and organizations; re-open regional Status of Women offices.</p>
<p>Other ideas</p>		<p>Amend the Canadian Human Rights Act to include gender identity and gender expression as protected grounds of discrimination; amend the Criminal Code to include these also in the hate sentencing and hate propaganda provisions.</p>		<p>Amend the Canadian Human Rights Act to include gender identity and gender expression and identity among the prohibited grounds for discrimination.</p>

Support women working towards equality

SUMMARY ANALYSIS: Women's organizations were shocked but galvanized across the country when "equality" was removed from Status of Women Canada's mandate, funding program criteria were changed, regional offices were closed, and women's organizations were prohibited from receiving funding for research and advocacy. The government relented and allowed "equality" back into the Status of Women Canada mandate, but women's equality-seeking groups still can't receive money for research or advocacy. In response to these cuts and changes, the **Liberals** have the most comprehensive, immediately realizable restoration plan to get women's equality back on the agenda among community organizations and in government decision-making. Their promise to establish an independent Gender Commissioner is welcome. This plan is very closely matched by the **NDP** promise to empower Status of Women to meet its mandate for equality and their strong commitment to undo cuts and changes. The NDP and the **Greens** both recognize gender identity and expression as needing human rights protection. The Greens treat equality as a first principle, and propose a radically different way of evaluating "progress" and "growth" that would benefit both women and the environment. The **Conservatives** argue that they increased the funding for Status of Women's programs and created new opportunities. However, equality-seeking, feminist women's organizations struggle to meet new criteria and desperately need resources for research and advocacy activities.



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