

Federal Election Resource

2015



FEDERAL ELECTION RESOURCE - 2015

This election resource has been prepared by several ecumenical organizations in Canada to inform and challenge all who are participating in the 2015 federal election. It identifies a range of priority issues, offers sample questions you can ask of candidates, and provides links to resources where you can learn more about these particular issues. We invite you to use this resource to:

- think through your own election priorities;
- call a group together to prepare for meetings with candidates;
- go deeper into issues you care about and work on them with others;
- organize and participate in all-candidates meetings in your riding.

Directly participating in the political process through voting is a primary benefit of membership in a representative democracy. Citizens have a right and an obligation to call on those who stand for public office to speak clearly about their convictions on important issues. This election resource has been prepared to assist citizens of faith and all people of good will to conscientiously prepare for, and participate in, the 2015 federal election.

For people of faith, religious convictions are not purely a private matter. Values, justice principles and moral commitments inform all our actions. They guide us when we speak to politicians and when we vote on election day. Similarly, candidates representing political parties who arrive on our doorsteps or at our community centres speak from their principles and convictions when they ask for our votes.

Each issue and question in this resource represents a priority area of one or more of our organizations, as indicated by the logo(s) in each section. Statements and questions are not necessarily endorsed by all organizations. All of us are committed to being non-partisan including in our engagement in the 2015 federal election.

We encourage you to participate fully in this significant event, drawing on the deep wells of your faith, values and convictions to advance care for land, air and waters, affirm the life of all people, and work for justice and peace.

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RESPONDING TO GOD’S CALL FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE

The concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has exceeded 400 parts per million, well above the 350 ppm threshold deemed to be the “safe” level for ensuring that runaway climate change does not imperil life on Earth. Globally, 2014 was the warmest year on record.

Research by the [International Energy Agency](#) and the [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) clearly states that at least 2/3 of known fossil fuel reserves must stay underground in order to avoid catastrophic climate change.

Canada is one of the world’s most egregious per capita emitters of greenhouse gases, emitting 14.7 metric tons per person, per year. In 2009, the Government of Canada committed to reducing our GHG emissions to 17% below 2005 levels by 2020. But Environment Canada data indicates that we are less than half-way there. According to Federal Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development [Julie Gelfand](#), “current federal measures will have little effect on emissions by 2020.”

As Christians, we have a responsibility to care for our neighbours (Matthew 25) and to be diligent caretakers of this beautiful planet with which God has blessed us (Genesis 1:26-28). This includes being aware of how climate change adversely affects all God’s creation as well as people living around the world.

Questions for candidates:

1. As a Member of Parliament,
 - would you work to end all subsidies to coal, oil and gas, including those provided through tax breaks and weak environmental laws?
 - would you support putting a price on carbon emissions through a tax or fee sufficient to keep the rise in global temperatures below two degrees Celsius?
2. What are the major components of your party’s plan to promote conservation and the development of renewable energy in Canada?
3. What is your party’s plan for Canada doing its part in setting fair and clear carbon emissions targets to ensure global average temperatures stay below a 2 degree increase from pre-industrial levels?

Resources: To learn more, visit www.cpj.ca/ecological-justice, www.kairoscanada.org/sustainability/climate-justice, and, www.councilofchurches.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Letter-to-Minister-Aglukkaq-Final-EN.pdf.



DIGNITY FOR ALL: A NATIONAL ANTI-POVERTY PLAN

Some 4.8 million Canadians are struggling in poverty. Poverty impacts every part of a person's life. Poverty makes it difficult for people to live in dignity and to respond to God's calling in their lives. Poverty takes a heavy individual and social toll, has an impact on health and an economic cost. Compared to other developed countries, Canada's poverty rate is shocking, especially in light of our wealth and economic stability as a nation. Among 34 developed countries, 23 have a lower poverty rate than Canada. Our record on Aboriginal poverty is shameful: one-quarter of Aboriginal people live in poverty.

Canada needs a plan to ensure that everyone in Canada can live in dignity. We must ensure that Canada has a vibrant economy and good jobs. But it goes much beyond that. We need comprehensive solutions to address income security, housing and homelessness, food security, health, early childhood education and care, and jobs and employment.

Christians can exercise the call to love our neighbours by using our citizenship as an instrument for justice. This starts with learning to discern when government actions contribute to greater justice and when they serve distorted goals. In response to poverty in this country, citizens must use their democratic rights to help shape governance in a way that contributes to public justice.

Questions for candidates:

1. Have you signed on to Dignity for All: The Campaign for a Poverty-Free Canada? What will you do to ensure that Canada has a comprehensive, integrated, and legislated anti-poverty plan?
2. As a Member of Parliament,
 - would you, and your party, support a national housing strategy? A national early childhood education and care strategy? Improved income supports for Canadians living in poverty?
 - would you, and your party, address the growth of precarious employment and large scale loss of stable employment for Canadians?

Resources: Dignity for All: The Campaign for a Poverty-Free Canada is a collective national initiative co-led by Citizens for Public Justice and supported by the Canadian Council of Churches and several member churches. They have prepared [Dignity for All: A National Anti-Poverty Plan](http://www.dignityforall.ca), which is available at www.dignityforall.ca and www.cpj.ca/wehaveaplan-do-they.

See also www.councilofchurches.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/PovertyLetterHarper.pdf



IS PRISON OUR ONLY ANSWER?

Incarceration is an important issue for faith communities as we consider how we respond to those who are marginalized and in need. Many inmates in Canada are serving sentences for a non-violent offence (76% of prisoners in provincial jails and 33% of those in federal penitentiaries).¹ Many repeat offenders are mentally ill, cognitively challenged and/or addicted. To become good neighbours and productive citizens, they need treatment, health services, education, housing, employment and support.

We are called to be healers and to be voices of compassion. This election provides an opportunity to bear witness to our faith by calling on our political parties to direct our criminal justice system in ways that honour God's vision of restorative justice and respect the human dignity of all.

Questions for candidates:

1. Canada's crime rate has been decreasing for years. How, then, do you, and your party, propose to make effective use of the resources committed to justice and corrections?
2. As a Member of Parliament,
 - how would you and your party develop restorative approaches to justice that support healing for victims, offenders, and communities?
 - how would you prepare and support women and men who are serving sentences to be good neighbours in our communities upon their release?

Resources: ¹ See www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2012001/article/11715-eng.htm#a6 and www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/2011-ccrs/index-eng.aspx#a7

To learn more, visit www.ccjc.ca.



DUTY TO CONSULT INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Indigenous peoples, as distinct, self-determining nations, have the right to be consulted on resource development projects on their territories. In 2007, many of Canada's Christian churches called for the recognition and guarantee of this right when they reaffirmed ***A New Covenant-Towards the Constitutional Recognition and Protection of Aboriginal Self-Government in Canada.***

Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982 made Canada one of the first countries to constitutionally protect Indigenous peoples' rights. Canada's 2010 endorsement of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* was an important step towards reconciliation.

Recent Supreme Court of Canada decisions have reasserted the duty of Canadian governments to consult and accommodate Indigenous peoples prior to permitting development projects. Although the Supreme Court has ruled that the "full consent" of Aboriginal peoples is necessary on "very serious issues,"¹ Indigenous peoples have found consultation processes to be "fundamentally flawed" and have asked the government to engage directly with them to amend the approval regime.

Questions for candidates:

1. As a Member of Parliament,
 - how would you and your party work towards the implementation of the duty to consult in a manner that ensures the genuine involvement and input of Indigenous peoples at every stage of resource development projects?

Resources: ¹ *Haida Nation v. British Columbia (Minister of Forests)*. Supreme Court of Canada. 2004.

At scc-csc.lexum.com/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/item/2189/index.do

See also [*A New Covenant Towards the Constitutional Recognition and Protection of Aboriginal Self-Government in Canada*](#)

On Free, Prior and Informed Consent see also www.kairoscanada.org/dignity-rights/fpic/



NATIONAL INQUIRY INTO MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN

While acknowledging government steps to address the issue of murdered and missing Indigenous women, United Nations Special Rapporteur James Anaya said:

“I have heard from Aboriginal peoples a widespread lack of confidence in the effectiveness of those measures. I have heard a consistent call for a national level enquiry into the extent of the problem and appropriate solutions moving forward with the participation of victims’ families and others deeply affected.”¹

Questions for candidates:

1. As a Member of Parliament,
 - would you and your party support a national public inquiry and work with Indigenous peoples on the development of a clear action plan to address the urgent crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women and children?

Resources: ¹ James Anaya, UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of indigenous peoples. Statement upon conclusion of the visit to Canada. October 15, 2013.

See also www.councilofchurches.ca/roundtable/ and www.kairosCanada.org/dignity-rights/justice-for-indigenous-women/



I say to God my Rock, “Why have you forgotten me:
Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the
enemy?”

—**Psalm 42:9**

WELCOMING THE STRANGER

Refugees are one of the most vulnerable populations in the world. As such, we as a human family have a responsibility to do what we can to ease their plight. Yet recent changes in Canada’s refugee policies have weakened our response to those in such need of our compassion and care.

We have seen the introduction of mandatory detention for “irregular” arrivals, limited or no access to health care services, and a significant loss of rights and protection under the law for some categories of refugees. Safe country designations and a lower “age of dependency,” combined with challenging processing timelines and increased obstacles to the private sponsorship of refugees make it more and more difficult for newcomers in Canada.

As Christians, we are urged to see the face of God reflected in every human being we encounter, regardless of nationality, creed, social status, or any other characteristics. In Romans 12:13, God calls us to “extend hospitality to strangers.” For those who are not only strangers, but have been forced to flee life-threatening situations, we must demonstrate an even higher level of mercy and compassion.

Questions for candidates:

1. As a Member of Parliament,
 - how would you, and your party, guarantee that refugee rights are protected when they arrive in Canada and throughout the process of making their claim?
 - would you reinstate the regulation that prevents provinces from imposing a minimum residency requirement on refugees in order for them to receive social assistance?
 - would you reinstate the pre-2012 Interim Federal Health Program?

Resources: To learn more, visit www.cpj.ca/refugees-newcomers.



PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED DEATH

Physician-assisted death remains a question of enormous significance for all Canadians, as it was in the late 1990s when the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC) issued its Statement of Convergence on Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide. The issue has become only more urgent in light of the Supreme Court of Canada's recent ruling. Some of the CCC's member churches are revisiting their response to this question in the light of the decision of the high court. Other churches continue to see their views reflected in the Council's statement of 1996.

All of the Council's member churches are in agreement that the issue of physician-assisted death, with its wide-ranging implications, is among the most significant ethical questions facing our country. As such, we believe a broad and deep consultation on this question is required, allowing all voices to be heard, prior to any legislation.

Questions for candidates:

1. What is your position on physician assisted death?
2. Do you agree that a broadly based, public consultation is necessary?
3. As a Member of Parliament,
 - how would you and your party proceed with a comprehensive consultation to ensure all voices are heard?

Resources: See www.councilofchurches.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Statement-of-Convergence-on-Euthanasia-and-Assisted-Suicide.pdf.



For he has not despised or scorned the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help.

—**Psalm 22:24**

INCREASING COMMITMENT TO EFFECTIVE INTERNATIONAL AID

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were established following the Millennium Summit of the United Nations in 2000. All member states at the time and over 20 international organizations committed to help achieve the following goals by 2015: (1) to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; (2) to achieve universal primary education; (3) to promote gender equality and empower women; (4) to reduce child mortality; (5) to improve maternal health; (6) to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases; (7) to ensure environmental sustainability; and (8) to develop a global partnership for development.

A new set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are in the process of being finalized following widespread consultation by the United Nations. These SDGs are a universal set of goals, targets and indicators that UN member states will be expected to use to frame their agendas and political policies over the next 15 years. It is expected that they will be endorsed at a UN summit in New York in September 2015, to come into effect in January 2016.

Canada has an opportunity for leadership not only in shaping these goals, but also in providing money to help achieve them. Canada's contribution to aid has fallen in recent years, and is now at 0.24% of gross national income (GNI), well below the UN target of 0.7% that Canadian churches have been calling for.

Questions for candidates:

1. As a Member of Parliament,
 - how will you work to reverse the decline in Canada's aid budget, in order to help developing countries overcome poverty and promote sustainable development?

Resources: For more information on the Millennium Development Goals, see: foodgrainsbank.ca/news/global-development-goals-are-within-reach/. On Canada's aid budget compared to other developed countries: cidpnsi.ca/canada-and-the-oecd-dac-aid-statistics/.

And, on reasons for Canada to increase its foreign aid: www.makepovertyhistory.ca/pointseven.



INCREASING SUPPORT FOR SMALL-SCALE FARMERS

Canada has made it a priority to reduce global hunger by helping small-scale farmers in developing countries. Yet the role of agriculture in our aid program has declined by some 25% over the past three years (from over 9% of the aid budget to less than 7%).

Questions for candidates:

1. As a Member of Parliament,
 - would you commit to prioritizing funding that creates opportunities for small-scale farmers in developing countries? What actions would you take to achieve this goal?

Resources: See the Canadian Foodgrains Bank resource on supporting small-scale farmers at: <http://foodgrainsbank.ca/goodsoil/>. For videos on food insecurity and small-scale farming go to: www.feedingninebillion.com; information on global hunger: www.wfp.org/hunger/who-are; and, for infographics and videos on global hunger, poverty, and malnutrition: outrageandinspire.org/



For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.'

—**Matthew 25:35-36**

ARMS TRADE TREATY (ATT)

Thousands of people are killed, injured, raped, and forced to flee from their homes as a result of the unregulated global arms trade. Project Ploughshares has worked for more than a decade with the international Control Arms campaign to create an effective Arms Trade Treaty to regulate the movement of military goods and ensure that they do not fall into the hands of human rights abusers. On December 24, 2014, the ATT came into force following its ratification by 50 countries. While the number of states parties to the ATT has now passed 63, Canada has neither signed nor ratified it. All other NATO countries, as well as countries such as Israel, have either signed or ratified the ATT.

Questions for candidates:

1. As a Member of Parliament,
 - would you work to ensure that Canada signs and ratifies the Arms Trade Treaty at the earliest possible date?

Resources: Lina Holguin, Ken Epps, and Mark Fried. "No more delays: Sign the Arms Trade Treaty." ploughshares.ca/pl_publications/no-more-delays-sign-the-arms-trade-treaty/

Summary Analysis of the Arms Trade Treaty. See controlarms.org/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2013/05/Control-Arms-ATT-analysis_EN.pdf



He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

—Isaiah 2:4

INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN INITIATIVE TO BAN THE NUCLEAR BOMB

The primary rationale for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons rests in the possibility that a catastrophe could occur, by accident or design, likely involving greater numbers of vastly more powerful bombs than those used in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Until all nuclear weapons are eliminated, there remains an entirely preventable risk of disaster.

In recent years, renewed attention to the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons has served as both catalyst and rallying point for a growing number of states and international civil society organizations. The widespread and long-term devastation to ecosystems, the global economy and human society from even a limited nuclear-weapons exchange could mean the end of human civilization and all life. It will be impossible to provide effective emergency relief following the use of nuclear weapons. Complete nuclear disarmament is the only certain way to avoid such a catastrophe. Canada has offered only lukewarm support to the humanitarian initiative to ban nuclear weapons.

Questions for candidates:

1. As a Member of Parliament,
 - would you and your party work towards complete nuclear disarmament?
 - would you and your party work to ensure that Canada takes a lead in international diplomacy to ban and then completely eliminate nuclear weapons within the next decade?

Resources: See Cesar Jaramillo's "The imperative for nuclear disarmament" and "Completing the push for nuclear disarmament" at ploughshares.ca/pl_publications/. See also "A World Without Nuclear Weapons" www.councilofchurches.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Church_Leaders_Letter_on_Nuclear_Disarmament.pdf and Canadian Council of Churches' letter seeking action on nuclear non-proliferation at www.councilofchurches.ca/seeking-action-on-nuclear-non-proliferation/.



CANADIAN MINING COMPANIES MUST RESPECT HUMAN RIGHTS

Canada is home to more than half of the world's mining companies. Human rights abuses, including displacement of communities and violation of labour rights, are increasingly associated with their projects.

Questions for candidates:

1. As a Member of Parliament,
 - would you support the creation of an extractive sector ombudsman with the power to independently investigate complaints and make recommendations to companies and to the government?
 - would you support legislated access to Canadian courts for people who have been seriously harmed by the international operations of Canadian companies?

Resources: See www.kairosCanada.org/take-action/open-for-justice/



But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace.

—James 3:17-18

CANADA'S MILITARY MISSION IN IRAQ AND SYRIA

The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) has been responsible for brutal killings and kidnappings, and other deliberate and massive violations of basic human rights amounting to war crimes and crimes against humanity. At the same time, military intervention will not bring an end to the conflict without a broader internationally sanctioned strategy for achieving sustainable peace in Iraq and Syria.

Informed by deeply rooted beliefs in the sanctity of human life and dignity, the need to protect vulnerable people from atrocities, and concerned about the ineffectiveness of international military interventions in the region in the past, church leaders have urged the Prime Minister to strengthen diplomatic efforts, increase further humanitarian assistance, provide robust support for refugees, support civil society organizations, reduce the flow of arms and focus on the protection of the rule of law and respect for human rights.

Questions for candidates:

1. As a Member of Parliament,
 - what strategy would you and your party promote to build a sustainable peace in Iraq and Syria?

Resources: www.councilofchurches.ca/church-leaders-letter/



He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

—**Micah 6:8**

We are leading ecumenical and justice charities in Canada who are working for unity, restorative justice, ecological justice, human rights, food security, refugee justice, peacebuilding, disarmament, women's rights, Indigenous Peoples' rights, health care and dignity for all.



The Canadian Council of Churches is the broadest and most inclusive ecumenical body in the world, now representing 25 denominations of Anglican; Evangelical; Free Church; Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox; Protestant; and Catholic traditions. Together we represent more than 85% of the Christians in Canada. The Canadian Council of Churches was founded in 1944.

Website: www.canadiancouncilofchurches.ca | Facebook: www.facebook.com/CCC.CCE | Twitter: @CCC_CCE



KAIROS unites eleven Christian churches and religious organizations in a faithful ecumenical response to the call to "do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8). We deliberate on issues of common concern, advocate for social justice and join with people of faith and goodwill in action for social transformation.

Website: www.kairoscanada.org | Facebook: www.facebook.com/pages/Kairos-Canadian-Ecumenical-Justice-Initiatives/19277141685?fref=ts | Twitter: @kairoscanada



Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ) is a national, member-based organization that promotes public justice in Canada by shaping key public policy debates through research and analysis, publishing, and public dialogue. CPJ encourages citizens, leaders in society, and governments to support policies and practices which reflect God's call for love, justice, and the flourishing of creation.

Website: www.cpj.ca | Facebook: www.facebook.com/citizensforpublicjustice | Twitter: @publicjustice



Canadian Foodgrains Bank is a partnership of 15 Canadian churches and church-based agencies working together to end global hunger.

Website: foodgrainsbank.ca | Facebook: www.facebook.com/CanadianFoodgrainsBank
Twitter: @Foodgrains



Project Ploughshares is the peace research centre of The Canadian Council of Churches and works with churches, governments and civil society, in Canada and abroad, to advance policies and actions to prevent war and armed violence and build peace.

Website: www.ploughshares.ca | Facebook: www.facebook.com/pages/Project-Ploughshares/206928856016444
Twitter: @ploughshares_ca



The Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada (WICC) is the only national ecumenical women's organization in Canada. Founded in 1918, we are representative of ten denominational church partners including the Anglican, United, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Baptist, Friends, Mennonite, Salvation Army, Evangelical Lutheran, and Disciples of Christ. WICC provides a voice for a large segment of the Christian women in Canada and our programs are shared with many other denominations including Pentecostal and African Methodist churches. We are a vibrant and diverse Christian women's Council encouraging women to grow in ecumenism; to share their spirituality and prayer; to respond to national and international issues affecting women; and to take action together for justice.

Website: www.wicc.org | Facebook: www.facebook.com/WICCCanada



The Church Council on Justice and Corrections (CCJC) is a national faith-based coalition rooted in the Christian tradition. Through research, projects, workshops, and presentations, the CCJC promotes education on restorative justice and sponsors initiatives to build healthier communities.

Website: www.ccjc.ca | Facebook: [The Church Council on Justice and Corrections](https://www.facebook.com/TheChurchCouncilonJusticeandCorrections) | Twitter: @CCJCanada