

ISSUES GROUP - ELECTION PROJECT 2015

In 2014-15 the Mississauga Issues Group choose and identified its top ten concerns that it would like addressed by our electoral candidates. We are now in the position to share the results with you. **We would like the membership to:**

- Attend a candidates meeting and ask a question or two
- Write a letter to a local candidate
- Share this report with friends and family
- Share on social media
- Write a letter expressing concerns to a newspaper
- Share actions and results with the Issues Group and membership
- Consider posting actions and results on the CFUW Mississauga Issues Blog
- And ... **Watch the Issues Blog for updates and new ideas**

We welcome your feedback as you engage in this project.
VANCE FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

THANK YOU IN AD-

1. THE FAIR ELECTIONS ACT:

The government introduced The Fair Elections Act in February 2014. It was criticized by political parties, election law experts and the public. Among complaints, it bans vouching and the Voter Information Card as ID to prove residency. This could affect students living away from home and others without a permanent address. It allows a Member of Parliament whose election results are being contested by the Chief Electoral Officer to remain as a sitting Member of Parliament until the dispute is resolved. It proposes to repeal the ban on the premature transmission of election results.

Elections Canada will still be allowed to run paid ads, but other forms of communication and engagement with Canadians will be off limits. The Chief Electoral Officer has spoken openly against restrictions imposed on his office such as the removal of public education programs re: the voting process and people's rights

What is your position on these changes to the act?

2. NATIONAL ENQUIRY INTO THE LOST AND MURDERED ABORIGINAL WOMEN

The RCMP has recorded that between 1980 and 2012, 1017 native women were murdered and 164 lost or missing. Eleven year old Teresa Robinson of Manitoba was killed in her own community in early summer 2015. The Assembly of First Nations, the Native Women's Association of Canada and other organizations have been calling for a national inquiry into the issue of these deaths. Many Aboriginal people believe that the federal

government's refusal to agree to an inquiry is an abdication of its responsibilities to their native peoples. At the same time, not all relatives of the lost women desire an inquiry that would revive the trauma they have suffered.

In March, 2015, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women concluded that Canada was responsible for "grave violations" of human rights due its "protracted failure to take sufficient action to stop violence against Indigenous women and girls," and that a formal inquiry should be held.

What is your stand on the issue of a national investigation into the many murdered and lost Aboriginal women and girls?

If there is no investigation into the lost and murdered Aboriginal women, how do you propose to bring a degree of closure to their relatives?

3. YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

Canadian youth face potential lifelong damage to their health from periods of joblessness which may cause low self-esteem, increased smoking, anxiety and mental health problems. Prolonged unemployment will lead some to crime and social unrest. The Huffington Post recently reported that youth underemployment was an even bigger problem than unemployment which itself is roughly twice the national average. Too many young people have to take part time jobs. Consequently contributions to a pension plan and other benefits do not begin until a permanent career position is obtained.

By May 2015, the unemployment rate for youth had risen to 13.20%. Their inability to find jobs is also impacting their parents who are assisting them. How would young people themselves address this problem? A study by yconic.com of 1,425 English speaking Canadian youth revealed they want mentorship and intern opportunities. Also rated highly were international work-study experience and start-up initiatives for their own businesses.

What answers do you have to help rectify the ongoing youth unemployment situation in Canada today?

4. USEFULNESS OF THE LONG FORM CENSUS

The life span of the mandatory Long Form Census ran from 1970 until 2010 when the Canadian government replaced it with the voluntary National Household Survey. The high success rate of the Long Form made it reliable and provided an unbiased record about Canada's population. Only 50 complaints were recorded about it in the 20 years leading up to its cancellation. The response rate to the voluntary 2011 NHS was 68.6 %. Stats Canada data collections are mandated to improve public and private decision making in every aspect of the lives of our citizens.

Opposition to the cancellation of the Long Form has come from many segments of the population with some 370 organizations expressing dismay, among them the Canadian Medical Association, Association for Business Economics, women's groups and the Canadian Bar Association. The elimination of the mandatory long form census has led to the loss of policy-relevant, objective data about Canadian society.

We are again approaching a census year in 2016. Please explain your position on reinstating the Long Form Census.

Where will Stats Canada get its information for developing long range policies relevant to the needs of our citizens if the Long Form Census is no longer used?

5. PROVIDING SAFE, CLEAN WATER FOR ABORIGINAL RESERVES

In 2013, the Safe Drinking Water for First Nations Act was passed creating enforceable standards to ensure the safety of water systems on reserves similar to those that exist in the rest of the country. Economic Action Plan 2014 has invested approximately \$3 billion since 2006 in the construction, maintenance and operation of their water and wastewater systems, with 198 major water and wastewater projects completed, including new construction and renovations. First Nations put up 20% of the funding and receive 80% from the federal government for the operation and maintenance of community water and wastewater infrastructure.

Despite massive expenditures, clean drinking water continues to be unavailable in too many First Nations communities. The combination of improper sanitation and bad water quality can lead to a number of health problems. As of April 30, 2015, there were 139 Drinking Water Advisories in effect in 94 First Nations communities across Canada, excluding British Columbia.

What would you do to remedy this situation?

Why has progress in providing safe drinking water been so slow?

6. CLIMATE CHANGE & GREENHOUSE-GAS EMISSIONS

Climate change is universally recognized as a threat to life on earth. In the future, people will face dramatic upheavals about where they can live, grow food and have access to fresh water. The federal government criticized the Kyoto Accord's planned measures against global warming, saying that Canada's economy would be crippled if we were forced to meet the Accord's timetable. On Dec. 8, 2014, the government released its annual report on global climate change showing that Canada was nowhere near meeting the targets the government had committed to for 2020. However, six months later, on June 7, 2015, Canada joined the Group of Seven leaders promising to stop burning fossil fuels by the end of the century and to lower greenhouse-gas emissions by 70% by 2050. A future international conference on climate is set for Paris in December 2015.

The challenge is how to reduce emissions while global demand for energy is increasing.

If elected, what steps would you take to see that Canada undertakes its commitments to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions and meet international commitments on climate change?

Do you believe that the 2050 target is realistic and, if elected, what will you do to meet that commitment?

7. PRIVATIZATION OF PARKS CANADA

You never know what you have lost until it is gone, is the saying. Our national parks are being nibbled at by creeping privatization. Budget cuts in 2012 forced a need to generate cash flow in some western parks met by privatizing hot springs operations. Sable Island, NS, now allows seismic testing inside the park and directional oil drilling under the park. The Canada-Nova Scotia Off-shore Petroleum Board is required only to inform (not consult) with Parks Canada about their activities.

In January, 2014, Parks Canada approved a plan to build a ten-storey war memorial on a scenic hectare of the Cabot Trail. Many argue it defies Parks Canada's mandate to preserve and protect the land. Funding for the \$30-\$60 million site is to be raised by a private foundation.

What is your position on privatization within our national parks?

How much commercialization is “too much?”

8. AFFORDABLE HOUSING

A better life for everyone begins with an affordable place to live. Lack of affordable housing is a serious problem across Canada which can sometimes lead to homelessness. In the Greater Toronto Area many renters are forced to use food banks because their rents are too high. Before the mid-1990's, the federal government engaged in a partnership with the provinces and municipal governments to provide the necessary funding for affordable housing, but it is no longer part of that partnership. Affordable housing has been downloaded to the municipalities where the property tax base is not large enough to build new housing. The waiting list in Mississauga alone stands at about 18,000. Provincial governments have made an effort to help but federal cutbacks to transfer payments have placed limits on what programs the provinces can fund. The federal government needs to get involved again to assist provinces and municipalities in providing an affordable home for every Canadian.

How would you address the problem of funding more affordable housing?

Would you be willing to re-establish the partnership with the provinces and municipalities?

9. EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE

Canada still has no national child care policy despite many promises made beginning with the Commission on the Status of Women in 1968. Child care costs vary greatly across the country and between urban and rural areas. Quebec has the lowest costs; Manitoba comes second, Ontario highest.

Advocates are promoting child care as a public good and important for the economy. It is destined to be an issue in the 2015 federal election with the parties already beginning to take a stand. The policy director at the Mowat Centre, Ontario's non-partisan voice on public policy believes the federal government could take a leadership role in terms of gathering data on child care costs.

All major parties have a child care policy but the approaches vary: the Conservatives will offer a universal child care benefit. The Green Party sees workplace child care spots as a priority. The Liberals promise child care spaces across the country likely geared to income. The NDP is supporting universal \$15 a day child care.

What is your stand on a national child care policy?

What will you do to ensure equitable access to top quality and affordable child care for all Canadians?

10. THE SITUATION REGARDING GOVERNMENT SCIENTISTS

Access to federal scientists and their research should keep Canadians safe and healthy by providing us, and our policy-makers, with the expertise needed to make smart decisions. The federal government has reduced science budgets by more than \$1.1 billion since 2011, terminated the contracts of 4,000 researchers and closed hundreds of research facilities. In a 2013 survey by Environics Research commissioned by the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada - although only 26% of federal scientists responded about government interference - 37% of respondents indicated that management prevented them from speaking freely to the media or had directed them to alter their findings. In the early summer of 2015 public sector unions organized rallies to protest the restrictions on federal scientists who do not have the right to approve the final version of proposed publications representing their scientific opinion. Canada needs a more open science communication policy and a reinstatement of funding to best serve its citizens.

What is your position on restricting communication for the scientific community?

What is your position on the reinstatement of scientific funding?