



## Up For Debate

### Questions for the Candidates

Battered Women's Support Services (BWSS) has joined [Up For Debate](#), an alliance of over 150 women's organizations and their allies from across Canada. We are united in raising awareness about women's rights in the lead up to the 2015 federal election. Up For Debate calls on all political parties to commit to a federal leaders' debate on issues identified by women, the first in 30 years, and to make meaningful commitments to change women's lives for the better, at home and abroad by:

- Ending violence against women
- Ending women's economic inequality
- Supporting women's leadership and organizations

Battered Women's Support Services has prepared this document to help shape conversations we will want to have as we approach the Federal Election 2015. This is a living document and will be amended to apply learning.

### **Violence Against Women, Women's Homelessness and Housing**

Battered Women's Support Services works to end violence against women and girls.

Violence against women is one of the most pressing social issues and costs over \$6 billion annually for Canada. Violence against women is also the leading cause of women's homelessness and precarious housing in Canada. In 2014, male violence and abuse of women caused over 200,000 women and their children to flee their homes into emergency shelters/transition houses. The lack of safe, affordable housing is one of the reasons why women and their children are forced to stay with unsafe and abusive partners. Women need access to safe and affordable housing. No woman should be homeless and living on the street.

Q: Will your party develop and implement an effective national strategy to end violence against women, in consultation with women's and Indigenous anti-violence organizations?

Q: Will your party develop a national housing strategy with emergency, second stage and safe, affordable permanent housing for women?

Q: What measures would your party implement to policies that address the roots of women's homelessness, precarious housing and street homelessness?

## Women's Access to Justice

BWSS recently held Women Seeking Justice, a conference that convened a former judge, researchers, academics, lawyers, legal advocates, and feminist thinkers to illuminate pressing legal issues for women in law practice and policy including Indigenous, international, immigration, refugee, criminal, family, and poverty. The conference highlighted key problems for women accessing justice under Canadian law, specifically:

- The inability for women to receive legal aid for legal representation in their family law cases
- The problems for women navigating multiple proceedings (such as criminal law, family law, child protection law, and immigration law) as a dangerous disconnect impacting women's safety in male violence situations
- The condemnation of Canada's response to violence against Indigenous girls and women by the international community specifically missing and murdered Indigenous girls and women
- Increases in women being arrested and charged for allegedly perpetrating domestic violence against their male partners when there is a long and documented history of male partner's violence against woman
- The call for Canada cities to adopt a sanctuary city model for undocumented migrant and immigrants in Canada
- Redressing the Conditional Permanent Residence requirements under immigration law in recognizing the dangers of making immigration status conditional on living with your spouse poses for women dealing with male violence

Q: Will your party substantially increase legal aid funds dedicated for family law?

Q: What will your party do to address the safety problems for women dealing with male violence forced to navigate multiple proceedings?

Q: Will your party support the call for a national inquiry examining the epidemic of violence against Indigenous girls and women agreeing with the urging of thousands of family members, individuals, women's groups, communities, First Nations, municipal, provincial and territorial governments, the international community, and human rights organizations?

Q: Will your party support the call for Canadian cities to adopt a sanctuary city model for undocumented immigrants in Canada?

Q: Will your party redress repressive refugee law reforms?

Q: Will your party redress the conditional permanent residence requirements which entrench immigrant women in abusive relationships?

## Child Care

BWSS advocates for a national strategy for comprehensive early learning and child care services that are high quality, accessible, publicly managed, not-for-profit and an integral part of Canadian social structure.

Q: Does your party support a federal government role in leading development of a national strategy for child care services?

Q: Will your party commit significant dedicated funding to provinces and territories to build universal not-for-profit child care systems?

Q: Will your party increase dedicated federal transfers for child care?

## Economic Security for Women

BWSS report on our research [Economic Abuse and Violence Against Women](#) highlighted that economic abuse is defined as controlling a woman's ability to acquire, use, and maintain economic resources. Economic abuse is as common in abusive relationships as physical, sexual and emotional abuse. 100% of the research participants reported experiencing emotional abuse by their partners, 75% had been physically assaulted, 80% had experienced sexual abuse by their partners and 100% had experienced economic abuse. Women also reported that their economic dependency, is also reinforced by societal and systemic gender discrimination that limits or denies women the opportunities to have access to and participate in the labour market and earn equal wages as male counterparts. And this societal and systemic gender discrimination was layered with racial discrimination for Indigenous women Immigrant women and Women of Colour who combined formed 40% of the research participants.

Women make up a disproportionate share of low-income Canadians and are particularly vulnerable in any economic crisis. Women account for 72% of part-time employees and approximately two-thirds of Canadians working for minimum wage. Canada has the highest levels of working mothers (working outside the home) in our recorded history, 36% of mother-led families still have incomes below the poverty line and 43% of children living in a low-income family live with a single, female parent. The median income for single moms is more than a third lower than for single dads.

Q: Does your political party have a policy to ensure Canadians have a guaranteed living income?

Q: What measures would your party implement to improve women's economic status?

Q: Is your party committed to adopting a national poverty reduction strategy with targets, timelines and a gender lens?

Q: Will your party implement Gender Budget Analysis to ensure taxation and other general government policies do not disproportionately disadvantage women?

Q: How do you propose ending family poverty in Canada? Will you work towards increasing the Child Tax Benefit?

## Canada Falling Behind On Gender Equality

Canada is our 23rd-place standing on the UN's Gender Inequality Index that has caught the attention of the international community.

<http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/opinion/analysis/canada-falling-behind-on-gender-equality-299151851.html>

***Battered Women's Support Services is a non-partisan women's organization working to end violence against women and girls while urging men to own their role in ending violence against girls and women.***

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**#UpForDebate**

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