



This time we can vote positive for women

What we want

We want to live in communities where women enjoy a better quality of life and have equal access to employment, stable full-time jobs with fair wages, and public pensions. We also want fair access to unemployment insurance, including parental benefits that replace 75 per cent of lost income.

We want women and their families to have access to affordable, quality, non-profit child care, universal public health care and social programs. We want a federal government that will help women balance work and family; that will support public transit; and ensure that women have access to training and advancement in the workforce.

We want a federal government that supports the expansion of public services because they are critical to ending poverty for women and families. We want a federal government that will use all its legal and financial authority to stop the privatization of public services.

How the Liberals have failed women

Paul Martin's privatization agenda has eliminated many well-paying jobs held by women. Many of these jobs have been turned into temporary, poverty-wage and non-unionized positions. Women now work more but earn less so that private corporations can make money off women's labour and essential public services.

About 25 per cent of part-time women workers want a full-time job, which means part-time work is involuntary for them. Precarious work has also led to lower rates of unemployment insurance coverage.

In 2001, just 33 per cent of unemployed women received insurance benefits, compared to 44 per cent for men. Statistics Canada shows that 35 per cent of mothers with newborns did not receive benefits in 2003.

Life is more dangerous for women. Low-income women and their children are more vulnerable to domestic violence because they can't make ends meet on their own. The United Nations Human Rights Committee recently blasted Canada for failing to protect Aboriginal women from violence, which the latest figures show to be three times higher than other women.

Paul Martin's privatization agenda is forcing increasing numbers of older women into poverty. Privatized jobs mean an end to public sector pension coverage. More than half of unattached senior women live in poverty. Women's Canada Pension Plan (CPP) retiring benefits still remain less than two-thirds of men's.

The wage gap between men and women was entrenched under Liberal rule. The 2004 federal pay equity task force found that women with the same qualifications and professional experience are still paid less than their male counterparts. The task force concludes that human rights legislation needs to tackle this problem head on. We've known that for years, but the Liberal government has done nothing.

Martin's cuts to public services have made women's quality of life worse. The negative impact of cuts to social programs and social assistance on women has been noted in the November 2005 UN Human Rights Committee report. Women have to juggle several jobs to make ends meet while putting in more hours looking after family members, including children and elderly parents.

Studies show that women are stretched to the breaking point. This is particularly true for immigrant women. More than 90 per cent of immigrant women within the Somali, Ghanaian and Ethiopian communities in Toronto are facing poverty.

Privatized, two-tier medicine will have devastating consequences for women because women rely most on public health care delivery and public health insurance. The Liberal government has declined to take any meaningful steps to stem the tide of privatization of our health care system when they possess the tools to do so.

Although the Liberals have allocated limited funds for child care, they still need to make a significant funding commitment and take steps to develop public, non-profit, universal, accessible and quality child care through legislation.

Why the Conservatives would be worse

The Conservatives under Stephen Harper promise to cut social programs even more severely than the Liberals. Martin has already delivered their demand for lower corporate tax rates than the United States, but the Conservatives want even more cuts.

Harper's policies will make inequalities between women and men worse. He says he is a "social conservative." That means he refuses to recognize the needs of women and equality-seeking groups.

When Harper left the Reform party and became president of the National Citizens' Coalition, he said it was because the NCC "criticizes, attacks and gives alternatives to such things as official multiculturalism, enforced national bilingualism, a pro-criminal justice system, anti-family social policies, open door immigration..."

The Conservative party has at last included women in its policy book. However, the policies are a throw back to the ones from the 1970s that never accomplished equality for women. While he was at the NCC, Harper said that the federal government should scrap its pay equity law. He also stated that pay equity has everything to do with pay and nothing to do with equity.

What the New Democrats say

The NDP has policies that support the rights of women and other equality-seeking groups. The New Democrats believe women need jobs that provide decent pay and benefits, job security, flexibility and access to training.

The New Democrats say women deserve opportunities for advancement, predictable working hours, employment equity and pay equity. NDP MPs continue to fight for a new unemployment insurance system that would meet the needs of women, many of whom are part-time workers.

The NDP has consistently pushed for a universal, accessible, affordable, non-profit and quality child care program and a Child Care Act to build and protect that program.

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