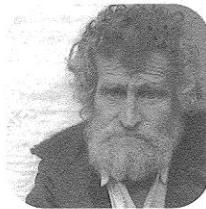


Counting on your vote!



Raising issues with candidates
in this election that affect
the most vulnerable



HOW TO USE THE ELECTION GUIDE

AS EASY AS A, B, C or D

1- **Be informed** – Review the content in this Guide to make yourself aware of some of the significant issues facing our province in the upcoming election. Then, take a look at the websites of the political parties in this election, and also review the website of your own MP. There you'll find their platform, that is, their position on issues that will affect your life and that of others in Ontario.

2- **Just the facts** – Among all the issues that you must consider, see what they have to say about issues that are raised here by Catholic Charities that touch on poverty, homelessness and basic human dignity.

3- **Checking** – Use the questions at the end of the Guide as a checklist to help you ask candidates who come to your home, at an all-candidates meeting or discussing issues with friends. Along with some suggested Questions there is a **REPORT CARD** to “grade” how they answer their answers (‘A’, ‘B’, ‘C’ or ‘D’).

“STRUCTURAL CAUSES OF INEQUALITY”

Pope Francis called on leaders around the world to fight poverty and growing inequality in his Apostolic Exhortation the Joy of the Gospel / Evangelii Gaudium.

He said that unchecked capitalism was "a new tyranny" and he sharply criticized economic systems that embrace the "idolatry of money". The Pope urged politicians to "attack the structural causes of inequality" and strive to provide work, healthcare and education to all citizens.

□

"I ask God to give us more politicians capable of sincere and effective dialogue aimed at healing the deepest roots – and not simply the appearances – of the evils in our world! Politics, though often denigrated, remains a lofty vocation and one of the highest forms of charity, inasmuch as it seeks the common good.

□

As long as the problems of the poor are not radically resolved...no solution will be found for this world's problems.

Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*
(The Joy of the Gospel),

The inclusion of the poor in society, "The economy and distribution of income,"
No. 205, 2013.

CASTING YOUR VOTE FOR A MORE JUST SOCIETY

We are preparing to cast our vote in the Ontario general election on Thursday, June 12th. We need to ensure that the people we elect will strive to make Ontario a more compassionate place and build better connections between government and the people.

We want to elect members of Ontario's Legislative Assembly that we believe will help create a better, more democratic society, a robust economy that meets the needs of all citizens, and a more sustainable and environmentally friendly future...and most importantly safeguard basic human dignity.

In casting our vote on June 12th, Catholic Charities and its member agencies would like you to be aware of issues that not only affect you directly but also issues that will affect others in your community, especially vulnerable families, children, teenage parents, homeless youth and isolated seniors. *They are counting on your vote.*

RESPECT AND SUPPORT FOR LIFE

Ontario's Catholic Bishops as well as the Catholic Bishops of Canada consistently remind us that the responsible use of freedom means promotion of human life and dignity at all stages, from conception to death, no matter the circumstances with respect for life and dignity of the human person as well as the preferential option for the poor.

Responsible citizenship is a virtue, and participation in political life is a moral obligation. The values of our faith are guides to public life.

"Governments must support life. For this reason, the Catholic Bishops of Ontario have offered their reflections on the important matter of choosing people for political office.

All human beings must be nourished, supported and cherished from the moment of conception until the moment of natural death. A government worthy of support will favour life rather than abortion and euthanasia, will be supportive of families, will make palliative care a priority, will fight against child poverty and will look for the rehabilitation of those who have become entangled in crime or drugs."

On Choosing A Government (1998) and Taking Stock (2007)
Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario (ACBO)

► POVERTY

Catholic Charities and its member agencies know that individuals and many families with children in Ontario still live in wretched conditions of poverty averaging between 9% to 12%+. It's not poverty caused primarily by personal action, but rather it is "structural", the result of a failure of our economy to address issues that keep people out of poverty. Many families have still not recovered from the 2008 recession when jobs were lost, livelihoods and their future threatened. Children and their families in the province were hardest hit.

In 2009, the provincial government committed to ending the cycle of poverty through the Poverty Reduction Act with the goal of reducing child poverty by 25% in five years. It increased the Ontario Child Benefit, the minimum wage, social assistance rates and reviewed social assistance. A second five-year phase was to be implemented. The Act was supported by all parties. Ontario's first Poverty Reduction Strategy legislation focussed on children and as a result child poverty declined by 9.2% despite the worst global economic downturn since the 1930s.

"Therefore, it must be borne in mind that grave imbalances are produced when economic action, conceived merely as an engine for wealth creation, is detached from political action, conceived as a means for pursuing justice through redistribution.

The Church has always held that economic action is not to be regarded as something opposed to society... the market is not, and must not become, the place where the strong subdue the weak."

Pope Benedict XVI, Caritas in Veritate (Charity In Truth), FRATERNITY, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND CIVIL SOCIETY, Chapter 3, No. 36. (2009).

Yet, just as these anti-poverty measures were put in place in 2008, the recession hit, striking vulnerable, poor families hardest as well as women, racialized communities, Aboriginal communities, newcomers and people living with disabilities. Austerity measures put in place to counter the recession stripped away benefits.

To lift low income families and groups out of poverty, there needs to be a living wage above the "poverty line" that reflects the actual cost of living especially for food and shelter. There should be long-term stimulus for jobs, enhanced child benefits, more affordable housing, dependable child care services and social assistance that keeps pace with the cost of living.

FOOD INSECURITY

Over 375,000 Ontarians had to rely on a food bank in 2013, because they could not afford to buy enough food for themselves or their families...and 35% were children with over 130,000 being under 18.

It is not surprising that numbers are high, since based on what a single mother on Ontario Works (OW) with one child receives for basic needs, the added costs of rent, hydro and basics means there is little left for food. As food prices rise, food bank numbers do, too.

The inability to buy good food for a family is felt most by low income families with children. Youths and women are more likely to live in households haunted by food insecurity. It should not, need not exist in Ontario.

► **HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS**

The consistent lack of affordable housing continues to force thousands of families and individuals in Ontario to live in deplorable conditions. These are conditions in which children must be reared. In Ontario, anyone will tell you that rent is one of the major expenses they face. It hits people living in poverty hardest as they must spend at least half of their income on rent. It leaves precious little for food or other daily needs.

There are more than 150,000 Ontario households on waiting lists for affordable housing. The wait times can be as long as 15 to 20 years for safe, affordable and accessible housing!

What is “affordable” housing?

What do we mean when we talk about “affordable” housing? It generally means housing, either owned or rented, that does not exceed 30% of the gross annual income of a family or an individual. It must also be adequate and accessible housing for people with special needs.

A home is *essential* to ending poverty, because it creates stability in the lives of families and whole communities. It’s now recognized that a key factor in lifting people out of poverty is housing itself. A major research project of the Mental Health Commission of Canada showed that this approach worked among people living with mental illness in Canada.

The project demonstrated that among this most vulnerable of groups when they were provided right from the start with housing, their lives became more stable faster, were three times more likely to find permanent housing and were better able to access support services. The housing itself helped to shift them from a situation of constant crisis to one of stability with support from community-based social services.

Cost is often cited as a reason not to pursue affordable housing. Yet this project showed that, the social return on investment and positive economic impact was very significant. There was an average cost savings of over \$21 for every \$10 invested: \$22,000 per person for high-needs participants and \$5,000 for moderate-needs participants. The cost reductions resulted from less need and fewer visits for crisis service providers, inpatient care, or shelter usage.

INCOME INEQUALITY

The fact that the income gap is widening in Canada would come as no surprise to many of us. It would also not be surprising that this widening income gap is making it harder for poor, low income families to escape poverty and find ways to move forward and out of it.

That’s because in the past thirty years or more, most of the gains from Canada’s economy have gone to the top 1% in the country. It has left the middle class shaken, seeing their purchasing power erode and good jobs disappear as well as shutting out their children from jobs.

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It's called *income inequality* and in the last 30 years as our economy grew, those at the top of the income profile have made substantial gains, those in the middle saw their share decline, while those at the bottom got no share at all. They are, in fact, worse off now than they were thirty years ago.

As of 2010, the income share of the economy going to the top 1% of earners nearly doubled to 12% of all income. Yet, the standard of living of middle income workers is virtually unchanged. It has been toughest on young workers – children and grandchildren of the middle

class – who must start at wages so low that they will not “catch up” to where they ought to be. They will be asked to fill short-term contract jobs with few or no benefits.

“In this context, some people continue to defend trickle-down theories which assume that economic growth, encouraged by a free market, will inevitably succeed in bringing about greater justice and inclusiveness in the world. This opinion, which has never been confirmed by the facts, expresses a crude and naïve trust in the goodness of those wielding economic power and in the sacralized workings of the prevailing economic system. Meanwhile, the excluded are still waiting.”

Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*
(The Joy of the Gospel),

I. Some challenges of today's world,
“No to an economy of exclusion,”
No. 54, 2013.

Such high inequality is a moral and ethical question about fairness and social justice. Yet it is also a threat to the economy. It's not only a moral issue but also an economic one, threatening people's livelihoods and plunging them unnecessarily into poverty. In the past inequality was seen as a trade off for greater growth and more jobs but not today.

A typical 22-year-old just graduated from university may only be able to find a temporary or contract job. While he might do similar work as do others where he is employed, he will only get an hourly wage: no salary, no benefits and no job security. Or, a 40-year-old mother of three is restructured out of a job she has done for 20 years only to be hired back to do the same work as a self-employed person with no benefits or job security, working “on-call”.

Between 1982 and 2010, the income of the richest 1 per cent of Ontarians grew by 73 per cent. You would be correct in thinking that the most vulnerable poor got poorer.

In speaking about the principles to be observed by all governments in their statement, *Choosing a Government*, the **Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario** reminds us that “Governments must demonstrate a grasp of the concept of stewardship. The heritage we have been given is ours to use for a time. It also belongs to future generations”.

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► **SOCIAL SERVICES OUTREACH**

Catholic Charities' member agencies provide a wide range of services from community and family services, to helping people with special needs as with the deaf community and people with developmental disabilities, to providing outreach to children and youth, to assisting new mothers move forward in their lives with their babies, to providing supports for older persons and seniors.

COMMUNITY AND FAMILY SERVICES

For Catholic social service agencies providing community services and family programs, poverty, affordable housing, food security, OHIP coverage for newcomers and funding for walk-in mental health clinics are chief concerns.

What makes them anxious is ensuring that the needs of vulnerable people they serve continues to meet the need in the community. For these agencies, the real concern regards sustainable, predictable funding. There is a need for increased core funding to meet the growing demand in their communities for their services.

Among the needs they face is a need for more counselling and outreach related to domestic violence and mental health. The lack of dedicated funding for couple and family counselling and walk-in mental health counselling is of particular concern. For some, they are unable to access sufficient funding from their Local Health Integration Network (LHIN). Some receive LHIN funding, but others do not. Given the rising numbers of people who turn to these agencies, it's clear that we need to prioritize mental health and addiction in our healthcare system.

Despite the rise in a need for more walk-in mental health counselling and the fact that the cost is much less than in using hospital emergency wards or private physicians, funding has been hard to obtain for some agencies. Yet, quick access to mental health services provided by family services agencies, says Family Services of Ontario (FSO), would divert 37,000 emergency visits each year.

Just one walk-in service, says a University of Waterloo report, diverts about 19% of people who would have to turn to hospital emergency rooms and 8% diversion from using primary care physicians. Ontario's Auditor General said that there were 5.4 million visits to the province's 160 hospital emergency departments at a cost of \$960million in 2008/2009. Walk-in clinics are easier to access and less expensive to use, so more funding should be provided for them.

PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

For people with special needs such as the deaf and persons with developmental disabilities, accessibility is a principal concern and it touches all aspects of their lives in terms of goods and services, information and communications, housing, education, and employment. In the deaf community, it also includes language acquisition for children.

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act 2005 (AODA) does address barriers in education, health care, and residential housing. The concern has been that while the legislation is good, it has not been as effectively enforced as it could have been. Catholic social service agencies working with people with special needs remain concerned that any new government will ensure that public money isn't used to finance the creation of new obstacles against people with disabilities or to perpetuate existing barriers.

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SENIORS

Catholic Charities' member agencies working with older persons report that there is a steady rise in the number of seniors who live in poverty and isolation. There is also mounting concern about the health and wellness of seniors as a group in terms of health care sustainability, aging in place, care-giving. In addition, incidents of elder abuse and mental health issues are also on the rise.

Despite the increasing mental health issues among seniors, there is a lack of mental health training for them; it is especially true for training in French to meet the needs of Franco-Ontarian seniors.

As the numbers of vulnerable and isolated seniors on fixed incomes continues to rise, it is not surprising that subsidized housing will be in greater demand. Because of current legislation in Ontario, supportive housing can only be offered for people living in apartment buildings. Yet for many seniors who are very isolated, frail and at-risk, and who live alone, they could greatly benefit from supportive services. There is also the high cost of public transportation for those seniors that do not, or are unable to drive.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

When young people who have been in the care of a children's aid society are to go out on their own, the trauma of their young lives leaves many of them ill-equipped for adulthood. Ensuring that these young people are to make a smooth transition, these agencies help them get the confidence they need to find local affordable housing, post secondary education and employment.

Catholic agencies working with these young people know that the advances made through these programs for youth in transition must continue in the next provincial government so that they can continue to provide these young people with the counselling and support they need.

YOUNG PARENTS

Catholic social service agencies working with young parents provide programs and services that range from individual counselling to prenatal classes to Teen Mom school programs. Yet the major concerns today reflect concerns with other groups, namely mental health issues, affordable housing, high levels of poverty and food insecurity.

Single mothers are more likely to be poor and have a greater need for mental health services and counselling than mothers in two-parent families. The risk of mental health problems is especially pronounced if these same young women live at or below the poverty line.

In general, living in poverty brings with it poorer mental health, because of the stresses of living in poverty. Those same mental health issues then bring with them increased social disadvantage, such as higher levels of unemployment.

A more integrated approach to mental health and social service outreach needs to take place in Ontario as it already has in the UK and other European countries. Given the large numbers of youth and older persons in need of mental health support, there is a need to transform mental health policy and delivery in Ontario.

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***Ask the candidates...* CANDIDATE REPORT CARD**

An easy way to develop questions for the candidates in your riding is by creating an election "Report Card". We created one here focussing on issues raised by member agencies of Catholic Charities. The **Report Card** allows you to "grade" each candidate on their responses. We have suggested questions; add yours, too.

| ISSUE | QUESTION | GRADE | |
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| | | ISSUE | QUESTION |
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RESPECT FOR LIFE

Governments must support life at all stages of development, respecting and supporting life from the moment of conception as youth and adults until the moment of death.

How will you work to ensure that that life is respected at its first and last moments, rather than abortion and euthanasia?

Respect for the lives of our elderly and infirm is an important priority of government. How will you make long-term palliative care for the elderly and infirm a priority?

With some provinces openly pursuing legislation related to euthanasia, how will you work to ensure that respect for life and the dignity of the human person is safeguarded no matter the circumstances?

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POVERTY REDUCTION /
SOCIAL ASSISTANCE REFORM

Current economic conditions have pushed many families into poverty. In 2009, the provincial government committed for the first time to end the cycle of poverty through the Poverty Reduction Act with the goal of reducing child poverty by 25% in five years. It increased the Ontario Child Benefit, the minimum wage, social assistance rates and reviewed social assistance. A second 5-year phase was to be implemented.

If elected, how is your government going to address poverty in the province?

What will you and your party do to ensure that Ontario develops another comprehensive plan for ending poverty in Ontario?

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Emergency dental care for low-income adults costs Ontarians \$30 million a year. Will your party provide preventive dental care for low-income adults?

What is your Party's position on high-quality employment opportunities together with training and skills programs?

What is your Party's position on policies and programs that address challenges faced by First Nations and Aboriginal people?

If elected, what particular issues would you as an MPP take action on in regard to poverty reduction, social assistance and minimum wage, and how would you address such issues?

Increasingly in Ontario, families are working multiple low income jobs just to make ends meet. Do you support the implementation of a living wage? If so, what should be your party's first step?

What is your position on the idea of merging Ontario Works (OW) and the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP)? {If you support the idea, how do you think merging the two would benefit Ontarians? If you don't support the idea, what do you think would be the negative impact on Ontarians?}

| ISSUE | QUESTION | GRADE | |
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A LIVING WAGE

Many families and individuals are piecing together one, two or three minimum wage and part-time jobs to support their families. What commitments are you and your party willing to make to bring the minimum wage up in order to make it a livable wage?

The income gap makes its presence felt in any number of ways. Even ordinary people – to say nothing of the unemployed, particular the youth - cannot afford daycare, the care of the elderly, the cost of university education for their children, food for the table, electricity for heat and light. What will you do to reduce the income gap and make an ordinary quality of life available again for ordinary people?

Would your party support an increase in the minimum wage from \$11.00 to \$14.00 by 2016, indexed to the rate of inflation, to benefit low-income workers and their families?

If not, what would your party propose instead?

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HOUSING / HOMELESSNESS

Will you support our call for the Ontario Government to develop a Residential Housing Accessibility Standard to address our crisis of accessible housing in Ontario?

What is your Party's position on affordable housing and homelessness?

If elected, what particular issues would you as an MPP take action on in regard to housing and homelessness, and how would you address such issues?

Given the lack of affordable housing for persons living with mental illness, does your Party support making such funding a priority?

What are the priorities of your Party on housing policies and programs that address challenges faced by First Nations/Aboriginal communities?

Will your party invest in the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI)?

| ISSUE | QUESTION | GRADE | |
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SOCIAL SERVICES / HEALTH CARE

How does your Party plan to transform the health care system?

How will your Party ensure that adequate funding is allocated to community-based health care to enable older adults and those with chronic conditions and developmental delays to remain in the community as long as possible?

Is your Party committed to looking at alternative approaches to costly medical services provided by physicians and nurses?

Is your Party willing to explore innovative ways to utilize social workers to reduce health care costs (e.g., placing social workers in Emergency Departments (EDs) during peak hours to reduce return visits by high users of EDs who have social and emotional needs; including social workers on multidisciplinary teams visiting the frail elderly living at home; etc.)?

How will you balance the need for more long-term care beds with the need to increase supports for families/caregivers looking after loved ones in the community?

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COMMUNITIES / FAMILIES

Family violence affects many families in Ontario; many use counselling programs offered by Catholic Charities member agencies. Family violence refers to violence committed by spouses, parents, children, siblings and extended family. Spousal victims range from 15 to 89 years old. There were 25,413 cases of family violence in Ontario as of 2010, the last completed statistics. Women face more than double the risk compared to males.

What is your party's plan to address the growing prevalence of domestic violence in Ontario families?

If elected, would you advocate in your party to provide more funding for social service agencies providing counselling and other services that deal with domestic family violence?

| ISSUE | QUESTION | GRADE | |
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PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

The most vulnerable persons in our community are those people who live with a disability such as those in the deaf community or those persons with developmental disabilities.

The Ontario Government developed new accessibility standards under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act 2005 (AODA) to address barriers in education, health care, and residential housing.

How will your party develop a Health Care Accessibility Standard to make our health care system's services fully accessible to patients and health care providers with disabilities?

Will your party push for the development of an Education Accessibility Standard to make Ontario's education system fully accessible to students, parents, and education staff with disabilities?

How will you and your party provide funding and support to families who have children with special needs (for day programs)?

The need for transportation for people with disabilities is great. What will your party do to provide assistance for transportation for intellectually challenged adults?

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Does your party have a plan for providing housing for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities? If not, would you explain why it does not?

People with disabilities face many barriers when trying to get an education, use our health care system, or find a place to live. Do you agree that people with disabilities deserve accessibility to education, health care services and supportive housing?

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SENIORS

Our society is aging quickly. We have many challenges now and the challenges will continue to be present unless a commitment is made to enhance service delivery.

How will your party ensure delivery of services to isolated seniors in our communities?

Does your party believe that seniors should be given the opportunity to age at home rather than be forced into a retirement home? If so, what system would you like to see put in place?

The number of older persons is growing in Ontario. Many of them live in poverty or on very small, fixed incomes. How do you and your party propose to respond to efforts to create more affordable housing for seniors? Will it be a top priority?

In terms of housing for low income seniors, there have been problems with a lack of collaboration between Ministries of Health and Housing. How will your party work to resolve this issue so that problems faced by seniors can be efficiently dealt with?

Does your party have a plan to provide proper home care in the community for seniors and offer affordable, supportive housing in Ontario communities?

| ISSUE | QUESTION | GRADE | |
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CHILDREN AND YOUTH

What are the key policies in your Party's platform that explicitly focus on protecting the most vulnerable children in our communities?

If elected, what steps will your Party take to improve the lives of Ontario children living in poverty?

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What are the priorities of your party on policies and programs that address challenges faced by children living in First Nations and Aboriginal communities?

This year the provincial government provided funding for 50 workers to assist youth, ages 16 to 24, helping them transition from children's aid society care to independent living. They learn how to find local affordable housing, education and employment resources, skills training, employment and access to health and mental health services.

Is your party committed to moving forward on assisting these young people by providing more support for youth-in-transition programs across the province? Will you push for your party to increase funding for programs like this?

Will your party continue the aftercare benefits initiative that gives these youth access to dental services, vision and hearing care and other health services?

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MENTAL HEALTH / ADDICTIONS

Each party consistently identifies mental health and addiction as the most costly and expanding health concerns for people in this province. Yet every year there is no substantial funding for mental health and, in fact, there have been reductions in addiction dollars. In the tight financial reality of health care dollars, what is your commitment to these addiction issues?

Would you consider funding for early assessment and intervention to treat infant mental health and attachment conditions?

If elected, will your party proceed with the current transformation agenda?

Will you proceed to contract regional lead agencies to plan and fund child and youth mental health services?

Who will be on the initial task force to determine need and how will the plans be delivered and evaluated?

What is your plan to address the growing demand for support for services for mild to moderate mental health issues?

Will you personally champion in your party dedicated funding for mental health walk-in services in your riding?

Will your party commit to the families of Ontario by providing dedicated funding for early intervention in mental health by providing annualized funding to family service agencies?

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Will your government increase access to and funding for mental health and wellness services to strengthen families across Ontario?

We need to prioritize mental health and addiction in our healthcare system. Given your Party's support for Ontario's Mental Health Strategy, what steps will your Party take to implement the Strategy?

Will your Party make the funding of mental health programs and services a priority?

Are there key policies in your Party's platform that address mental health and addiction problems?

Does your Party support an approach to public policy which focuses on preventing, wherever possible, the involvement of people with mental illness in the criminal justice system (e.g., making opportunities available and accessible for diversion to treatment/rehabilitation services that meet people's differing needs)?

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YOUNG PARENTS

Young teenage parents and their newborn infants are among the most vulnerable in our community. They struggle to find affordable housing, often live at or below the poverty line and are faced daily with food insecurity. These stresses can pose mental health problems for these young mothers.

Does your party intend to review the policy and service needs of young parents and their infants who are at risk in our communities?

Would your party provide additional support to social service agencies already working with young parents?

If elected, would you push your party to review the policy and service needs of young parents and their infants who are at risk in our communities?

Would you consider funding for early assessment and intervention to treat infant mental health and attachment conditions?

Will you proceed to contract regional lead agencies to plan and fund child and youth mental health services?

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CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

Catholic Social Teaching undergirds the reasons behind our Election Guide because it spurs us on to be in solidarity with all people but especially the poor and vulnerable. And justice is at the core of this thinking. It is rooted in the prophetic books of the Old Testament and the Gospels (Matthew 25:31-46) and Letters of the New Testament as well as the early writers of the Church back to the 5th Century.

As Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI has written: “The just ordering of society and the State is a central responsibility of politics...Justice is both the aim and the intrinsic criterion of all politics. Politics is more than a mere mechanism for defining the rules of public life: its origin and its goal are found in justice”.

Spurred on by social conditions over the past century, Catholic social teaching has taken on an even greater vigour, beginning with Pope Leo XIII and his landmark encyclical, *Rerum Novarum* (1891) where he critiqued the deplorable conditions of workers then, championing their rights in society.

KEY PRINCIPLES OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

HUMAN DIGNITY

In a world warped by materialism and declining respect for human life, the Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. Our belief in the sanctity of human life and inherent dignity of the human person is the foundation of our social teaching.

COMMUNITY AND THE COMMON GOOD

In a global culture driven by excessive individualism, our tradition proclaims that the person is not only sacred but also social. How we organize our society in economics and politics, in law and policy directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community. Our Church teaches that the role of government and other institutions is to protect human life and human dignity and promote the common good.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Catholic tradition teaches that human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected and responsibilities are met. Every person has a fundamental right to life and a right to those things required for human decency. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities to one another, to our families, and to the larger society.

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OPTION FOR THE POOR AND VULNERABLE

Catholic teaching proclaims that a basic moral test is how our most vulnerable members are faring. In a society marred by deepening divisions between rich and poor, our tradition recalls the story of the Last Judgment (Matthew 25:31-46) and instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first.

PARTICIPATION AND SUBSIDIARITY

All people have a right to participate in the economic, political, and cultural life of society. It is a fundamental demand of justice and a requirement for human dignity that all people be assured a minimum level of participation in the community. Conversely, it is wrong for a person or a group to be excluded unfairly or to be unable to participate in society.

DIGNITY OF WORK AND THE RIGHTS OF WORKERS

In a marketplace where too often the quarterly bottom line takes precedence over the rights of workers, we believe that the economy must serve people, not the other way around. If the dignity of work is to be protected, then the basic rights of workers must be respected – the right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, to organize and join unions, to private property and to economic initiative.

STEWARDSHIP OF CREATION

Catholic tradition insists that we show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God's creation. This environmental challenge has fundamental moral and ethical dimensions which cannot be ignored.

SOLIDARITY

Catholic social teaching proclaims that we are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, wherever they live. We are one human family, whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. Solidarity means that "loving our neighbour" has global dimensions in an interdependent world.

ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

The state has a positive moral function as an instrument to promote human dignity, protect human rights, and build the common good. Its purpose is to assist citizens in fulfilling their responsibility to others in society. In today's complex society these responsibilities cannot adequately be carried out on a one-to-one basis. Citizens need the help of government to fulfill these responsibilities and promote the common good.

PROMOTION OF PEACE

Catholic teaching promotes peace as a positive, action-oriented concept. "Peace is not just the absence of war," said Pope John Paul II, "it involves mutual respect and confidence between peoples and nations. It involves collaboration and binding agreements". Peace and justice are linked: Peace is the fruit of justice.

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