

# Election Issues

## CASTING YOUR VOTE FOR A MORE JUST SOCIETY

The Catholic Charities' Election Guide focuses on issues that affect families, children, teenage parents, homeless youth and isolated seniors and that impact on the work of the member agencies of Catholic Charities. The Election Guide highlights a few of the issues that are to be considered before casting your vote in this federal election. Some may not have been ones that you considered. Yet, they are issues that are important to keep in mind. And, some are fundamental issues that must be considered.

The Commission for Justice and Peace of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCCB) has also issued a [2015 Federal Election Guide](#), based on Catholic moral and social teaching, to help voters analyze and evaluate public policies and programs.

Ask the candidates...  
CANDIDATE REPORT CARD

As we have done with our other election guides, we have created a Candidate Report Card. It is based on the issues elaborated in the Guide. It's a simple way to develop questions for the candidates in your riding. The Report Card allows you to "grade" each candidate

on their responses. We have suggested questions, but there is room to add questions of your own, too. This Election Guide and the Report Card are on our website and can be downloaded free of charge.

When we vote, we do so in the hope of creating a society that promotes justice and the dignity for all, sharing in the abundance of God's creation, rooted in the Catholic social justice tradition. We pray that those we elect will work to change unjust and inequitable structures that cause poverty and place the needs of those marginalized at the centre of our advocacy. Casting our vote is about creating a better, more just society.

#### Catholic Social Teaching

Catholic Social Teaching undergirds our Election Guide; it invites us to stand in solidarity with all people but especially the poor and vulnerable. Justice is at its core, rooted in the words of the Old Testament prophets and the New Testament Gospels (Matthew 25:31-46) and Letters, as well as the early writers of the Church back to the 5th Century. "The just ordering of society and the State is a central responsibility of politics," wrote Pope Benedict XVI. "...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".

## ► RESPECT AND SUPPORT FOR LIFE

Canada's Catholic Bishops consistently remind us that the responsible use of freedom means promotion of human life and dignity at all stages, from conception to natural 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. 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.

Pastoral Letter: "[On Choosing a Government](#)," No. 9, Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario, Pentecost 1998.

Respect for life and human dignity means demanding the right to life for the smallest and oldest among us, advocating for laws promoting life at every stage of life. This includes protecting the unborn and all persons from being exploited by biomedical technologies, respecting the life and dignity of the dying, accompanying them until their natural death and promoting greater access to palliative care; rejecting capital punishment, promoting the rehabilitation of criminals and ensuring support for their victims; defending and caring for individuals in all circumstances, beginning with the poorest and most vulnerable; and supporting and accompanying individuals with disabilities, the elderly, the sick, the poor and those who are suffering. (([Respect for Life and Human Dignity: From Conception to Natural Death](#))," Federal Election Guide 2011, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops).

## ► PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED SUICIDE

Physician-assisted suicide now confronts us and remains an issue of enormous significance for all Canadians, [following the recent decision by the Supreme Court of Canada](#). Catholics are called by their faith to assist all those in need, particularly the poor, the suffering and the dying. Comforting the dying and accompanying them in love and solidarity has been considered by the Church since its beginning as a corporal work of mercy.

Canada's Catholic Bishops have called on provincial and territorial governments to ensure accessibility of quality palliative care for all Canadians. They are encouraging everyone to work for the betterment of the elderly, the disabled, the ill, and all those who are socially isolated. Government and professional associations have been urged to implement policies and guidelines which ensure respect for freedom of conscience of all health-care workers and administrators who do not accept suicide as a medical solution to pain and suffering.

"Helping someone commit suicide...is neither an act of justice or mercy, nor is it part of palliative care. The decision of the Supreme Court of Canada today (February 6, 2015) does not change Catholic teaching. "[A]n act or omission which, of itself or by intention, causes death in order to eliminate suffering constitutes a murder gravely contrary to the dignity of the human person and to the respect due to the living God, our Creator. (Catechism of the Catholic Church No. 2277) ...The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops will continue to promote palliative and home care, and to encourage all the faithful to work for the betterment of the elderly, the disabled, the ill, and those who are socially isolated."

**On Physician-Assisted Suicide**, Most Rev. Paul-André Durocher, President, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops  
February 6, 2015.

They have invited all Canadians, and especially Catholics, to do all they can to bring comfort and support to all those who are dying and for their loved ones, so that no one, because of loneliness, vulnerability, loss of autonomy, or fear of pain and suffering, feels they have no choice but to end their own life. . Catholic Charities' member agencies that work with the elderly and offer pastoral outreach in healthcare have been among the social service agencies in Ontario who have led the way in this area by responding to this need.

## ► POVERTY

Catholic Charities and its member agencies know that individuals and many families with children in Ontario still live in wretched conditions of poverty. It is also the case across Canada and especially among Aboriginal communities. It's usually not poverty caused by personal actions taken by these families, but rather it is "structural", that is, 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, seeing their livelihoods destroyed when jobs disappeared and were lost and their future threatened and made more precarious.

Poverty is difficult to measure in Canada because there is no fixed "poverty line" and so no official measure of poverty across the country. Statistics Canada only reports about the percentage of Canadians who are "low income", using Low Income Cut-offs (LICOs) which are set at the point where a family spends on average at least 20% more of its income than the average family on food, clothing and shelter (given family and community size).

There are several ways [to measure poverty levels in Canada](#). One measure which is often used is the Low-income measure after tax (LIM-AT) used in this election guide. The LIM-AT is the fixed

percentage (50%) of median income adjusted after-tax income of households observed at the person level, where 'adjusted' indicates that a household's needs are taken into account.

Poverty can vary greatly among different groups in different parts of the country such as among parents, new immigrants, people living with developmental disabilities and older isolated persons. Aboriginal people make some 30% less than the rest of Canadians. Income inequality and [poverty have increased rapidly in Canada since the mid-1990s.](#)

Issues contributing to poverty are the high cost of housing and lack of housing that is adequate, accessible and affordable housing as well as safe and secure. One of the major reasons for poverty is the cost of housing and shelter. Many Canadians are spending more on housing and shelter than their meagre budgets can afford. Many do not get enough to eat as can be seen by the number of people frequenting food banks across Canada. Statistics Canada reported that the Canadian household debt ratio hit a record of 163.3% in the 4th quarter of 2014.

#### Rising Numbers of Low Income families

The number of Canadians living in conditions of poverty is rising at an extraordinary pace. Using the Low-income measure after tax (LIM-AT), 4.6 million people in Canada, or 13.5% of the population, lived in low income in 2013, virtually unchanged from 2012. For seniors living in an economic family, it was 5.2%, while for seniors not in an economic family, the rate was 27.1%.

Among Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) member countries, Canada has a wide gap between rich and poor and that places it near the bottom of the OECD's list, ranking 18th among developed countries in terms of social expenditures.

Despite years of unprecedented economic growth and an increasingly diverse population, race is still often a determining factor in Canada's labour market contributing to high poverty levels. Even in good economic times, the pay gap is large: racialized Canadians earn only 81.4 cents for every dollar paid to non-racialized Canadians. While racialized Canadians have slightly higher levels of labour market participation, they experience higher levels of unemployment and earn less income than non-racialized Canadians. Their work is much more likely to be insecure, temporary, and low paying.

### Child Poverty

The other contributing factor in measuring poverty in Canada is its effect on our children. Child poverty is high in Canada which ranks behind the average in among rich nations that showed that 13.3% of Canadian children live in poverty when compared to an 11% spread across the 35 "economically advanced countries" studied.

In Canada, [child poverty rate of 14.3%](#) offends Canadian values of concern, caring and safeguarding the well-being of all children. Eradicating child poverty is understood in Canada as a communal and collective responsibility. According to one study, half of children in Aboriginal communities in Canada live in poverty.

More than a quarter century after passage of the all-party, House of Commons resolution on November 24, 1989 to end child poverty in Canada by the year 2000, there are still more than 970,000 children living in poverty in Canada – of children living in two-parent families, 12.8% lived in low income situations, and of those single-parent the incidence was 42.6% – a whole new generation of children has now become a part of this systemic problem.

Over twenty-five years, child and family poverty has increased to 1,331,530 children (19.1%) in 2012 from 1,066,150 children (15.8%) in 1989 according to tax-filer data. More children and their families live in poverty as of 2013 than they did when the House of Commons unanimously resolved to end child poverty in Canada by the year 2000.

Aboriginal children in Canada are over two and a half times more likely to live in poverty than non-Aboriginal children. The average child poverty rate for all Aboriginal children in Canada is 40%, compared to 15% for non-Aboriginal children. Aboriginal children fall behind the rest of children in Canada on practically every measure such as in family income, education, homelessness, infant mortality, health and suicide.

It is most disturbing that 4 in 10 of Canada's Aboriginal children live in poverty. Aboriginal children include Métis, Inuit, non-status First Nations (who live off-reserve) and status First Nations children on reserve. In First Nations communities where the federal government has the major role in funding income support and community services, 1 out of 2 status First Nations children lives in poverty.

#### Never Permanent, Ever Part-Time

Almost a million Canadians today work only part-time or casual jobs. Opportunities for traditional, full-time jobs with benefits have faded and in some places disappeared altogether only to be replaced by part-time or temp positions without health benefits or pension plans. The negative impact on young families and individuals who depend on these jobs is incalculable.

Such shaky, precarious work is an underlying theme of Canada's labour market. It is a growing crescendo of low paid, reduced-hour and part-time positions, all less than 30 hours a week, including contract jobs. Much is done to keep labour costs low, improve profit margins and weather recessionary periods.

"STRUCTURAL CAUSES OF INEQUALITY"

Pope Francis called on leaders around the world to fight poverty and growing inequality.

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. 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, Inclusion of the Poor in Society, the Economy and Distribution

For Canadians who want full-time, permanent positions with health and insurance benefits, this trend means they cannot plan for their future, their children's education or save money for the long-term. It often means no chance of ever getting a mortgage, sending their children to college or university or providing for their old age.

Part-time work is often lumped into reports by government – federal, provincial, territorial – when citing growth in job creation. While it is correct to include it, it can be misleading to the average Canadian who may see a rosier economic picture for themselves than is actually there. While part-time positions are a benefit to some Canadians, it is insufficient as a standard for Canada's workforce as a whole. These jobs will clearly not significantly help any Canadian family over the long term to move out of a low-income situation. We risk creating a permanent underclass of low income people who are permanently stuck with no way out.

In a current April 2015 study of permanent, full-time workers in the GTA, increases in the cost of basic necessities -- child care, rent, food, clothing, transit – coupled with a low-paying job meant that a couple with children must make \$18.52 per hour each just to get by. When one compares this, for example, to Ontario's current \$11.25 minimum wage, it shows how difficult it would be to live only on part-time wages. Using Statistics Canada and municipal data, the study said that a family of four in Toronto needs an annual combined employment income of around \$72,000 just to afford the basics.

Another recent [study](#) showed how a majority of those in precarious or low-wage jobs do not have any health plans from their employer that cover prescription drugs, eye examinations or dental care. It showed that one third of Ontario workers have [no medical and dental benefits](#) and that 35% do not have employer-provided health plans. For those earning between \$10,000 and \$20,000 the number rises to 70%, and for those earning less than \$10,000, it soars to 85%.



The other concern with Canada's economy today relates to the federal government's partnership with the provinces and territories in relation to the suite of social programs that includes the Canada Pension Plan (CPP), Medicare, and Employment Insurance (EI) among others. Despite numerous adjustments, they have not evolved to address adequately current economic and demographic realities.

## ► INCOME INEQUALITY

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

To lift low income families and groups out of poverty, there needs to be a living wage 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.

As of 2010, the income share of the economy going to the top 1% of earners in Canada 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.

Such high inequality is 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. It has been often suggested that a Guaranteed Annual Income would be a better way to ensure a more robust economy that would benefit everyone and replace the existing array of social income programs.

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”.

## ► HEALTHCARE

Canadians take great pride in their national healthcare which is the envy of many much larger countries with even larger economies. One area of mounting concern that has become an issue in this election is that of the growing cost of drugs. There is a growing call for a national "pharmacare" program that will help Canadians cope with the ever increasing drug costs.

A national pharmacare program would allow the government to negotiate lower drug costs with manufacturers. It's estimated that [a universal pharmacare program](#) would generate savings of 10% to 41% on prescription drugs, representing savings of up to \$11.4 billion per year. And just having [a single-payer system](#) would save \$1 billion a year by eliminating the duplication of legal, technical and administrative costs, according to the C.D. Howe Institute.

## ► SENIORS

There is a growing need to address issues facing the rise in the number of older Canadians, "seniors", from healthcare to poverty. Poverty, financial insolvency and general care are among a basket of issues facing Canadian seniors. There is a need for a national seniors' strategy.

An OECD report warns that poverty among Canadian seniors is on the rise and that current [pension safety nets](#) may be inadequate to address the problem. The rising poverty while still relatively low is most acute among elderly women.

The study showed that while Canadians over 65 are relatively well-off when compared with other developed countries, the incidence of poverty has risen, because when poverty rates fell in those same countries from 2007 to 2010 it rose two percentage points in Canada. That said, the average poverty rate for people 65+ in Canada was 7.2% compared with 12.8% in the 24-nation OECD. Government transfers to seniors in Canada account for less than 39% of their gross income compared with the OECD average of 59%, meaning more of them depend on workplace pensions to bridge the gap. The level of financial instability among seniors is growing especially among those who have had only temp or part-time, low-paying jobs. [Seniors in Ontario make up 30% of bankruptcies](#). Those approaching retirement are making up a growing proportion of those filing for insolvency.

In health care, many are calling for a national senior's strategy in health and long-term care. There are some 5.2 million seniors in Canada who represent almost 15% of the country's population yet account for almost 50% of health costs. By 2036, those Canadians over the age of 65 will account for 25% of Canada's population, and those over 85 will quadruple. These issues clearly not only affect older Canadians but the entire economy and should be considered by the federal government in place after the election in October.

Canadians are unsure that Canada's current health system will be able to provide care for themselves and aging members of their family with federal government finding a solution and proposing a solution. They don't want a smattering of senior's programs, rather they want a commitment to a long-term strategy. Fewer than one in four believe there will be adequate home care and long-term care facilities, and just one in three think there will be sufficient hospital beds available to meet their basic medical needs as they age. Three in five of those surveyed do not feel they are in a good position to care for loved ones who are ageing.

A poll last year regarding people's views on aging, found that four out of five Canadians said they aren't confident they'll be able to access the health services they will need; three-quarters are worried they won't have the money to pay for services that aren't covered by medicare after they retire; and, 61% doubt the country's hospitals and long-term care facilities will be able to meet the demands of Canada's growing elderly population.

The [Mental Health Commission of Canada](#) reported last year that family caregivers in Canada are experiencing extreme stress: 16.5% reported very high levels of stress. It's estimated that about 35% of Canada's workforce is providing care to a relative or friend, accounting for an annual loss in productivity of \$1.3 billion. Statistics Canada reports that family caregivers contribute an estimated \$5 billion of unpaid labour to the health-care system. It was one of the key topics of discussion at the provincial premiers' meeting in Ottawa this past January.

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: "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".

## ► HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

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. Where there has been immediate access to permanent housing, a "housing first" approach that is based on the principle that people need a home before they can address mental health issues including addiction.

A report last year on the state of [homelessness in Canada](#) said that while Canada's population has increased by almost 30% over the past 25 years, the annual national investment in housing has decreased by over 46% and federal spending on low-income housing (per capita) has dropped from \$115 to \$60.

The consistent lack of affordable housing continues to force thousands of individuals and families with children in Ontario and across Canada to live in deplorable conditions. The high cost of housing is the biggest challenge facing low income families and individuals. A family that spends over 30% of its income on rent and utilities is considered to be in core housing need.

Housing insecurity is associated with poor health, low education attainment, unemployment and a host of other issues that have social and economic implications. It affects all of us. People who depend on social assistance and people in low wage jobs may spend up to half of their income on shelter; it is about one in five of all rental households. Allowances for shelter are absurdly low when compared with market rate rents. The situation is grave when one considers that on average there are some 235,000 Canadians experiencing homelessness each year.

"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, Fraternity, Economic Development and Civil Society, Chapter 3, No. 36. (2009).

While the federal government transferred its responsibility for social housing to the provinces and territories – this includes subsidized housing with affordable rent for low-income households – the primary funding must still come from the federal government. Federal housing and homelessness funding to [Ontario is declining](#).

There has been an ongoing decline in federal spending on affordable housing. Using figures from 2013, it has gone from \$2.7 billion (2013 dollars) two decades ago to \$2.2 billion – including the Homeless Partnership Strategy (HPS) funding. Spending per person has dropped by over one-third. Federal spending is well under half that in the U.S., adjusted for differences in the dollar and population.

Homelessness and housing insecurity have escalated in Canada because there has been minimal development of both market and non-market low-cost rental housing. Canada is the only country of the G7 nations that does not have a national housing strategy. Such a strategy would commit the federal government to ensure the development of secure, adequate, accessible and affordable social housing for Canadians.

## ► FOOD INSECURITY

Four million Canadians are food insecure. Every year 1.1 million children are food insecure. A coherent federal food policy should guarantee universal access to adequate amounts of healthy and appropriate food within a participatory, equitable and ecological food system. It would reduce the incidence of food insecurity.

When we speak of "food insecurity", we're speaking about inadequate or insecure access to food because of household financial constraints. It is a significant social and health problem in

Canada. The most [most recent statistics](#) indicate that in 2011–2012, 8.3% of Canadian households experienced food insecurity. Nunavut had the highest rate of food insecurity (36.7%), over four times the Canadian average (8.3%) in 2011–2012.

In 2011–2012, the rate of food insecurity was more than three times higher in households where government benefits were the main source of income (21.4%) compared with households with an alternate main source of income (6.1%). Among various household types, lone-parent families with children under 18 reported the highest rate of household food insecurity, at 22.6% in 2011–2012.

Food insecurity is defined by the Government of Canada as “the inability to acquire or consume an adequate diet quality or sufficient quantity of food in socially acceptable ways, or the uncertainty that one will be able to do so.”

The experience of food insecurity can range from concerns about running out of food before there is more money to buy more, to the inability to afford a balanced diet, to going hungry, missing meals, and in extreme cases, not eating for a whole day because of a lack of food and money for food.

Household food insecurity affected nearly one in every six children in Canada as of 2012. Ontario, Quebec, Alberta and British Columbia accounted for the largest share of food insecure households in Canada, amounting to 84%. Households with children under the age of 18 are at greater risk for food insecurity than households without children (15.6% versus 11.4%).

#### Adverse affects on children

Food insecure households include 1.15 million children, or 16% of all children under the age of 18. Nunavut and the Northwest

Territories had the highest prevalence of children living in food insecure households at 62.2% and 31.6% respectively.

Recent research in Canada has shown that the experience of hunger leaves an indelible mark on children's physical and mental health, manifesting in greater likelihood of such conditions as depression and asthma in adolescence and early adulthood. Canada is the only G7 country with no nationally-funded school meal program as outlined in G7 [Summit recommendations](#) to ensure food and nutrition security that reaches vulnerable populations.

### Food Banks

Each month, more than 840,000 Canadians seek help from a food bank in order to be able to feed themselves and their families. Of those helped, 37% are children. [Food banks](#) are helping 170,000 more people each month than was the case before the 2008-2009 recession; 90,000 people visit a food bank for the first time each month. In 2014, 1.8 million individuals received food from food banks. Of the households receiving food from food banks, 50% are families with children. One in six households that receive food has people working in low-paying jobs and cannot make ends meet.

Adults in food-insecure households have poorer physical and mental health and higher rates of numerous chronic conditions, including depression, diabetes, and heart disease. Once chronic diseases are established, their management is also compromised in the context of food insecurity. As of March 2014, 841,191 people visited food banks across Canada; that's an increase of 25% from 2008.

Of those households whose major source of income was social assistance, some 70% were food insecure, as were 38.4% of those reliant on Employment Insurance or Workers' Compensation. The majority of food insecure households (62.2%), however, were working poor, reliant on low wages or salaries.



## ► REFUGEES

"It is necessary to respond to the globalization of migration with the globalization of charity and cooperation, in such a way as to make the conditions of migrants more humane....

Solidarity with migrants and refugees must be accompanied by the courage and creativity necessary to develop, on a world-wide level, a more just and equitable financial and economic order, as well as an increasing commitment to peace, the indispensable condition for all authentic progress."

Pope Francis, "Church without frontiers, Mother to all," Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the 101st World Day of Migrants and Refugees (2015), Vatican, September 3, 2014

Refugees are one of the most vulnerable populations in the world. Canada has always been known as a safe-haven and welcoming place for refugees. In an age of huge movements of migration, "large numbers of people are leaving their homelands, with a suitcase full of fears and desires, to undertake a hopeful and dangerous trip in search of more humane living conditions," says Pope Francis.

Many parishes, families, religious orders, institutions, groups and individuals in the archdiocese of Toronto have come forward to help refugees. They can initiate a process to sponsor refugees to come to Canada through the [Office for Refugees](#) of the archdiocese where they can get advice, support and assistance on sponsorship and resettlement.

From 2009 to 2013, Canada gave refugee status to 122,518 people. Countries with resettlement programs resettle about 100,000 refugees from abroad each year. Of that number, [Canada annually takes in roughly one out of every 10 refugees](#), through the government-assisted and privately sponsored refugee programs. As of August 10, 2015, there were [over 15,900 refugees](#) and over 57,000 refugee claimants in Ontario.

Canada itself is a country built on immigrants and newcomers finding a home here. Immigration makes significant contributions to Canadian society - economically, culturally, socially and politically. Although Canadians consider themselves generous and [open toward refugees](#), this acceptance rate pales when compared with the number of displaced people in the world today who need protection. As of July 2015, there are some 60 million refugees in the world today.

Despite the thousands of people who seek out Canada for safety, current immigration processing for family reunification cases is very slow. Many children can wait more than two years before being able to be reunited with their parents in Canada. For refugee families, the wait is 31 months. Children should be reunited with their parents at least as quickly as economic immigrants are processed. Citizenship and Immigration Canada has a six-month express entry program for economic immigrants with a valid job offer.

There are concerns about mandatory detention for “irregular” arrivals, which limit access to health care services, and a loss of rights and protection under the law for some categories of refugees. Other concerns are return to "safe country" designations and a lower “age of dependency,” combined with challenging processing timelines and increased obstacles to the private sponsorship of refugees.

## ► TEMPORARY FOREIGN WORKERS

Canada has a Temporary Foreign Workers Program (TFWP) that allows a Canadian employer to contract workers from other countries when employers cannot find qualified workers in Canada. A Labour Market Opinion (LMO) must be done to determine if the jobs posted by a company could be filled with workers already in Canada.

The [temporary foreign workers](#) program is separate from the Canadian immigration system. These workers must leave Canada when their temporary employment is concluded. Temporary foreign workers are limited to working in Canada for four years before having to return to their home country. They are part of the low skill Labour Market Opinion stream – construction,

#### Migrant agricultural workers

"There are also growing concerns about the more than 18,000 seasonal agricultural workers, mostly from Mexico and the Caribbean, who come each year to do work that Canadians are less interested in doing. The conditions offered are not always respectful of human dignity, in part because of extended work periods without time off, poor housing conditions and lack of due medical attention. Together with advocacy groups, we also question the justice of migrant workers having to pay premiums for Employment Insurance benefits when their right to receive these remains theoretical and inaccessible."

"We are aliens and transients before the Lord our God", Pastoral Letter on Immigration and the Protection of Refugees": Episcopal Commission for Social Affairs, No. 15, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops. World Day for Migrants and Refugees, January 15, 2006

manufacturing, retail trade, food services, and accommodation sectors – that led most of the TFWP increase from 2005 to 2012. These sectors saw an increase between 200% and 900%.

All foreign workers are open to abuse of one form or another and very vulnerable to exploitation. This is also true in Canada. They remain vulnerable, despite the government's response to the outcry of abuse and it made [changes to the Temporary Foreign Workers Program](#) and the Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP).

In Canada, as a condition of their work permit, they are tied exclusively to one employer. Should they level a complaint about loss of pay, working conditions or even sexual harassment, it could not only cost them their job but also see them deported back to their home country. They would lose all the money it took just to get to Canada as well as the money they would have made for the time they worked here. While not all employers act in a negative way, being tied to a single employer sets up the possibility for recurring instances of abuse and exploitation.

Further, the low skill temporary foreign worker program could have the effect of driving down wages and eroding working conditions for Canadian workers. And, it could undermine initiatives to create apprenticeship and training programs because there would be little incentive to do so.

## ► HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Human trafficking denies basic human rights to millions of women, children and men globally.

It means people are taken through deception or coercion for the purpose of exploitation and then sold into forced labour, sexual exploitation and other activities. Groups and people from many [faith communities](#) are working to end human trafficking and make people aware that it is both a local and global problem.

#### On Human Trafficking

"...our efforts to work against human trafficking cannot be simply about protecting the human rights of persons who have been trafficked, or prosecuting those who buy and sell people, although this is clearly necessary. People become vulnerable to being trafficked through social and economic exclusion. Many people experience exclusion because of barriers such as poverty, gender bias, racism, lack of education and lack of opportunity; others become excluded as a result of mental illness, addiction, family disconnection or social isolation. Aboriginal women and girls can be particularly vulnerable to being trafficked because they often experience multiple barriers intersecting in their lives. Human trafficking is challenging us, as a society, to address these underlying patterns of exclusion.

First International Day of  
Prayer and Awareness  
Against Human  
Trafficking, Most Rev.  
Paul-André Durocher,  
President, Canadian  
Conference of Catholic  
Bishops, Feast of Saint  
Josephine  
Bakhita, February 8, 2015

When we speak about 'trafficking in persons' and drawing on the United Nations definition, we mean "the recruitment, transportation, harbouring ...of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control for another person, for the purpose of exploitation.

In Canada, people become victims of human trafficking because conditions around them do not allow them to provide even the most basic needs for themselves or their families and become desperate for opportunity. Traffickers prey upon these weaknesses.

Yes, it does happen in Canada. In terms of [Human Trafficking Offences in Canada](#), 90% of victims are from domestic trafficking within Canada and 10% are victims brought into Canada from another country. There were more than 500 documented cases of human trafficking in Ontario between 2011 and 2013. There were likely thousands more that went undocumented.

According to the 2014 [Global Report on Trafficking in Persons](#), it was reported that between 2010 and 2012, victims were identified from 152 different citizenships in 124 countries. Facing desperate situations in their home countries, people look to find ways to enter countries like Canada to find work so that they can help family members back home.

Vulnerable to exploitation, they can be found working on construction sites, as food service workers or in the sex industry. Although Canada's immigration law recognizes trafficking as a crime, progress in protecting the victims has been limited. The global report says that prosecution numbers for trafficking are still small in most countries.

Human trafficking is the second largest source of illegal income worldwide exceeded only by drug trafficking. It is the world's fastest growing global crime and is one of the largest sources of income for organized crime. The United Nations estimates the total market value of illicit human trafficking at US\$32 billion! It's social and economic exclusion that make people vulnerable to being trafficked. Poverty, isolation and conflict situations plus a lack of opportunity in the current "globalized" economy with its increased demand for cheap labour, goods and services have all created a situation in which buying and selling human beings has become highly profitable.

Efforts to [stop the trafficking](#) have grown to stop the enslavement of women, children and men held against their will and forced to perform services, physical or sexual. We need to see more people prosecuted for human trafficking. As human trafficking challenges us to make people more aware of it ...and that it does exist in Canada, it also challenges us to become a society of greater compassion and justice.

## ► VIOLENCE AGAINST ABORIGINAL WOMEN

Aboriginal† women in Canada are at least two-and-a-half times more likely to suffer domestic, spousal violence than other Canadian women. Nearly six out of ten Aboriginal women are affected by spousal violence and are three times more likely to be targets of other forms of violence than non-Aboriginal women.

Aboriginal women are much more likely than other women to be attacked by strangers. The high numbers and incidence rate suggest a systemic level of violence specifically focussed on these women. More than 580 cases of missing or murdered Aboriginal

women and girls have occurred across Canada; these are the ones that are known.

Canada is home to a large and diverse Aboriginal population, numbering over 1,172,000. Aboriginal peoples represent approximately 3.8 per cent of the population of Canada, speaking 50 traditional languages. Of the three Aboriginal groups in Canada, First Nations people have the largest population (698,025), followed by the Métis (389,780), and the Inuit (50,480). Some 54% of Aboriginal people live in the country's major metropolitan centres, while the rest live in smaller communities, most on their traditional territories. Of all Aboriginal peoples in Canada, twenty-five percent identify themselves as Catholic, and they are found in every Catholic diocese across the country.

The UN Human Rights Committee in July 2015 accused Canada of failing to act on missing and murdered Aboriginal women, and violence against women generally. The UN's first report on Canada in 10 years, the [Sixth Periodic Report of Canada](#), measures whether the country has met its human rights obligations.

The Committee said it was concerned about the continued high prevalence of domestic violence in Canada in particular violence against women and girls and that mostly affects Indigenous and minority women. It said it was also concerned about the lack of statistical data on domestic violence, including on investigations, prosecutions, convictions, sanctions and reparations.

The high levels of violence afflicting Aboriginal women has led to a call for a federal public inquiry in Canada to investigate these high numbers of murdered and missing native women. Last year's March 2014 report on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women in Canada, "Invisible Women: A Call To Action," a [Report of the Special Committee on Violence Against Indigenous Women](#), made 16 recommendations addressing the violence faced by Indigenous or aboriginal women in Canada. Citing police data, the

report notes Indigenous women accounted for at least 8% of homicide victims in Canada between 2004 and 2010, despite accounting for only four per cent of the total female population in the country.

The report did not suggest that the government set up an independent public inquiry. The federal government has so far said it would not launch a national inquiry into these murdered and missing women. The parliamentary report did acknowledge that the scope of the violent situations experienced by these women is not “fully understood or quantified.”

The report noted that the situation facing Aboriginal women in Canada is very diverse, encompassing the experiences of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis women, as well as those living in urban and rural settings. “This diversity of experiences makes it impossible to develop solutions solely at the national level... (the) role the federal government can play is to support initiatives coming from communities themselves.”

## ► VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Violence against women particularly intimate partner violence and sexual violence against women are major public health problems and violations of women's human rights. The lack of [effective national laws to end violence against women](#), or the failure to implement such laws where they exist, is widespread worldwide. There is also a lack of programs and social services for men who have abused women. Men and boys in general must also be engaged in prevention efforts to end violence against women.

According to the [World Health Organization](#), recent global prevalence figures indicate that 35% of women worldwide have experienced either intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual

violence in their lifetime. On average, 30% of women who have been in a relationship report that they have experienced some form of physical or sexual violence by their partner. Worldwide, as many as 38% of murders of women are committed by an intimate partner.

In Canada, there were just under 88,000 victims of family violence in Canada in 2013, according to police-reported data, says [Statistics Canada](#). This represented more than one-quarter of all violent crimes reported to police. Just under half (48%) of all victims of family violence were victimized by a current or former spouse. Police-reported data also reveal that in 2013 almost 7 in 10 family violence victims were female. In comparison, females represented 46% of victims of violent crimes that were not family-related.

One quarter of all violent crimes reported to police involve family violence. Of the victims of this family violence, 70% of the victims are women or girls. Spousal violence has been consistently identified as one of the most common forms of violence against women in Canada. The majority of spousal violence victims are women and are four times more likely than men to be victims.

The rates of violence against a spousal partner are highest among women between the ages of 25 to 34, while one quarter of reported violence against children and youth are committed by a family member, but girls are four times more likely than boys to be the victims of sexual assault or other sexual offences by a family member. Young women between 15 to 24 experience the highest rates of violence, while women 18 years of age and older experience violent crimes of a sexual nature at a rate of 7%.

In 2011, 27,000 young women were victims of violent crimes. Girls this age were eight times more likely than boys to experience sexual assault or other sexual crimes. Girls 12 to 17 years of age are



more likely to experience violence at the hands of peers or dating partners.

Women experience more serious forms of spousal assault than men. Four out of every ten women are victimized by their spouse and report being physically injured which is more than twice the proportion of men. Women are, in fact, three times more likely to report being beaten, choked, sexually assaulted, or threatened with a gun or knife by their partner or ex-partner. Most victims of domestic homicide are female, while most perpetrators are male.

Violence against women is an under-reported crime; incidents of domestic violence are not reported to police. Less than one-third or only 30% of female spousal violence victims say that they reported the incident to police. There are many reasons for this: some fail to report this out of fear of their spouse, some feel they can deal with the situation in another way or do not want anyone to find out. Education and income levels have no bearing on women's risk of spousal violence.

Children are affected by such domestic violence, because they are more likely to witness violence since about six out of every ten women assaulted has children. Their children heard or saw the violent episode. Many domestic violence victims experience abuse while pregnant. Abuse during pregnancy can negatively impact both maternal health and birth outcomes.

Spousal violence has psychological, physical, social and economic impacts for victims, their families and society as a whole. Fear, depression, anxiety are all results of domestic violence. And, there are obvious financial and economic costs that are higher for women such as the impact on work productivity.

In a Juristat Article, "[Measuring violence against women: Statistical trends](#)," developed through the Federal-Provincial-

Territorial (FPT) Ministers responsible for the Status of Women and released in February 2013, it was estimated that the total cost of spousal violence against women in Canada totalled \$4.8 billion. Today the cost would be much higher.

Women turn to many different sources for support. While some can turn to family or friends, most women use social services – counselling, shelters, women's centres, support groups, crisis lines – such as those services provided by Catholic Charities Family Service agencies.

On walking a difficult journey together

"...the Church has walked with Aboriginal Peoples, shared their joys, their sufferings, and their aspirations, and supported their struggles for recognition of their rights for personal and collective growth. Then and now, the Churches provide a place where Native and non-Native Peoples may find common ground. Non-Native Church members have accompanied Native Peoples on their journey – sometimes leading, sometimes following, sometimes side-by-side"

"Let Justice Flow like a Mighty River," Brief to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops. November 8, 1993.

## ► ABORIGINAL, FIRST NATIONS, INUIT AND MÉTIS

The Permanent Council of Canada's Catholic Bishops (CCCC) has called the work of the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#) "another important step in providing further opportunity for deeper encounter, greater understanding and renewed hope" for the First Nations, Inuit and Metis, as well as for all Canadians.

In [a statement by the CCCC Permanent Council](#), the bishops said that since the beginning of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, hundreds of thousands of Catholics across the country have been involved in its hearings, directly or indirectly, including members of our Church from First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities, as well as non-Aboriginal Catholics...all shared deeply in the issues being raised, through their prayer, reflections and a deep sense of solidarity, compassion and justice.

## ► RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

"In the present condition of global society, where injustices abound and growing numbers of people are deprived of basic human rights and considered expendable, the principle of the common good immediately becomes, logically and inevitably, a summons to solidarity and a preferential option for the poorest of our brothers and sisters...it demands before all else an appreciation of the immense dignity of the poor in the light of our deepest convictions as believers. ..."

Pope Francis, Encyclical  
Laudato Si', On Care for  
Our Common Home, Saint  
Peter's Basilica, Rome,  
Solemnity of Pentecost,  
May 24, 2015

Restorative Justice is a way of dealing with the needs of victims and the accountability of offenders, and it addresses both in ways that repair the harm caused by the crime. It helps bring healing to the relationship violated rather than simply separating and punishing those involved. It also involves the victims of crime and provides a space for families, including the often forgotten members of the offender's family, to deal with the crime and its perpetrators.

To be true to its principles, restorative process is respectful of all persons, is inclusive and derives its meaningfulness and its effectiveness from genuinely engaging persons in an exchange that seeks understanding and resolution, perhaps even true reconciliation. Those who have been harmed and those who have caused harm are active participants in their journey for justice, accountability, and reparation but are accompanied by the community and family supporters who pursue in a just way the well-being of both the offender and victims.

Visiting those in prison is a corporal work of mercy and rooted in the New Testament in the Beatitudes. Jesus says: "I was in prison and you came to me". (Matthew 25:34-46). The justice system, both provincially and federally, needs to become more community-based. Groups such as the [Smart Justice Network](#) promote a more responsible, fair, humane, efficient and financially smart way of responding to criminal and social justice challenges.

Restorative Justice has been found to be a worthy approach to all sorts of community conflict. Organizations have modelled their governance and policy manuals on the principles as well. [Governments at all levels](#) embark on restorative justice processes for many reasons.

There are a number of different [restorative justice](#) approaches currently in use (circles, victim/offender meetings, mediation, conferencing, drug courts school disciplinary and student courts using restorative models, etc.,) some with traditional legal involvement before or after the restorative process, some with decision on outcome before or after the traditional court's involvement, some without reference to the established legal system.

### Mental Illness

Many persons in prison are also suffering from mental illness and addiction problems; these inmates need effective treatment rather than more punishment. The unfortunate and unnecessary criminalization of mental illness leads sometimes to deadly confrontation with police. Often arrested after the repeated failure of the mental health system to respond to their distress, the mentally ill are jailed and then controlled with methods such as solitary confinement and sedating drugs that only aggravate the condition.

The focus of the recent [John Howard Society report](#) is Ontario, but the conditions are comparable across Canada. There is a need for a massive overhaul of federal and provincial systems. We need to stop relying on the police and the courts and keep vulnerable people with mental health issues out of police custody. They belong in care not in the courts and certainly not in prison.

The staggering costs of incarcerating thousands of non-violent, victimless offenders prompted the United States to repeal federally mandatory minimum sentences. New York State reduced its incarceration rate by 15% over 10 years and saw its violent crime rate drop by 40%. Texas reduced its imprisonment rate and recorded a reduction in crime of 10% over five years.

In general, the federal government continues to establish mandatory minimum sentences, incarcerates more offenders,

makes it harder to obtain parole and ensures that the conditions are harsher. Of great concern is the growing but already disproportionate number of Aboriginal and visible minority inmates, especially among Aboriginal women. As a system, it defines itself by punishment rather than prevention, rehabilitation and preparation for re-integration.

### Encyclical *Laudato Si'*

## ► ON CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME

In Pope Francis' far-reaching Encyclical, [\*Laudato Si', On Care for Our Common Home\*](#), is one that is both a reflection of concern and a call to action. Its message is we are all part of one human family, and as members of that family, we share a common responsibility to care for one another and for the earth itself.

#### The Principle of the Common Good

"An integral ecology is inseparable from the notion of the common good...Underlying the principle of the common good is respect for the human person as such, endowed with basic and inalienable rights ordered to his or her integral development. It has also to do with the overall welfare of society... the common good calls for social peace, the stability and security provided by a certain order which cannot be achieved without particular concern for distributive justice; whenever this is violated, violence always ensues. Society as a whole and the state in

The first victims of the environmental crisis are the poor. If the earth is to be protected and injustice and poverty to be ended, then we must ensure that our concerns and interests are not harmful to the common good. This means honouring the right of every person to share in the world's resources because there is an inseparable bond between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace.

The Pope's challenge is that we consider that in a certain way our understanding of human life and activity has gone askew: "There is a tendency to believe that every increase in power means "an increase of 'progress' itself", an advance in "security, usefulness, welfare and vigour; ...an assimilation of new values into the stream of culture, as if reality, goodness and truth automatically flow from technological and economic power as such."

Pope Francis speaks of the "intimate relationship between the poor and the fragility of the planet, the conviction that everything

in the world is connected, the critique of new paradigms and forms of power derived from technology, the call to seek other ways of understanding the economy and progress, the value proper to each creature, the human meaning of ecology, the need for forthright and honest debate, the serious responsibility of international and local policy, the throwaway culture and the proposal of a new lifestyle."

When he speaks of our "ecology", he means much more than the natural environment. For Pope Francis, our ecology includes our social, economic, political, and cultural environments as well. An "integral ecology" recognizes and respects the interrelationship of society and nature. We must create social systems that mirror nature, where nothing is wasted and all is used for the common good.

In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis affirms that not only are all human beings integrally related to one another and to all of creation but also that to honor, respect, and protect this relationship, we need to act in a way that allows everyone to thrive. The environment and our economy are inextricably connected.

Rampant consumerism and individualism have not only made us profoundly unhappy, but have also weakened our social bonds and marginalized entire communities. They are destroying our environment and polluting our politics. We must also pay special attention to people living in poverty, for they are the ones who suffer the most from our unjust economic structures as well as from air, water and soil pollution.

To heed the call in *Laudato Si'* is to find a better way to act, a better politics that is not dominated by special interests or election cycles. It is a call not only to ask MPs during this election but also after to foster the culture of inclusion and develop a social structure and economy in which everyone has a seat at the table

and none are excluded. We can heal our broken relationships to one another and to the earth. We need only put it in action.

## CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING.

### PRINCIPLES OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

Catholic Social Teaching undergirds the reasons behind our Election Guide because it calls on Catholics and all people to be in solidarity with all people especially the poor and vulnerable. 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. Spurred on by prevailing social conditions, 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.

### 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.

## 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.

## REPORT CARD

Ask the candidates...

REPORT CARD

Here are a few questions for your Report Card. They focus on the issues addressed in the Election Guide. The Report Card allows you to give a “grade” to each candidate, based on their responses to these questions. We have suggested questions; add yours, too.

HOW TO USE

THE ELECTION GUIDE

It's as easy as A, B, C

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” their answers (‘A’, ‘B’, ‘C’ or ‘D’).

RESPECT AND SUPPORT FOR  
LIFE

ISSUE	QUESTION	GRADE	
		KNOWLEDGE	RESPONSE
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.	As a Member of Parliament, 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.	As a Member of Parliament, how will you make long-term palliative care a priority?		
	What is your position on physician assisted death?		

RESPECT AND SUPPORT FOR  
LIFE

<p><i>"Helping someone commit suicide...is neither an act of justice or mercy, nor is it part of palliative care." It is contrary to the dignity of the person and to the respect due to God.</i></p>	<p>As a Member of Parliament, how will you work to ensure that respect for life and the dignity of the human person is safeguarded no matter what the circumstances?</p>		
	<p>Do you agree that a broadly based, public consultation is necessary?</p> <p>How would you and your party proceed with wide-ranging consultation to ensure that all voices are heard?</p>		

POVERTY + INCOME  
INEQUALITY

ISSUE	QUESTION	GRADE	
		KNOWLEDGE	RESPONSE
Pope Francis says we must "attack the structural causes of inequality" and strive to provide work, healthcare and education to all citizens. As long as the problems of the poor are not radically resolved...no solution will be found for this world's problems.	With many families with children and individuals in Ontario still caught in the grips of poverty, how would you as a Member of Parliament address the structural causes of poverty? How should government and our economy address this issue?		
The number of Canadians living in conditions of poverty is rising. Statistics Canada's after-tax low income measure says 4.6 million people or 13.5% of Canadians in 2013, are virtually unchanged from 2012.	As a Member of Parliament, how would you address the problem of the rise in the number of Canadians living in poverty?  What are your priorities on programs addressing challenges faced by children living in Indigenous communities?		

POVERTY + INCOME  
INEQUALITY

More than 25 years have passed since the House of Commons in 1989 unanimously resolved to end child poverty in Canada by the year 2000. Yet child and family poverty increased.	More children live in poverty as of 2013 than when the House of Commons voted unanimously to end child poverty in Canada by 2000. Why do you think this has happened? How can it be changed?		
Income inequality is not only a moral issue but economic one, threatening people's livelihoods and plunging them into poverty.	The top 1% of income earners in Canada has doubled but middle income earnings are unchanged. How can our economy change to help young workers who must start at low wages to fill short-term contract jobs?		

HOMELESSNESS + FOOD  
INSECURITY

ISSUE	QUESTION	GRADE	
		KNOWLEDGE	RESPONSE
A home is <i>essential</i> to ending poverty. It creates stability for families and whole communities. It's a key factor in lifting people out of poverty.	What are your concerns with developing more housing that is adequate, accessible and affordable as well as safe and secure?		
The consistent lack of affordable housing forces thousands of individuals and families with children to live in deplorable conditions.	Describe how you think the federal government should work with the provinces to create more adequate and affordable housing?		
Homelessness and housing insecurity have escalated in Canada because there has been minimal development of both market and non-market low-cost rental housing.	Canada is the only country of the G7 nations that does not have a national housing strategy. Do you think Canada needs a national strategy? And why?		

HOMELESSNESS + FOOD  
INSECURITY

Household food insecurity, inadequate or insecure access to food is a significant social and health problem in Canada affecting 4 million individuals including over 1 million children.	Large numbers of Canadians still must rely on food banks to feed their families. What ways could we remedy this problem so that no Canadian family goes without adequate food?		
	Do you agree that Canada urgently needs a coherent, federal food policy that guarantees universal access to adequate amounts of healthy and appropriate food?		



## RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

ISSUE	QUESTION	GRADE	
		KNOWLEDGE	RESPONSE
Restorative Justice, Smart Justice and other programs address criminal justice issues that solves the problems of crime rather than simply punishing the criminals. It involves the victims of crime and provides a space for families to deal with the crime and its perpetrators.	As a Member of Parliament, how would you and your party develop restorative approaches to justice that support healing for victims, offenders, and communities?		
	As a Member of Parliament, how would you see to it that support be provided to women and men who are serving sentences to be good neighbours in our communities upon their release?		

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

.	Canada's crime rate has been decreasing for years. How, then, do you, as a Member Parliament and your party, propose to make effective use of the resources committed to justice and corrections?		
We need to stop the practice of using the justice system 'to punish' people with mental illness.	Do you believe we should screen all inmates with regard to their mental health? Do you think we should stop the practice of isolating prisoners with acute mental illness in solitary confinement?		

REFUGEES + TEMPORARY  
FOREIGN WORKERS

ISSUE	QUESTION	GRADE	
		KNOWLEDGE	RESPONSE
Canada has always been known as a safe-haven and welcoming place for refugees.	As a Member of Parliament, how would you, and your party, guarantee that refugee rights are protected when they arrive in Canada?		
	The government's current immigration processing for family reunification cases is very slow. Many children wait more than two years before being able to be reunited with their parents here. How do you think your party can remedy this situation?		

REFUGEES + TEMPORARY  
FOREIGN WORKERS

Government changes to deal with refugees make mandatory detention for so-called "irregular" arrivals and limited or no access to health care.	As a Member of Parliament, would you end mandatory detention for "irregular" arrivals? Would you reinstate the pre-2012 Interim Federal Health Program?		
Low-skilled temporary foreign workers who have limited employment rights and have few legal protections, are easily exploited.	As a Member of Parliament, what concerns about this program do you have? What action would you take to address these issues? What changes would your propose to make certain that these workers will not be exploited by employers looking to profit from cheap labour.		

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

ISSUE	QUESTION	GRADE	
		KNOWLEDGE	RESPONSE
<p><i>"People become vulnerable to being trafficked through social and economic exclusion. Many people experience exclusion because of barriers such as poverty, gender bias, racism, lack of education and lack of opportunity; others become excluded as a result of mental illness, addiction, family disconnection or social isolation."</i></p>	As a Member of Parliament, what are your concerns with the growing number of situations in Canada involving human trafficking?		
	As a Member of Parliament, do you see Canada's National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking as being effective?		
	How would you make it more effective? Do you think Canadians see human trafficking as primarily an international issue, not related to them?		

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

	<p>Do you think that the government could do a better job in its support for organizations providing assistance to victims, including young female immigrants who arrive in Canada alone?</p> <p>Awareness-raising is one of the actions highlighted in Canada's National Action Plan, do you think more needs to be done?</p>		
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VIOLENCE AGAINST  
WOMEN + INDIGENOUS  
WOMEN

ISSUE	QUESTION	GRADE	
		KNOWLEDGE	RESPONSE
One quarter of all violent crimes reported to police involve family violence. Of the victims of this family violence, 70% of the victims are women or girls.	As a Member of Parliament, how effective in your opinion has been the National Action Plan on Violence Against Women?		
	Do you think that Canada should develop a more comprehensive Action Plan together with provincial, territorial and municipal governments as well as Indigenous peoples First Nations, Metis and Inuit?		
	What new elements do you think should be part of that comprehensive plan?		

**VIOLENCE AGAINST  
WOMEN + INDIGENOUS  
WOMEN**

<p>Aboriginal women are three times more likely to have experienced intimate partner violence than non-Aboriginal women. In 2009, 15% of Aboriginal women reported experiencing spousal abuse compared to 6% of non-Aboriginal women.</p>	<p>Do you think that the federal government should launch a national inquiry into the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls?</p> <p>Do you think Indigenous women should be involved in the preparation, planning and implementation of this national inquiry?</p>		
<p>Standing Committee on the Status of Women Report (June 2015)</p>	<p>Should the federal government invest in economic development ventures to nurture the economic well-being of Indigenous women and girls?</p>		

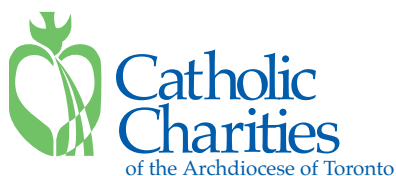


ON CARE FOR OUR  
COMMON HOME

ISSUE	QUESTION	GRADE	
		KNOWLEDGE	RESPONSE
<p>"A very solid scientific consensus indicates that we are presently witnessing a disturbing warming of the climatic system," Pope Francis said. "Humanity is called to recognise the need for changes of lifestyle, production and consumption, in order to combat this warming or at least the human causes which produce or aggravate it."</p> <p><i>Encyclical <b>Laudato Si',</b> "On the Care of Our Common Home"</i></p>	<p>As a Member of Parliament, what do you think Canada must do to improve its record in relation to environmental issues?</p> <p>What steps do we need to take to be ready for the U.N. climate summit in Paris (November 30 to December 11, 2015)?</p>		

ON CARE FOR OUR  
COMMON HOME

<p>"In the present condition of global society, where injustices abound and growing numbers of people are deprived of basic human rights and considered expendable, the principle of the common good immediately becomes, logically and inevitably, a summons to solidarity and a preferential option for the poorest of our brothers and sisters..."</p> <p><i>Encyclical <b>Laudato Si',</b> "On the Care of Our Common Home"</i></p>	<p>As a Member of Parliament, how do you understand Pope Francis' call for a change of lifestyle in countries like Canada, steeped in a "throwaway" consumer culture, and an end to an "obstructionist attitudes" that sometimes put profit before the common good?</p>		
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**CATHOLIC CHARITIES** of the Archdiocese of Toronto through its member agencies provides outreach and support that improves the lives of people in communities in Toronto, Peel, York and Durham regions as well as Dufferin and Simcoe counties. For over 100 years, Catholic Charities has been providing leadership and raising awareness about issues that affect vulnerable families and individuals. We draw on Catholic Social Teaching and our desire is to build a more just society, while safeguarding the dignity of every person.

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