

Taking the Next Step on Women's Equality

The Challenge

Canadian women have long fought for equality, fairness and equal opportunity—and New Democrats have been there every step of the way. Along with our allies in the labour movement and women’s organizations, New Democrats have advocated for pay equity, childcare, the right to reproductive choice and an end to violence against women.

New Democrats have also shown leadership in electing female representation to Parliament. In the last election, Canadians sent a record 76 women to parliament—most of them New Democrats. But Canada still lags behind the rest of the world in equal representation. We need to continue to move forward. There's more work to be done.

Women work hard to make ends meet, but on average they still only earn 70% of what men make. Equal pay for work of equal value is a human right that has not been a reality for women in Canada.

Poverty disproportionately affects single, widowed or divorced women over 65 and even 40% of single women under 65 are now living below the poverty line. Two thirds of minimum wage earners over the age of 15 are women, many living well below the poverty line. Yet, consecutive Liberal and Conservative governments have severely cut access to social and employment assistance leaving women in poverty to fend for themselves.

An estimated one in four women experiences sexual violence in her lifetime and approximately half of Canadian women will face criminal violence by men. Aboriginal women are more likely to face violence than other women in Canada and incidents of murdered and missing aboriginal women are a national crisis that is not being addressed.

Women’s equality is fundamental to a fair and just society. As Leader of the New Democratic Party, Thomas Mulcair will continue our party's legacy of fighting for equality for every Canadian.

Tom's record of standing up for women’s rights goes well beyond politics. Before ever running for public office, as President of the Quebec Professions Board, Tom pushed for a zero tolerance policy for sexual misconduct by doctors and fought for changes to ensure fair hearings for those making allegations against doctors and other professionals. Tom's fight eventually led to an overhaul of Quebec's professional code—ensuring higher standards for all of Quebec's professional associations.

In Parliament, Tom has been one of the strongest voices in opposition to the Conservative attack on women's equality. As NDP Finance Critic, Tom led the fight against Conservative budget proposals that forced women in the federal public service to bargain for equal pay rather than having that right guaranteed by the courts.

The Conservative attack on women’s equality continues. More than ever, we must unite to ensure that women are provided the opportunity they deserve to move forward.



The Harper Failure

The Conservative government has introduced several regressive policies and has moved backwards in the goal of reaching full equality for women.

- Attacked pay equity by requiring female workers achieve pay equity through the collective bargaining process rather than having that right guaranteed by the courts
- Continue to disregard the recommendations from the 2004 Pay Equity Task Force that concluded that federal pay equity legislation is inadequate and that Canada needs to adopt a proactive pay equity law
- Cut 40% of the budget for Status of Women Canada, eliminated the gender-based analysis unit and closed 12 of 16 Status offices across Canada
- Followed in the footsteps of the previous Liberal government and made massive cuts to federal funding for women's advocacy organizations
- Introduced an ineffective "universal childcare allowance," that did not provide new child care spaces or real options for working mothers
- No action on poverty, affordable housing, retirement security, Employment Insurance reform or violence against women

Taking the Next Step: Strengthening Women's Equality

As Leader of the New Democratic Party, Thomas Mulcair would both propose innovative new ideas and build on existing party policy to take the next step delivering on women's equality.

The New Democratic Party has always been a leader in championing such policies. Tremendous work has been done by both the NDP caucus and our party membership to craft our platform for ensuring fairness for women. But we must also seek out new ideas to advance the cause of equality.

That's why, as Prime Minister, Thomas Mulcair would commit to **ensure that 50% of all persons appointed to the boards of Crown corporations and federal agencies are women—and he'll challenge the private sector to do the same.**

This new commitment to adopt a gender equity policy for public appointments builds on the existing elements of New Democratic Party policy summarized below to ensure greater representation for women in the most powerful quarters of government.

Equality in Employment and Compensation

- Reverse Stephen Harper's attack on pay equity and move forward with the recommendations from the 2004 Pay Equity Task Force to introduce proactive pay equity legislation

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- Increase access to Employment Insurance by improving maternity-benefit rules and permit family members to take up to 6 months leave to care for sick relatives
- Assist women who are new to Canada by investing in new programs for foreign credential recognition, language and job training

Putting an End to Violence Against Women

- Reverse the devastating cuts to women's programs and organizations and work with the provinces and territories to expand access to shelters, rape relief, and transitional housing for women experiencing physical or sexual violence, including in rural areas
- Restore Court Challenges Program cancelled by the Conservative government
- Implement a coordinated federal plan, led by Aboriginal women, communities and organizations to end the violence against Aboriginal women while working to end the systemic discrimination and inequality that cause Aboriginal women to be vulnerable to violence
- Renew the federal government's commitment to gun control including developing a more effective, better managed system of firearms registration

Social Equity

- Provide funding and a national framework to assist provinces to adopt a quality, low cost, universal child care program
- Take action through the Canada Housing Mortgage Corporation (CMHC) to assist in providing low-cost and non-profit housing to women and their families
- Provide retirement security for women by increasing the Guaranteed Income Supplement and work with the provinces to increase benefits under CPP/QPP
- Re-establish Status of Women Canada as a full ministry

