

the Catalyst

Citizens for Public Justice Summer 2019



2019 ELECTION BULLETIN: SHAPING A JUST CANADA



The 2019 federal election will present a fresh opportunity for people across Canada to shape the kind of country we want to be.

As we prepare to cast our votes, it's essential we consider the collective interests of fellow citizens and non-citizens, as well as those beyond our nation's borders.

Coupled with the privilege of exercising our democratic rights is a duty to care for others. At Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ), we believe this is a responsibility particularly for people of faith, who are called to love those around us. We view public justice as the "political dimension of loving our neighbour."

As we engage with people across the country throughout the election period, we've prepared this election bulletin to help you participate in the political process in a meaningful way. We hope that in this time of increased division, voters will continue to keep in mind the common good.

Through informed and thoughtful political engagement, we will help to define the Canada of tomorrow.



DEMOCRACY – LEVERAGING OUR OPPORTUNITIES AS CITIZENS

Democratic participation is highlighted around election time, yet the opportunity to engage in the democratic process exists year-round.

Citizens are entitled to voice their concerns and to have these concerns heard. As people of faith, we recognize that the tools of democracy allow us to care for the needs of our neighbours.

To be active and engaged citizens, we should remain informed about policy developments by staying up-to-date with news, contacting leaders in government about topics of concern, and engaging respectfully with those in our communities – especially with those who hold differing views from our own.

Along with our benefits as citizens is the responsibility to leverage our positions so that the interests of the marginalized are considered and upheld. It's also our responsibility to make sure we are tuned-in to current events throughout the year, so that we can discern fact from fiction and be informed voters come election day.

Ensuring a Voice for All

Healthy democracies require strong participation alongside solid representation. In our current first-past-the-post system, not all the votes that are cast are reflected in the political breakdown of elected representatives.

Although the call for electoral reform created momentum for change in the 2015 federal election, little movement has been made to strengthen the integrity of Canada's democracy.

ASK FEDERAL CANDIDATES:

If elected, are you prepared to move forward on proportional representation?

Upholding Fair and Considered Policy Making

To develop public policies, adequate time, consideration, and public consultation must be undertaken to maintain democratic integrity.

Despite this, concurrent governments have continued to pass bills with multiple policy changes, known as omnibus bills. These changes often lack the necessary consideration of public interest. Elected officials must know that voters expect better.

We need thought-out policy making processes that implement true public dialogue.

ASK FEDERAL CANDIDATES:

How do you plan to ensure that public policy changes receive adequate parliamentary consideration and study?

LEARN MORE

To read more about electoral reform, visit: samaracanada.com/samara-in-the-classroom/electoral-reform

Maintaining Trust

Widespread misinformation in online spaces has raised concern over the integrity of democracies around the world. Thankfully, the Canadian government has taken some proactive steps to counter the threat of foreign interference and the spread of false information in the upcoming election.

Through the creation of the Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections (SITE) Task Force, the government aims to identify and respond to incidents of foreign interference in Canada's democratic process. SITE will work to: enhance citizen preparedness, improve coordination across government departments, monitor foreign actors, and call for greater accountability from social media platforms.

Still, as at all times, it's important that voters be aware of the validity of the content they consume online. While it's not possible to prevent all sources of media manipulation, and while not all false information is malicious or intentional, people can avoid pitfalls by exercising caution in online spaces.

Some good practices when engaging online include: reading articles before sharing them, taking time to look up the websites, publications, or individuals from whom information originates, engaging with a variety of perspectives and news channels, and verifying claims against official political party platforms and public statements.

Voters should be critical of news that comes from unknown media outlets, that lacks legitimate or verified sources, as well as information that is inflammatory or that aims to elicit strong emotional responses.

Rather than dismiss or distrust news outlets outright, remember that journalism serves an essential role in the health of our democracy, and we each have a role to play in advancing media literacy.

LEARN MORE

To read more about the effects of technology on Canada's democracy, visit: ppforum.ca/project/digital-democracy-101-understanding-technologys-effect-on-canadas-democracy

ASK FEDERAL CANDIDATES:

How will you ensure that people in Canada can retain trust in the integrity of the democratic process in the face of those attempting to spread misinformation?

What policies would you enforce to foster greater action from social media platforms to combat the spread of propaganda and misinformation?

Resisting Divisive Politics

Polarization is on the rise in democracies around the world. Fear of "the other," or xenophobia, often motivates politicians and voters alike to move towards exclusionary and isolated politics.

In our current social media landscape, it's easy to exist in echo chambers that drive people further and further away from one another.

But, as people of faith, it is imperative that we resist the urge to "other" those around us. We do not live in a world of "us" versus "them," but rather, in a shared community on a shared planet.

The Bible implores us to love one another, which means loving those with whom we disagree just as much as we are to love those that think and vote like us.

In a climate of increased polarization, let's reject the politics of division, fear, and name-calling, and instead recognize that respectful dialogue, even when holding opposing viewpoints, is indeed how we are called to live as people of faith.

ASK FEDERAL CANDIDATES:

As a national leader, how will you take responsibility for cultivating a respectful state of democracy and public dialogue in Canada?





ENDING POVERTY IN CANADA

As people of faith, we know that we are called to engage with our world in a way that recognizes and affirms the dignity of all people. We are also called to challenge structures and institutions that create barriers to full life and dignity by working for justice.

In Canada today, it is important that we ask what it means to follow the call to justice. Biblical justice is a call to feed the hungry and clothe the naked; to welcome the “stranger” and protect the vulnerable. It means we open our hearts, minds, and spirits to see where there is need, to learn about problems at their roots, and to respond in love and concrete action.

Urgent and strategic action is needed to end poverty in Canada. Fortunately, steps are being taken in the right direction.

Current Poverty Trends

Right now, over 5 million people in Canada struggle everyday to get by. Poverty is a heavy burden to bear. It impacts people physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. It impacts their sense of identity in the world and their relationship with others, with creation, and with God.

We know, as well, that poverty impacts people differently, and some people experience multiple barriers that make it harder for them to live fully.

Indigenous peoples in Canada have experienced the pain of colonization, residential schools, forced displacement, inter-generational trauma, and ongoing discrimination. This has led to high rates of poverty in many Indigenous communities, along with related challenges. Access to healthcare, education, safe housing and drinking water, nutritious and culturally appropriate food, and other necessities is often lacking for many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities across Canada. It is a national shame.

Racialized communities in Canada often face discrimination that leads to unsafe housing and social exclusion, low-paying and precarious work, and criminalization. **Refugees and those with precarious immigration status** are incredibly vulnerable to poverty, as they also have to overcome the many challenges of settlement and finding community.

People with disabilities find themselves without the supports that they need to fully participate in their communities. **Single mothers** often lack the services and supports that would allow them and their children to thrive. **Children** go to school hungry and find it hard to focus on their educations. **Single young adults** are often faced with precarious employment that provides little financial security and little relief from overwhelming debt from student loans.

Many others are living from paycheque-to-paycheque, not knowing how they will cover their bills, provide for themselves or their families, and in fear of how they could manage if they lost their job or fell ill. These are incredible burdens to bear, and they require a public justice response.

We know that strong policy impacts people’s lives and makes our communities stronger. As faithful citizens, we must pray and work for Canada to be a country where all can live in dignity.

LEARN MORE

Living Justice: A Gospel Response to Poverty is a CPJ publication that explores worship and action on poverty in Canada. The book provides reflections and workshop activities that examine how faith communities can address issues of justice. It is available at cpj.ca/living-justice-gospel-response-poverty

A National Anti-Poverty Plan for Canada

For over a decade, anti-poverty advocates have been calling for federal leadership to end poverty in Canada, particularly through the creation of a national anti-poverty plan. Since 2009, CPJ has co-lead the Dignity for All campaign alongside Canada Without Poverty. The campaign has called for a national plan to end poverty that is comprehensive in scope, that is legislated, fully-funded, and includes ambitious targets and accountability mechanisms.

In August 2018, the federal government released “Opportunity for All” Canada’s first federal poverty reduction strategy. This was a major achievement for CPJ, Dignity for All, and all our members and partners who pushed so hard for over a decade to make this happen!

Following the release of the strategy, CPJ and Dignity for All continued to call on the federal government to strengthen the strategy through legislation and increased funding. In November 2018, the federal government tabled legislation for the Poverty Reduction Act, Bill C-87. Again, this was an important step forward.

The federal poverty reduction strategy and the legislation for the strategy include:

- The creation of Canada’s first “Official Poverty Line” – the Market Basket Measure;
- A commitment to reduce poverty by 20% by 2020 and by 50% by 2030 (reductions of 2015 levels as calculated by the Market Basket Measure);
- The creation of an Advisory Council on Poverty that will serve to review and evaluate the federal poverty reduction strategy to ensure targets and timelines are met, to advise the Minister on ways to move the strategy forward, and to engage the public in an ongoing way.

In an effort to strengthen the legislation, CPJ, Canada Without Poverty, and Campaign 2000 lobbied for improvements and amendments by way of an open letter to Minister Jean-Yves Duclos. The letter was signed by over 535 organizations and individuals. In April 2019, Bill C-87 was included as part of the Budget Implementation Act, and CPJ had an opportunity to speak to the Finance Committee in its review of the legislation, sharing our recommendations for improvements.

The government has a moral obligation to provide leadership in consultation with those most impacted by poverty. This includes implementing structural changes to eliminate poverty and creating new policies that ensure all people have the means to achieve a sustainable livelihood. Our public policy must prioritize human well-being. When it does, we all benefit.

Ask federal candidates to build on our recommendations to strengthen the poverty reduction strategy legislation:

How will you ensure the poverty reduction strategy and its legislation reflect Canada’s commitment to end poverty in adopting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?

How will you ensure that the new “Official Poverty Line” for Canada, the Market Basket Measure, is regularly updated, so that the measure reflects current costs experienced by those living in poverty?

How will you ensure that the Advisory Council on Poverty reflects diversity and functions as an accountability mechanism that holds the federal government to its commitments?

How will you work with Indigenous communities to co-develop initiatives to ensure accountability and implementation of remedies for the distinctive barriers faced by First Nations, Inuit, and Métis persons living in poverty?

“Seeing not only ourselves but others as bearers of God’s image, with profound dignity and worth, prevents relationships of injustice in our social, political and economic life.”

– Canadian Council of Churches, Healing Poverty report

LEARN MORE

The “Dignity for All: A National Anti-Poverty Plan for Canada” outlines a human rights framework for a national strategy and provides concrete recommendations for six key policy areas: income security, housing and homelessness, healthcare, food security, employment, and early childhood education and care. Learn more at dignityforall.ca

CPJ’s Poverty Trends report is released every year around October 17, the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. Poverty Trends provides data on poverty rates in Canada, who is most impacted, and what is happening with poverty rates and policy. Read CPJ’s [Poverty Trends 2018](http://cpj.ca/poverty-trends-2018) at cpj.ca/poverty-trends-2018

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Safe, affordable housing

Safe, affordable housing is a fundamental right. In the midst of a housing crisis in many communities across the country, the urgent need to recognize and respond to this right is clear. The federal government's National Housing Strategy and the accompanying "right to housing" legislation are important steps forward. It is essential that safe, affordable housing is developed, and that funding is allocated as quickly as possible, with federal, provincial, territorial, municipal, and Indigenous governments working together in ways that respond to their specific needs.

Improved healthcare outcomes

Healthcare remains a top priority for people across the country, as so many do not have adequate care, lack a family doctor, cannot afford prescription medications or dental care, or must wait for important medical treatments, including for mental health and addiction crises. A national pharmacare plan is being explored by the existing federal government, which could provide some relief. We must ensure, however, that Canada's health care system continues to be strengthened, particularly through recognition of the social determinants of health in legislation and enforce the Canada Health Act.

Sustainable jobs, not precarious work

More and more people across the country are having a hard time finding full-time permanent jobs. As a result, they are forced to obtain precarious, low-wage jobs with little security. The call for governments, organizations, and businesses to provide a living wage is growing, as people find it impossible to manage on minimum wage, often needing to work multiple jobs to get by each month. In addition, government support of work must be forward looking – by providing support for training and businesses that contribute to essential social needs, including the need for a just transition toward clean energy sources.

Income security

A range of income security measures is needed to address shortfalls in income, due to barriers to adequate work or inadequate wages, or due to unmanageable costs, including unaffordable housing and childcare. Over the past several years, the federal government made investments in the Canada Child Benefit, Guaranteed Income Supplement for seniors, the Canada Workers Benefit, and Employment Insurance. There remain income security gaps, particularly for single working-aged adults and people living with disabilities, that could be addressed by a focused Guaranteed Livable Income.

Universal, affordable, and high-quality childcare

Childcare is unaffordable in so many communities across the country. This often means women do less paid work or have to put off further education that would benefit them and their children. The federal government has provided some support for childcare nationally, but universal, affordable, and high-quality childcare is essential to support children's well being, women's social and economic engagement, and to support families and communities.

ASK FEDERAL CANDIDATES:

How do you plan to ensure that Canada's poverty reduction strategy meets our commitment to the international target to end poverty in Canada by 2030?

What comprehensive improvements will you make to the poverty strategy to address income security and precarious work?

Will you prioritize investments in affordable housing to address the national housing crisis?

How would you ensure that families in Canada have access to affordable and nutritious food?



Good food and nutrition

Good food and nutrition are the building blocks for health and well-being. They are also essential for bringing people together. Canada's new national food policy, "A Food Policy for Canada", is a place to build on to ensure school children have access to healthy food; food security, affordability, and culturally appropriate food is available in northern and remote Indigenous communities; and to ensure there are no food deserts in communities across the country.



ENSURING CLIMATE JUSTICE

People of faith across Canada are increasingly speaking up about the urgent need for climate action. Christians and faith leaders are recognizing that the world as we know it is changing. Many are starting to take bold steps to restore a sense of shalom in creation as an indivisible part of their faith convictions.

The range of climate change impacts for Canada's far north and coastal regions is striking: glacial melt, flood risks, seasonal shifts, more snow and rain in winter, and hotter, dryer summers. Still, no part of the country is immune. Earlier this year, communities in several provinces and many First Nations experienced extensive flooding. An intense annual wildfire season in British Columbia is becoming the new normal. The March 2019 "Canada's Changing Climate Report" indicated that a warmer climate will "increase the severity of heatwaves and contribute to increased drought and wildfire risks." At the same time, "more intense rainfalls will increase urban flood risks." Around the world, famine and natural resource wars threaten food and water security and contribute to increases in migration.

Climate change is leading to crisis, after crisis, after crisis. Those who are already socially and economically marginalized are the most vulnerable.

Climate change is an issue that reaches to the core of who we are as people of faith and how we are to live in God's world. As people of faith, we are called to respect the dignity of every human being as image-bearers of God. We all have a rightful claim to live in dignity, be respected by others and have access to resources needed to live out God's calling. We also have a duty to act justly, care for creation and work for peaceful relations within society.

This must inform the way we live, work, and play. Future generations have a right to the abundance of creation; we cannot over-consume and deny our children's children a healthy and secure life. Indigenous peoples, leaders from low-lying island states, and youth around the world have stressed the moral imperative of taking far-reaching action. We must move away from a model that supports the devastation of the Earth and brings hardship upon the world's most marginalized.

In a statement at the 2018 UN climate conference in Katowice, Poland, the World Council of Churches declared, "our faiths demand that we act for the protection of the vulnerable and as caretakers of Mother Earth."

Climate change refers to the human-induced increase of atmospheric greenhouse gas (GHG) concentrations beyond normal levels of variation. Although earth's climate has always fluctuated, the average surface temperature has increased dramatically – by roughly 1°C – due to human activity since the industrial revolution.

LEARN MORE

Living Ecological Justice: A Biblical Response to the Environmental Crisis is a faith-based learning tool for Canadian Christians trying to live out the justice mandate to care and advocate for creation. It is available at cpj.ca/living-ecological-justice

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Ambitious action on climate change is not optional. A complete suite of federal measures is needed to address the climate crisis and set Canada on a path towards decarbonization by 2050. Canada's future must be built on green energy.

To start, the federal government must implement measures that will meet Canada's emissions-reduction target. Then, it must increase national ambition to a level consistent with no more than 1.5 C over pre-industrial levels.

The urgency of the situation requires that we use all the tools available.

Follow-through on longstanding commitments to end inefficient fossil fuel subsidies

Estimates of Canadian subsidies vary widely, ranging from \$1.5 billion to tens of billions of dollars. Regardless of the figure, research by the office of Canada's Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development revealed that "inefficient subsidies to the fossil fuel sector encourage wasteful consumption, undermine efforts to address climate change, and discourage investment in clean energy sources."

Strengthen and expand Canada's carbon emissions pricing mechanism beyond 2022

2018 Nobel Prize winner, William Norhaus, highlights four objectives achieved by carbon pricing. "It sends signals to consumers about which goods and services are more carbon-intensive; it sends signals to producers about which activities are most carbon-intensive and which are less carbon-intensive; it sends signals to propel innovation to find new, affordable alternatives; and finally, pricing is the best means to convey these signals within well-functioning markets."

Establish a national just transition strategy

Central to Canada's way forward is a just transition towards a decarbonized economy. In a just transition, the weight of change that benefits everyone is not borne disproportionately by one group of people. It includes significant investments in low-carbon energy development and energy efficiency, as well as funding for skills development and retraining for workers. As such, it reduces emissions, creates good jobs, and supports communities. A just transition incorporates a robust Employment Insurance program to assist those who find themselves temporarily out of work. It gives protection to the most vulnerable and increases social justice for all.

Canada has taken some important initial steps with the work of the Task Force on Just Transition for Canadian Coal Power Workers and Communities. In order to meaningfully reduce Canada's emissions, it is essential that the lessons of this work – and corresponding resources – be expanded upon and applied to the oil and gas sector.

A shift to clean technology development, promises tremendous economic and health benefits to Canadians. Research by the Conference Board of Canada highlights Canada's

"competitive edge" in wind and solar power, energy-efficient turbines, and waste management. And the United Nations Environment Program predicts that "green trade" internationally will grow to at least \$2-trillion (U.S.) by 2020.



Working as an International Community

In October 2018, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) signaled the scientific imperative of transformational climate action, with the release of their landmark report on the implications of allowing global temperatures to rise 1.5 C over pre-industrial levels. Their research shows that the global community has less than a decade to dramatically change course and avoid catastrophic climate consequences.

Specifically, the IPCC says, "climate-related risks to health, livelihoods, food security, water supply, human security, and economic growth are projected to increase with global warming of 1.5 C and increase further with 2 C."

Echoing the IPCC's clear and urgent call to action, "Canada's Changing Climate Report" lays out, in no uncertain terms, that Canada must immediately invest in a just transition towards a decarbonized economy.



“The climate crisis has already been solved. We already have the facts and solutions. All we have to do is to wake up and change.”

– 16-yr-old Swedish climate activist, Greta Thunberg

For the Love of Creation

Policy consistency, transparency, and accountability must be brought to bear as Canada adopts an all-hands-on-deck approach to addressing this global crisis.

Our economy, ecology, and society are all wrapped up in one another. We need to take a holistic approach that respects the rights of Indigenous peoples, and considers both the health of the economy, and the well-being of plants and animals in the natural environment, as well as the sustainable livelihoods, lifestyles, and health of individuals, families, communities, and future generations.

It is abundantly clear that all of us need to do things differently. We need to consider how we consume, waste, and navigate our landscape. We must also acknowledge that the scale of the climate crisis requires a collective response. It is no longer a question of what needs to be done, but rather how quickly we need to do it.

ASK FEDERAL CANDIDATES:

How will you ensure the development and implementation of a just transition strategy for Canada? How will you approach the development of green jobs across Canada? Through what mechanisms will you support workers (and their communities) through this transition?

Will you end all public financing of the fossil fuel industry? If so, when?

How will you enhance Canadian climate and energy policy to align with the scientific imperative of limiting global average temperature rise to 1.5 C?

How will you assist Indigenous and northern communities, coastal regions, and other vulnerable populations to adapt to the new realities of their local environments? How will you support them in the face of negative health impacts from climate change?

LEARN MORE

On Earth Day 2019, Christian leaders from across Canada joined together to issue a call to climate action. Created by CPJ, the Canadian Council of Churches, and KAIROS, the [#ForTheLoveOfCreation](#) video collaboration highlighted the need for urgent action by Canadians – and the Canadian government – on climate change. View the video at cpj.ca/for-the-love-of-creation



UPHOLDING REFUGEE RIGHTS

CPJ envisions a world in which individuals, societal institutions and governments all contribute to and benefit from the common good. We strive to bring about public justice and promote human rights.

This framework is particularly imperative when working on issues that surround the treatment of refugees. All refugees are immigrants, but not all immigrants are refugees. As some of the world's most vulnerable people, refugees require compassion and support, rather than the condemnation, xenophobia, and racism that have surfaced more openly in Canada as of late.

Over the years, Canada has maintained a relatively generous immigration policy and a reasonable refugee policy. Our refugee determination system is considered the global gold standard, which is why, in 1986, the people of Canada were awarded the Nansen Medal by the United Nations in recognition of their contribution to refugee resettlement. Canada currently accepts about 300,000 new immigrants annually, making us a multicultural hub. Refugees and Protected Persons only make up a small fraction of this total, however, with government target projections welcoming between 45,000 and 50,000 of these newcomers yearly, across all sponsorship streams, over the next three years.

In April 2019, Canada celebrated the 40th anniversary of the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program, through which it has resettled a total of 327,000 refugees. In 1985, the Supreme Court of Canada declared that the legal guarantees of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms applied to "everyone" physically present in Canada, including foreign asylum seekers. On April 4, Canadians mark Refugee Rights Day, celebrated annually for this landmark declaration.

Why Canada needs immigrants

Canada needs immigrants to meet its labour force needs. The Conference Board of Canada reports that Canada's fertility rate stands at 1.6, well below the population replacement rate of 2.1. Immigrants currently make up 65% of Canada's net annual population growth. This implies that if immigration was stopped now, deaths would exceed births by the year 2034. By 2035, 5 million Canadians will reach retirement age, at which time it is estimated that 350,000 immigrants will be needed annually by 2035 in order to meet Canada's workforce demands.

The Syrian crisis and travel loan repayments

When the Syrian crisis was brought to the world's attention by the drowning of three-year-old Alan Kurdi, whose family has connections to Canada, Canada pledged to give sanctuary to 25,000 Syrians within one year. Canadians welcomed refugees at our airports with open arms, and the government promoted Syrian resettlement as a victory for Canadians and refugees alike.

The government gave these specific Syrian refugees a soft landing by exempting them from the financial stresses associated with repaying travel loans. A debt that can cost up to \$10,000 upon arrival for other refugees. This was seen as a double standard, and critics, including CPJ, called on government to extend similar consideration to all refugees resettled in Canada. 98% of the Immigration Loans Program users are refugees whose ability to settle in Canada is burdened by the requirement to repay these loans. As such, the government must eliminate repayment of travel loans for refugees and absorb the costs as part of the resettlement process.

LEARN MORE

For further information on our advocacy, and to read real stories about the impact this debt has on refugees, check out our [#WaiveRepayment](https://cpj.ca/waiverepayment) campaign at cpj.ca/waiverepayment

The Safe Third Country Agreement (STCA)

In 2004, Canada signed an agreement known as the Safe Third Country Agreement (STCA) with the United States. It allows the Canada Border Services Agency to return refugee claimants who arrive at an official land border to the U.S. because the agreement stipulates that refugees should make their claim in the first "safe" country in which they arrive. By the end of 2018, 40,000 irregular border crossings occurred in Canada.

People do not become refugees by choice, rather, they are forced to flee for safety. Due to recent executive orders in the U.S. that have increased restrictions on immigration and altered criteria for refugee determination, the U.S. is no longer a safe country for many refugee claimants.

When politicians describe refugee claimants as "illegals," "queue jumpers" or "asylum shoppers," it creates discriminatory public discourse and provides ammunition for the dangerous and misinformed anti-refugee rhetoric that exists in Canada. It also confers a false element of criminality on those seeking refugee protection. In our June 2018 report, *Reclaiming Protection*, CPJ called for the STCA to be rescinded to restore the integrity of Canada's obligations. The Canadian Council for Refugees, Amnesty International and the Canadian Council of Churches remain in Federal Court challenging the designation of the U.S. as a safe third country for refugees.

LEARN MORE

Read CPJ's *Reclaiming Protection* report at cpj.ca/protect

Read CPJ's statement on Bill C-97 at cpj.ca/billc97

Amendments to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) in Bill C-97

In April 2019, just a week after celebrating Refugee Rights Day, the federal government stealthily scuttled the rights of refugees by burying drastic changes to IRPA in the omnibus budget bill. It was disheartening that less than a week after celebrating these momentous achievements, the government backpedalled from its commitment to uphold the rights of refugees.

Concealed in Bill C-97 is a new ground of ineligibility for refugee claimants who have previously made a claim in the U.S., U.K., Australia or New Zealand, deeming them ineligible to claim refugee status in Canada. Given the current political contention over irregular arrivals, it is clear that this provision is aimed at those whose refugee claims have been rejected in the United States and thus, wish to seek safety in Canada. CPJ issued a statement condemning this assault on refugee rights.

Racism & anti-immigrant rhetoric

There has been a sharp increase in anti-immigrant rhetoric openly across Canada. An EKOS poll shows that there has been a distinct increase in opposition to visible-minority immigration. That worrying trend must be called out for what

it is – racial discrimination.

Racism is an important factor that dictates views about immigration. Most of the border-crossers from the United States originate from Haiti and Nigeria, which are majority Black countries. Many were forced to flee terrorism or war in their home countries, and are now fleeing racist policies that have made the U.S. an unsafe place for them to live.

Support for anti-immigrant and white supremacist ideologies perpetuate hate-filled and uninformed dialogue about refugees, while also amplifying ignorance of the lived experiences of this vulnerable population. All refugees must be treated equally and equitably, no matter where they come from.

It's time for the electorate to hold leaders to account when their politics could jeopardize the safety of some of the world's most vulnerable. All of us must bear in mind that refugee rights are human rights and that Canada has a duty to uphold its moral, charter, and international obligations.

ASK FEDERAL CANDIDATES:

Would your government absorb the cost of travel for all refugees and waive repayment for those currently in debt to ensure equal and equitable treatment for all resettled refugees?

Will you commit to ensuring Canada removes restrictions placed on refugee claims originally made in other "safe" countries? And that Canada rescinds the STCA with the United States to ensure refugee claimants are protected and that their rights are being upheld?

How do you plan to ensure that the multiple and specific barriers faced by the most vulnerable refugees are understood and mitigated through policy? In what tangible ways will you address racism as it pertains to immigration and white supremacist ideology among Canadians? Would you support the development and implementation of an anti-racism strategy for refugee resettlement and claimant processes?

What role do you believe the Canadian government should play in resettling refugees from around the world? Do you believe we're doing enough?

"As long as there are wars and persecution, there will be refugees... Their story is one of resilience, perseverance and courage. Ours must be of solidarity, compassion and action."

– UN Secretary General, António Guterres

Debunking the Myths

MYTH

Refugees just want to take advantage of Canadians' generous social programs.

Refugees might pose a security risk to Canada.

Refugees jump the queue over other, more deserving immigrants.

For more common misconceptions and accompanying facts, visit cpj.ca/refugee-myths

FACT

Refugees are forced to flee their homes, with some leaving behind good jobs. Most are eager to work but may first have to learn a new language and wait to process their work permit, this can take many months.

Refugees flee from violence in search of safety. They go through very rigorous security checks before entering Canada.

Refugees are forced to flee their homes while economic immigrants have the ability to choose where and when to move. Canada recognizes this by having completely separate programs for refugees and economic immigrants. There is no queue.



Visit cpj.ca/election2019

As the 2019 election campaign unfolds, you'll find more in-depth analysis including:

- Additional articles on the issues covered in this bulletin
- Election resources from partner organizations
- Information on how to vote
- Tools on hosting a public debate

Support CPJ

For more than 50 years, we've been a strong voice for public justice in Canada, and your support is critical to help us continue our work. Whether it's an annual, quarterly, or monthly donation, we appreciate your gifts. Visit cpj.ca/support to donate.

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Citizens for Public Justice's mission is to promote public justice in Canada by shaping key public policy debates through research and analysis, publishing, and public dialogue. CPJ encourages citizens, leaders in society, and governments to support policies and practices which reflect God's call for love, justice, and the flourishing of creation.

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