

the Catalyst

Citizens for Public Justice

Spring 2025

Pub. Mail Agreement no: 40022119



2025 ELECTION BULLETIN: Public Justice at the Polls

The 2025 federal election arrives at a unique and challenging moment: in Canada and across the globe there are heightened concerns about political and economic disruption; human rights and equity-focused initiatives are under attack—all while we experience heightened polarization, the impacts of climate change, and increased costs of living.

How are we to respond to these challenges, and what opportunities for action does this election offer us?

While circumstances may vary with time, we believe the way forward can be found by asking good questions that get at the bigger picture and evaluating responses with evidence and the lived realities of those most impacted. How do we advance the common good, and realize God's vision of justice and flourishing for all creation? What must we do to ensure that everyone in this country has access to an adequate standard of living? How can we best live in right rela-

tion with all people and creation?

This Election Bulletin highlights key considerations and questions related to each of CPJ's main policy areas—poverty eradication in Canada, refugee and migrant rights, and climate justice. Our policy analysts have shared facts and framing to help cut through misinformation and partisan spin and to advance effective, equitable, and sustainable solutions to today's pressing challenges.

We have included specific questions to ask your local candidates, as well as tips for evaluating and understanding the responses you might receive. Candidates and parties who are faithfully engaged in working for public justice should be able to explain clearly why and how they will support policies and practices which, in their way, reflect God's call for love, justice, and the flourishing of all creation.

Among the core values that underlie CPJ's work are the belief that all people are made in the image of God, born with inherent

CITIZENS FOR
PUBLIC JUSTICE



CITOYENS POUR
UNE POLITIQUE JUSTE

dignity and worth, that we are called to live in respect and harmony with all creation, and that we are called to seek justice. Canadian governments, institutions, and citizens have treaty and human rights obligations that mirror these convictions and these, in turn, must be translated into public policy. Our commitment to CPJ members is that we will act as a hope-filled, prophetic voice for faith-inspired justice in Canadian public policy, and we will connect our members and followers with the resources and opportunities to do the same.

We encourage you to insist that the people and parties who want to lead Canada have a clear, measurable plan to work towards justice—not just a strategy for electoral victory.

Beyond learning about current public justice issues in Canada, we invite you to join us in pushing for these issues to remain front and centre during this election campaign—and beyond. Visit cpj.ca to subscribe to our newsletter, JusticeE-News, follow us on social media, and become a member to stay informed, equipped, and engaged as we work together for justice.

Addressing Poverty and Inequity in Canada



Nearly everyone in Canada has real concerns about their ability to provide for themselves and their loved ones. However, persistent trends show us that some people are more likely to experience poverty—and to experience it more deeply. Anyone looking to address poverty effectively in Canada must address the realities people are facing today and the underlying causes of systemic poverty and inequity.

In our recent history, we have been playing catch up when it comes to affordability and the right to an adequate standard of living. For example, from the 1980s until recently, successive federal governments divested from the creation of affordable housing—while

at the same time, multiple levels of government loosened regulations for landlords and developers that protected housing affordability. We are now losing affordable units faster than we can build new ones. Affordable, non-market housing makes up about 3.5 per cent of Canada's housing stock, as compared to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average of 7 per cent.¹ Trickle-down approaches focused on middle-class and market-based home-ownership will not address the financialization and inflation of the housing market, particularly for low-income renters who are the most impacted.

Beyond housing, wages and other conditions of work, income

supports, and investments in publicly funded, publicly delivered, and universally accessible programs and services have not kept pace with the rising costs of living that have come with deregulation and increased privatization and corporate concentration.

We know that providing people with adequate housing, health and social services, and income support provides the stability needed to thrive economically and socially. We know that these investments result in downstream net savings for governments and taxpayers and create decent jobs for workers. Upholding every person's right to an adequate standard of living is the right choice for everyone in society.



Does your party's platform include investments and regulatory controls to strengthen the social safety net for all people living in Canada? Will it bolster publicly funded, publicly delivered programs and services, while cracking down on private profiteering?

Evaluation tip: consider whether their response invokes any stereotypes or scapegoating.

Governments are responsible for creating the conditions in which all people can access an adequate standard of living, and they must use maximum available resources to do so.² This includes investments, regulatory controls, and then generation of revenue. How would you propose to advance progress towards Canada's treaty and human rights obligations, and create the conditions where all people can access an adequate standard of living?

Evaluation tip: consider whether their proposed solutions address underlying causes of poverty and inequity, or if they suggest a "trickle down" mentality focusing attention on the middle and upper classes. Do their proposed solutions address upstream causes to ensure downstream prevention and cost-savings?

What is your party's position on the following policies and programs?

- Expanding Canada's public healthcare and pharmacare programs.
- Increasing the percentage of affordable, non-profit rental housing units and investing in related necessary infrastructure.
- Working with provinces and territories to expand eligibility and adequacy of income supports, including the new federal Canada Disability Benefit.
- Generating needed revenue for public programs by undoing corporate tax cuts, closing tax loopholes, and implementing a wealth tax on wealth over \$10 million.

Evaluation tip: consider whether their response focuses on the specific topic you asked about, or if they shift the focus to a different policy or program.

Tackling Canada's Polycrisis through Climate Justice



This election is defined by a ‘polycrisis,’ where overlapping crises—an affordability crunch, looming trade threats from the United States, and the existential threat of the climate crisis—compound one another. To safeguard our sovereignty and take the desperately needed actions necessary for climate justice, we must embark on nation-building projects that boost the economy as well as do our fair share in reducing emissions, while ensuring no one is left behind.

Recently, climate policies have been scapegoated for exacerbating the affordability crisis—when, in reality, our overreliance on fossil fuels is to blame. While the carbon tax contributed less than 0.5 per cent to the more than 19 per cent increase in consumer prices since 2019,³ the mining, oil and gas

extraction sector’s skyrocketing profits alone accounted for about 25 cents per dollar of inflation.⁴ Canada’s federal government also provided at least \$28.5 billion in fossil fuel subsidies in 2024,⁵ despite an oil and gas industry that saw operating profits soar from \$6.6 billion in 2019 to \$66.6 billion in 2022—roughly a tenfold increase.⁶ Considering these companies not only benefited from price gouging at the pump, but were also Canada’s largest emitters responsible for nearly a third (31per cent) of Canada’s annual emissions in 2022,⁷ the rationale for them paying their fair share is clear.

Meanwhile, proposals to revive “zombie pipelines” threaten to divert public funds into projects with dubious feasibility, little impact on energy security within the next

four years, and primary benefits accruing to U.S. owners and oil conglomerates.

Conversely, investing in renewable energy—now the cheapest source of new power⁸—offers a promising path forward. Community-owned projects and Indigenous-led initiatives creating local jobs to work on nation-building projects like a smart, interconnected East-West energy grid can lower emissions, stabilize local energy markets, and build economic resilience. By expanding programs like the Greener Homes Grant and establishing a Youth Climate Corps to tackle both emissions and youth unemployment, Canada can seize this moment to multisolve: create decent jobs, cut emissions, and reduce costs for everyone.



Earlier this year, the consumer carbon tax was repealed. How will your party uphold and advance the “polluter pays” principle?

Evaluation tip: strong answers may cite reforms to make Canada’s approach to large industrial emitters (Output-Based Pricing System) more effective, or mention a strengthened emissions cap. Candidates could also highlight phasing out all remaining fossil fuel subsidies and directing the saved funds to climate solutions like renewable energy and green jobs. Be alert for responses that deflect responsibility to other levels of government or suggest that current efforts are sufficient.

How will your party ensure that the transition to a low-carbon economy genuinely leaves no one behind—particularly Indigenous communities, young people facing higher unemployment, and other equity-seeking groups who were historically marginalized and kept out of carbon-intensive sectors like women and racialized people?

Evaluation tip: good responses might talk about programs like a Youth Climate Corps, increased funding for the Greener Homes Grant and Oil to Heat Pump Affordability Program, and targeted training or supports for affected workers. Vague or generic promises indicate a lack of concrete plans.

What major ideas or nation-building projects is your party proposing to strengthen Canada’s economy while meeting our climate commitments?

Evaluation tip: look for mentions of green industrial projects like a high-speed rail corridor between Quebec City and Windsor, electrifying public transit fleets using Canada’s auto manufacturing capacity, and investments in community-owned renewables. Watch out for “zombie pipeline” proposals that rely on public funds without delivering timely or public benefits.

Protecting Refugee and Migrant Rights in Canada



Since the last federal election, protections for the rights of refugees and migrants have been dealt several concerning blows. Not only has public support for refugees decreased and policies that protect refugees been abandoned, but public opinion polls show that Canadians are turning the blame for everyday hardships onto refugees⁹—when, in reality, they are not causing these problems, but instead are especially vulnerable to them.

Last year, the Canadian government made changes that risked the lives of asylum seekers and refugees alike, pausing the private sponsorship program until 2026

and dramatically reducing the number of refugees that Canada will accept. This increases the already-lengthy wait times that refugees must spend in unsafe situations, often fearing for their own lives and those of their families. Increased wait times also delay the reunification of families and leave asylum seekers without support for longer periods of time.

When refugees and asylum seekers arrive here, Canada proves far too often not to be the safe haven they need. Of those seeking emergency shelter in churches, arenas and community centres in Canada's capital, more than half of them are asylum seek-

ers.¹⁰ In February 2024, a mother of four died¹¹ after waiting for six hours in the cold for a bed at the shelter. These are the direct results of policies that deny refugee claimants access to crucial and hard-won federal and provincial support. It also is caused by a lack of sustained federal funding for short-term and transitional housing for refugee claimants.

These are only a few examples of government policies that are directly harming refugees and migrants seeking safety, security, and opportunity in Canada. In this election, we can and must hold our leaders accountable and ask them to do better.



What measures will your party take to combat the harmful increase in discrimination and racism against migrants and refugees, and build inclusive communities across Canada?

Evaluation tip: Look for answers that not only acknowledge the rise in discrimination and racism but also provide concrete, actionable policies or programs aimed at combating these issues. Effective responses should address both systemic discrimination and grassroots efforts, such as anti-racism education, legal protections, community initiatives, or policies that foster inclusivity.

Housing access is a challenge for many Canadians. For refugee claimants, the barriers can be even more significant. What measures will your party take to ensure that refugee claimants in Canada have access to safe and affordable housing during the processing of their claims, and how will you address the barriers they face in securing stable housing?

Evaluation tip: Look for responses that consider both the immediate and long-term housing needs of refugee claimants, as well as practical solutions to reduce barriers such as discrimination, affordability, and eligibility for housing programs.

Canada has long been a signatory to international agreements that outline its obligations to support refugees and asylum seekers. What steps will your party take to ensure that Canada upholds its international commitments and provides the necessary support for refugees and refugee claimants, both in terms of legal protections and access to essential services such as housing, healthcare, and education?

Evaluation tip: Look for responses that demonstrate a clear understanding of Canada's international obligations and that propose specific and actionable steps to improve the support and protection of refugees, avoiding vague or overly generalized answers.

ENDNOTES

- 1 National Housing Council, Scaling-up the non-market housing sector in Canada. March 2025, <https://nhc-cn1.ca/publications/post/scaling-up-the-non-market-housing-sector->.
- 2 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Article 2, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-economic-social-and-cultural-rights>.
- 3 Institute for Research on Public Policy, “Does Emissions Pricing Hurt Affordability? Quantifying the Effects on Canadian Households,” December 13, 2024, <https://irpp.org/research-studies/does-emissions-pricing-hurt-affordability/>.
- 4 Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, “Your Inflation Dollars May Not Be Going Where You Think: Report - CCPA,” September 11, 2024, <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/news-research/your-inflation-dollars-may-not-be-going-where-you-think-report/>.
- 5 Environmental Defence, “The Running List of Federal Fossil Fuel Subsidies in Canada in 2024,” July 4, 2024, <https://environmentaldefence.ca/the-running-list-of-federal-fossil-fuel-subsidies-in-canada-in-2024/>.
- 6 Environment and Climate Change Canada, “Oil and Gas Greenhouse Gas Pollution Cap — Background to CGI Regulations,” Canada.ca, November 29, 2024, <https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/news/2024/11/oil-and-gas-greenhouse-gas-pollution-cap--backgrounder-to-cgi-regulations.html>.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Canadian Climate Institute, “Clean Electricity, Affordable Energy,” October 29, 2024, <https://climateinstitute.ca/reports/electricity/>.
- 9 The Environics Institute for Survey Research, Canadian public opinion about immigration and refugees, 2024, <https://www.environicsinstitute.org/projects/project-details/canadian-public-opinion-about-immigration-and-refugees---fall-2024>.
- 10 Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, “Hundreds of asylum seekers now living in makeshift shelters in Ottawa,” November 7, 2024, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/hundreds-of-asylum-seekers-now-living-in-makeshift-shelters-in-ottawa-1.7375539>.
- 11 Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, “An asylum seeker died after waiting hours for a shelter space. Advocates are demanding action,” February 23, 2024, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/asylum-seeker-death-mississauga-federal-funding-1.7123310>.

PUBLIC JUSTICE AFTER THE POLLS CLOSE



Citizens for Public Justice

334 MacLaren Street - Suite 200
Ottawa, Ontario K2P 0M6
Unceded Algonquin Territory
tel.: 613-232-0275
toll-free: 1-800-667-8046
email: cpj@cpj.ca
web: cpj.ca

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, civil society, and Canadian governments to support policies and practices which reflect God's call for love, justice, and the flourishing of creation.

the Catalyst, a publication of Citizens for Public Justice, reports on the intersections of public justice issues in Canada.

CPJ annual membership fee includes *the Catalyst*: suggested donation of \$50 (tax receipt provided.)

the Catalyst is also available electronically. Inquire at cpj@cpj.ca.

Spring 2025 (Volume 48, Number 1)
ISSN 0824-2062
Agreement no. 40022119
Editors: Scott Cooper and Michael Krakowiak
Cover photo: Swire Chin, Toronto

Three ways to work for justice beyond the election

Regardless of which party wins the federal election, our call to seek justice will remain. Enduring structural changes that honour God's calls for love, justice, and the flourishing of all creation require sustained effort in many different contexts—not just in elections.

We encourage you to stay engaged in the pursuit of public justice with CPJ beyond election day by:

- **Downloading CPJ's Advocacy Toolkit and sharing it with your community:** cpj.ca/cpjs-advocacy-toolkit

CPJ's Advocacy Toolkit is designed to help you influence the legislative process. It is a matter of knowing where the access points are, who to contact, and what to say. This guide provides tools for people with various levels of ability, with useful information about different methods of advocacy, when to use each, and how to voice concerns most effectively.

- **Requesting a workshop:** cpj.ca/request-a-cpj-workshop

Are you in a community that is interested in learning about public justice issues, or who wants to make an impact? CPJ offers a variety of customizable virtual and in-person workshops and discussion groups for churches, students (typically high school or above), and community or workplace groups. We will gladly work with you to customize a meaningful learning opportunity.

- **Becoming a CPJ member:** cpj.ca/join-cpj

For over 60 years, Citizens for Public Justice has been a member-based organization. It is the generosity and engagement of our members that enable us to bring rights-based research, education, and advocacy to communities across Canada and to parliamentarians on the Hill, working together for a more just and sustainable future. Becoming a CPJ member is a powerful way to amplify your voice, linking it to our collective advocacy actions, and by bolstering our policy messages to decision makers. By becoming a member, you are also sending a message to governments and civil society that you are invested and engaged — and that you expect better! Any financial donation qualifies you for membership for one year.