

# 52%

fifty-two percent coalition

**Women Vote! May 17, 2005**

**Will the candidate you vote for  
support women's equality?**

**This guide is meant to help you  
ask questions of your candidates,  
and find out where they stand on  
issues that affect women.**

**[www.sfss.ca/52percentcoalition](http://www.sfss.ca/52percentcoalition)**

**52%**

## Registering to Vote

Elections BC is the official government agency responsible for overseeing all provincial elections.

If you need to register to vote, confirm your registration, or if your name or address have changed since you last voted, you can contact Elections BC via telephone, internet, or in person to ensure you are on the voter's list.

As well, Elections BC will provide voters with information on how to cast an absentee or advance ballot in the event you are unable to be in your home riding on voting day. If you require assistance in order to cast a ballot, Elections BC will provide information on how to do so.

You may also register to vote on voting day, May 17th. You must provide two pieces of personal identification, showing, in combination, your name, current address and signature to register at the polls.

### **Elections BC Contact Information**

Phone: (250) 387-5305

Toll Free: 1-800-661-8683 / TTY 1-888-456-5448

Facsimile: (250) 387-3578

Toll Free Facsimile: 1-866-466-0665

1-800 Information Call Centre Hours:

8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Monday - Friday,

Saturday 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Email: [electionsbc@elections.bc.ca](mailto:electionsbc@elections.bc.ca)

Web site: [www.elections.bc.ca](http://www.elections.bc.ca)

**52%**

of respondents

## Primary and Secondary Education

The recent closure of 113 public schools in BC has been disruptive to many families and communities.

Community groups who formerly used schools outside of school hours, at little or no cost, now have to make other arrangements such as using one's home or renting space in other locations. Much of this work is done by women who now must bear the cost financially or with time.

Shutting schools for one day a week has caused parents to forego employment to stay home with their children, or else pay for additional child care. This is especially hard on single parent families, who are mostly headed by women. Shutting schools has also substantially reduced hours of school support personnel, such as child-care workers and aides. Again, most of these are women.

If elected are you prepared to restore schools to their central place in the community and keep all public schools open five days a week?

**52%**

of respondents

## Post-Secondary Education

Students in British Columbia have been hit with the highest tuition fee increases in Canada for the last three years in a row, and tuition fees on average have doubled for students in BC. This has resulted in decreased access to education.

In addition, the BC grant system was eliminated in 2004, leaving many women with thousands of dollars in additional student debt. The current government has committed to holding tuition fee increases to the rate of inflation, but this does not address the fact that tuition fees are already too high for many British Columbians.

Will you commit to a reduction in tuition fees for post secondary education?

Will you commit to ensuring that the up front, needs based grant system in BC is restored?

**52%**  
of the population

## Pharmacare

Pharmacare, BC's provincial plan for drugs and medical supplies, is supposed to help people who don't have an extended benefits plan, with their drug costs. The provincial government's so-called Fair Pharmacare plan eliminated universality and introduced income testing thereby shifting a further \$90 million in costs onto individuals.

Will your party, if it is elected to form government on May 17, reverse the changes to Pharmacare introduced over the last four years?

Will your party commit to establishing a truly universal and affordable drug plan for British Columbians within your first term in office?

## Privatization of Health Services

The provincial government is leading the charge in Canada to privatize health care. BC has seen a huge increase in private surgical and diagnostic clinics over the last decade and this has intensified over the last four years; as well the Abbotsford Hospital and an outpatient facility at the Vancouver General Hospital are being financed and operated as public-private partnerships.

Will your party, if it is elected to form government on May 17, commit to halting the privatization of our health care?

Will your party commit to either shutting down or making public the private surgical and diagnostic clinics in BC?



## Health Care Workers

87% of health care workers are women. Between 2002 and 2004, 8,000 unionized health care workers lost their jobs and thousands more had their wages rolled back by 15%. Pay equity, a hard won battle for women health care workers, was lost with private contractors.

Will your party, if it is elected to form government on May 17, commit to halting the contracting out of health care jobs to private contractors?

Will your party commit to restoring pay equity for health care workers?

## Medical Services Plan

The Medical Services Plan premium, a tax to access health care in BC, was increased by 50% by the provincial government on May 1, 2002. Only BC, Alberta and Ontario – 3 provinces – impose a health care tax on residents. At the same time that MSP premiums were increased the provincial government cut services covered by MSP, for example eye examinations, physiotherapy, and chiropractic care, among other services.

Will your party, if it is elected to form government on May 17, immediately rollback MSP premiums to the 2002 levels and restore coverage for the health services that were cut from the plan in the last four years?

Will your party eliminate the MSP premium within your first term in office?

**52%**  
The proposed solution

## Legal Aid

The BC Government cut the budget of the Legal Services Society by 40%. The majority of the 40% cut occurred in family law legal aid, poverty law, and immigration law. These are the areas of legal aid that are particularly needed by women. The documented result has been women trying to navigate a complex legal system on their own, appearing without lawyers in highly charged divorce and custody cases, and agreeing to settlements that are not in their own or their children's interests.

If you are elected, will you restore funding to the Legal Services Society, particularly targeting funding to the areas of legal aid needed by women?

Will you also ensure that women have access to legal aid for family law, poverty law and immigration law matters?

**52%**

Liberal Democrat Coalition

## Women's Centres

In 2001, the newly elected provincial government eliminated the first and only free-standing Ministry of Women's Equality in this country. As well, in April 2004, the provincial government cut the annual \$47,000 core grant to each of BC's 37 women's centres.

Will your party, if it is elected to form government on May 17, re-establish a free-standing Ministry of Women's Equality with a budget and staff levels that ensure the Ministry can have a meaningful impact on furthering women's equality and social just in this province?

Will your party immediately restore women's centres funding and as a starting point commit to providing each women's centre with a \$50,000 annual core grant linked to an annual increase at the rate of inflation?

## Reproductive Health Services

Current legislation in British Columbia guarantees women's access to abortion services. In addition, women accessing abortion services and health care providers are protected by the bubble zone law that establishes protected zones around clinics, and doctor's offices and homes, to prevent interference from anti-choice protesters.

If elected, will you protect the Access to Abortion Services Act and the Abortion Services Statutes Amendment Act?





52%

## Social Assistance

Since 2001, the BC government has cut social assistance rates and narrowed the eligibility rules (including time limits, a 3 week waiting period, a single parent is now deemed 'employable' when youngest child is 3 not 7, and a new requirement to live outside parents' home for 2 years before eligible for social assistance). These changes have had a devastating impact on the poorest women in B.C.

If you are elected, will you raise the rates to a level that will ensure that women receiving welfare can meet their basic needs for food, clothing and shelter?

Will you also eliminate those eligibility rules that bar the way to the poorest women receiving adequate social assistance?

## Adult Basic Education

In the last two years, some public post-secondary institutions have begun charging fees for adult basic education. This has barred many women from obtaining a high school education, particularly Aboriginal women, who are more likely than average to drop out of high school before completion. Many women must attend adult basic education as an access point for post-secondary education when returning to the workforce after raising children, or in order to better their career opportunities.

If elected, will you ensure an elimination of fees for adult basic education?

**52%**

of the population

## Primary and Secondary Education

In 2002, legislation removed class size and composition provisions from BC teachers' collective agreements. As a result, class sizes have increased and 2500 teachers (close to 70% of whom are women) have been laid off.

With increased class size, students have less one on one time with teachers. The removal of composition language has meant that teachers do not receive the required support and resources to integrate students with special needs. There has been more than a 17% reduction in Special Education Teachers. This has had a damaging effect on both the classroom teacher and all the students in the classroom.

If elected, will you advocate for returning class size and composition language to teachers' collective agreements?

52%

Living on a pension

## Senior Women

A significant number of single, unattached senior women in BC live below the poverty line. Furthermore, women's lower wage, and frequently part-time, part-year, and contractual work make it harder to save for retirement. Discrimination in employment against women with disabilities, Aboriginal women, and women of colour makes their ability to save for retirement next to impossible.

What will your government do to ensure that the needs of seniors are heard and addressed in a meaningful, ongoing way?

Will your government re-instate the provincial Seniors' Supplement to top up the income of very poor seniors, most of whom are women, until such time as the federal government increases the Guaranteed Income Supplement to acceptable levels?

## Childcare

The federal government has committed 5 billion dollars over the next 5 years to begin the creation of a national child care plan. Women all over BC will tell you that currently there are not enough spaces available for their children, and that fees are too expensive.

How will your government ensure that these federal dollars will be used in such a way that creates a real system of not-for-profit childcare in BC that is affordable, high quality and accessible to all families who need it?

The 52% Coalition is an ad hoc, non-partisan coalition of organizations and individuals committed to raising the profile of women's issues on the provincial election agenda in British Columbia.

This pamphlet covers a small number of the many issues concerning British Columbian women.

If you are seeking more information on any issue outlined in this pamphlet, please view our website for further information, and to link to different organisations advocating for women's equality and social justice issues. Contact information for participating organisations is available on the website as well.

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