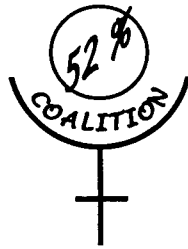


WOMEN: MAKE YOUR VOTE COUNT!



Will the party you vote for support women's equality issues?

BC PROVINCIAL ELECTION

The 52% Coalition is a diverse group of women's organizations, independent women and social justice groups in BC. The Coalition is making sure that women's equality and social justice issues are at the forefront of the 2001 BC Provincial Election. This pamphlet covers a small number of the many issues for women in BC. Please contact us for more information on these and other issues.

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POVERTY

Will the party you vote for restore or improve previous income assistance rates so that women and their families can receive livable amounts of money? What steps will they take to ensure women from marginalized groups have a voice in developing anti-poverty strategies that will address the impact on their lives?

Cuts to income assistance rates under the new BC Benefits Program means that those receiving assistance, especially single mothers and their children, will be pushed even further below the poverty line. When rates are too low, it results in greater hardship, and leads to poorer health and increased homelessness, among other ills.

A newborn girl child is more likely to grow up to be poor as an adult. Women form the majority of the poor in Canada. One in five Canadian women live in poverty -- that's 2.8 million women. Seventy percent of Canada's poor (3.5 million) are women and children, and tax cuts provide little or no relief to low income earners. Aboriginal women, women of colour, lesbians, women with disabilities, and immigrant women are more likely to be at the receiving end of racism, homophobia, ableism, sexism and poverty.

ABORIGINAL WOMEN & THE TREATY PROCESS

Will the party you vote for support self-determination for Aboriginal peoples? How will your party include all Aboriginal women living off-reserve and on-reserve in the treaty making process?

Aboriginal women lost their rights when they were displaced from their homelands. Additionally, some have been forced to leave their homes on reserves due to domestic violence and life-threatening situations. Urban and rural Aboriginal women are excluded from the treaty-making process. The 1998 Standing Committee Report regarding Aboriginal women's exclusion from the treaty process recommended that all Aboriginal women be meaningfully involved in the treaty making process. Unfortunately, the lack of response to the Report has reinforced the furthered exclusion of gender analysis within the treaty process.

EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION

Will the party you vote for commit to pro-active pay equity and work towards creating full-time, quality jobs for women in public and private sectors? Will they protect post-secondary education as a publicly funded institution, which does not shift the burden of cost onto individual users through higher user fees and greater student debt?

Women perform 2/3 of unpaid work in Canada, worth up to \$319 billion to the economy. Women still earn about 70% of men's wages and over 60% of minimum wage earners are women. It's been shown that allowing companies to voluntarily introduce pay equity into the workplace doesn't work.

Participation rates of women in BC colleges and universities have improved in recent years; however, women seeking further education continue to face significant barriers. Women continue to find summer employment in lower paying sectors, and often study part time or take time off due to financial and family reasons. High education costs take a greater toll on women. A decline in public support for post-secondary education is a loss of equality for women.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN & GIRLS

Will the party you vote for commit to expanding funding for front-line, independent, feminist women's groups who are working to end violence against women?

B.C. has the highest rate of violence against women and girls in the country. Fifty-nine percent of women 16 years and older have experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual violence. A number of recent cases where women in B.C. have been murdered as part of widespread violence against women and girls call out for the need for the government to deal proactively with this issue.

CHILDCARE

Will the party you vote for create and implement a universal child-care program in BC?

Numerous studies have shown that access to affordable and appropriate childcare is essential to the economic and social well being of Canadian families. Regulated daycare spaces that are affordable will allow women to work without going broke.

LEGAL SERVICES FUNDING

Will the party you vote to restore funding levels for the Legal Services Society of BC so that women, especially in rural BC, may have access to equal protection under the law, particularly in relation to Family Law matters?

Continuous funding cuts since 1994 to the Legal Services Society in BC have drastically reduced women's access to the protection of law. Concurrently, the government has ignored the levels of unreliable, inadequate and inconsistent legal aid funding especially in rural areas. It is particularly vital for women in rural BC who are trying to leave violent men to have access to legal advice pertaining to: restraining orders, custody and access, and property settlements in both rural and urban areas. The lack of legal aid lawyers for women in rural BC has meant a revolving door of representatives who cannot adequately compete with well-paid lawyers representing ex-spouses with deep pockets.

WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES & ACCESS

Will the party you vote for ensure access for women with disabilities within public and private institutions?

Health care cuts, specifically to continuing care, are having a particularly devastating effect on women with disabilities. These cuts have resulted in increased isolation, increased risk of neglect and abuse, and put women who are presently at most risk for violence in further danger. In addition, the lack of resources and support systems for people with disabilities continues to decrease access to legal, economic, social and political institutions.

WOMEN & IMMIGRATION

How much of a priority does the party you will vote for place on the settlement issues immigrant women face? How will they ensure that employers and professional associations credit immigrants by recognizing valuable work experience and education acquired in other countries?

The number of affordable and appropriate ESL and job training programs for immigrant women falls critically short of meeting the demand. Sponsored women are very vulnerable to abuse from partners and employers. Immigrant women, largely women of colour, experience deskilling due to the lack of recognition of

their professional credentials in Canada. This leads to further poverty, discrimination and disenfranchisement faced by immigrant women in this province.

WOMEN & THE ENVIRONMENT

If elected, will the party you vote for enact and enforce comprehensive and effective environmental legislation?

Inaction on environmental pollution is one of the primary causes of breast cancer and increased death from respiratory illnesses for women. Access to clean water and air, a ban on the use of toxins and effective measures to prevent environmental degradation are gender issues that affect women's safety and well-being.

HOUSING

Given there are long waiting lists for social housing, how many new units of affordable housing will the party you vote for commit to building?

The lack of appropriate, affordable rental housing is a significant contributor to women's poverty – whether she is a working single mom, or a woman living on a fixed income. Seniors and single mothers are the majority of residents in non-profit, co-op, and rental housing, reflecting women's economic status. Yet, few non-profit co-op units and affordable rental units are being built.

WOMEN & HEALTH

Will the party you vote for eliminate the Medical Services Plan premium charged to British Columbians to access health care?

Will they work with the federal government to develop a national pharmacare program, and to implement standards of the Canadian Health Act (publicly-funded/operated, universal, comprehensive, portable, accessible)?

Will they commit to maintaining funding for existing free-standing non-profit abortion clinics to all regions in BC?

BC is one of only two provinces in Canada which charges its residents a user fee to access health care; this is a violation of the Canada Health Act. Further, women are forced to pay privately for both drugs, which are not covered under pharmacare, and holistic remedies. This detrimentally affects

women's physical, mental and emotional well-being as well as their ability to care for themselves and their families.

While access to abortion services has improved over the last few years, this expansion of access has occurred primarily in the Lower Mainland. Unfortunately, it continues to be the case that many women in the northern and interior parts of BC must travel out of their communities to access abortion services.

LESBIAN & TRANSGENDERED RIGHTS

Will the party you vote for continue to defend the inclusion of "sexual orientation" in the BC Human Rights Act and ensure funding specifically for: lesbians / gay women and bisexual women in our communities? Will they commit to providing funding, resources and centres specifically to meet the needs of the transgendered community?

Although the BC Human Rights Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of "sexual orientation", lesbians/gay women, and bisexual women are still experiencing many forms of discrimination that urgently need addressing. The lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgendered communities continue to demand recognition of their full, equal rights as individuals and as partners, particularly in areas of adoption, access to employment benefits, and the right to make decisions regarding the health care and inheritance of their partners.

PENSIONS

What is the policy of the party you will vote for on replacing the public pension system with a private scheme (one that relies on individual savings and the purchase of RRSP's)?

Recent changes to the BC Pension Benefit Standards Act made attempts to ensure that elderly women are more financially independent. However, 49% of single, unattached senior women live below the poverty line. Furthermore, women's lower wage, and more frequent part-time, part-year, and contractual work make it harder for women 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.