

# Community Dispatch

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## Canada Votes! – Women's Economic Security



"Just one question..."

This publication is intended to help you engage with local candidates in the federal election on October 14, 2008. It's all about social issues that impact your community; questions that matter to you; and the role that the federal government can choose to take in addressing them.

Questions raise issues. Questions require candidates to develop a clear position on where they stand. In this document, we cover thirteen social issues affecting communities nationwide today, provide sample questions you can ask your candidates, and include links to more information. By getting involved, you help shape the kind of community in which you live – all it takes is just **one question**.

## Women's Economic Security

Women in Canada continue to struggle for economic security. Equity in the labour market and decreased social spending are two issues that are challenging the quality of life of women in Canada. The federal government can choose to pay attention to, and adjust, pay equity laws and social

spending in order to ensure equality and economic security for women in Canada.

Of women under 65 living on their own, 35% live in poverty. Cuts to social spending, changes to the Employment Insurance (EI) benefits, and ineffective pay equity laws have all had serious impacts on the economic status of women, especially on single parents. Many women with children are living in poverty because women are earning less than men and child care costs are very high. In 2004, 38% of women tax filers earned too little to pay income tax. The \$100 per month taxable childcare benefit introduced in 2006 does not do much to improve the situation of those who do not make enough to qualify.

Working women are missing out on EI benefits; only one third are eligible for benefits in the event of unemployment. Thirty-three percent of unemployed women received regular benefits in 2001 compared with 44% of unemployed men. This difference is mostly due to restrictions that prevent part-time, seasonal and low-income workers from collecting EI. Women who work part-time because they have children at home are put in a very precarious position.

Women in Canada are still not being treated equally in the labour market. Women working full-time in Canada earned \$71 for every \$100 earned by men working full-time in 2003. Yet the federal government chose not to introduce legislation to strengthen pay equity laws, despite the recommendations of the Pay Equity Task Force.

The federal government can choose to make changes to pay equity laws to ensure that women get equal pay for equal work. They

can also choose to keep, and increase social supports that will help to keep women employed, and, in the event of unemployment, keep them from falling below the poverty line. We can choose to elect a government that is committed to equality, equity, and economic security for women.

**For more information:**

Government of Canada's Pay Equity Task Force  
[www.justice.gc.ca/payequal.html](http://www.justice.gc.ca/payequal.html)

Canadian Labour Congress  
[canadianlabour.ca/index.php/pay\\_equality](http://canadianlabour.ca/index.php/pay_equality)

Women's Legal Education and Action Fund  
[www.leaf.ca](http://www.leaf.ca)

**Sources**

Statistics Canada. 2005. *Women in Canada: A Gender Based Statistical Report*, Fifth Edition.

Government of Canada Pay Equity Task Force website.  
<http://www.justice.gc.ca/payequal.html>

Jackson, A. 2003. *Is Work Working for Women?* Canadian Labour Congress: Research Paper 22.

A Commitment to Training and Employment for Women. 2007 Dec. *Women in the Canadian Labour Market*.  
[http://www.actew.org/projects/pwpsite/snapshots/canadian\\_women.html](http://www.actew.org/projects/pwpsite/snapshots/canadian_women.html)

## Women's Economic Security: Key Points & Questions

Cuts to social spending have had a negative impact on women, especially single parent households.

Thirty-five percent of women under 65 living on their own live in poverty.

Tax breaks are not benefiting those most in need, and are leaving too little for future public investment.

**Would your party introduce new pay equity legislation to ensure that women are paid the same as men for work of equal value?**

**What would your party do to ensure that women who pay into the EI system are eligible for benefits if they lose their jobs?**

**What would your party do to ensure that women who need access to skills training can get it regardless of whether or not they're eligible for EI?**

*Canada Votes Papers 2008 is a pan-Canadian collaboration between SPARC BC, Community Social Planning Council of Toronto, Community Development Halton, Human Development Council St. John, and Canadian Council on Social Development.* Social planning organizations across the country are helping to strengthen communities and work on social justice issues. We also recognize the need to work together around key issues affecting our communities. We have come together to provide this publication on the federal election because we believe that democracy works best when citizens engage in dialogue on important issues.

*Canada Votes papers outline key social issues and related questions that are important in this election. Asking questions is a way to make sure these issues are on the public agenda. By reading this publication and passing it on, by asking questions and talking about the issues, and especially by voting on October 14, 2008, you can help shape the kind of community in which you want to live.*

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