



Election 2004 : Women's Equality and Party Platforms

ISSUE	NDP	LIBERAL	CONSERVATIVE
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The positions of the three major parties on issues of special concern to women are summarized in the following chart. Please note:

- there are no specific commitments to women's equality, nor to women in general, found in the Liberal policy platform;
- there is no commitment to women's equality specifically, nor to women or equality rights in Canada generally, in the Conservative policy platform. In fact, there is a dearth of specific commitments within this platform in relation to social policy issues in general; and
- the New Democratic Party policy platform contains two full sections that speak directly to women's equality issues: "Respecting Women's Equality" and "Respecting Equality." Additionally, the NDP has set out policies inclusive of women, persons with disabilities, persons of colour, gays and lesbians, and new Canadians.

Affordable Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10-year national housing program to build 200,000 affordable and co-op housing units (including homes for seniors, people with disabilities and students) • renovate 100,000 existing units • provide rent supplements to 40,000 low-income tenants, many of whom are single mothers who pay a large percentage of their income in rent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no commitment to a target number of new housing units annually • \$1 to \$1.5 billion over five years to enhance existing housing programs • support for the idea of a non-profit, national housing foundation called Housing Works • increased funding for the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program to ensure that people with disabilities can live independently in their own home or in an adapted residence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Policy
Reproductive Choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure women have access to safe, therapeutic abortion services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Policy
Violence Against Women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide stable funding for women's centres and educational programs designed to combat sexism and violence against women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Policy



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Pensions and Seniors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• improve access to the CPP/QPP for women by expanding the current “drop-out” provision for child care to include other unpaid care, such as that for senior family members• 10 additional commitments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• an increase in the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) to reflect the fact that wage growth has exceeded inflation; when fully implemented, the GIS will have increased by 7% over and above inflation• the creation of a Secretariat for Seniors to co-ordinate policies affecting seniors• an increase in the RRSP contribution limit to \$18,000 in 2006 from \$13,500	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• create a Lifetime Registered Savings Plan with contributions up to \$5,000 a year allowed• contributions are not tax deductible, but neither are withdrawals
Sports and Physical Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• dedicate some of the recent increases in Sport Canada funding to increasing access to programs for women, persons with disabilities, and Aboriginal Canadians	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• provide funding to sport organizations like the Aboriginal Sport Circle, Canadian Paralympic Committee, Special Olympics, and the Canadian Advancement of Women and Sport	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• commit 1% of health funding for the promotion of physical activity• this money will also support the Canadian Olympic Agency and amateur athletes and activities for school age children



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Child Care and Family Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• provide stable, long-term, federal funds to create an additional 200,000 high-quality, affordable, publicly funded child care spaces within four years• develop a strategy with provinces and territories to ensure universal, high-quality early childhood education and care in every region of Canada within a decade• increase the Child Tax Benefit to \$4,900 per child and alter the program to permit Canada's poorest families, who don't pay tax, to qualify• create two new national holidays, one in February and one in June, to allow parents to spend more time with their children, work towards a shorter work week, longer paid holidays, and earlier and flexible retirement options, and encourage job-sharing programs to enable families to spend more time together	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• a phased-in contribution of \$5 billion in new money over five years to establish <i>Foundations: The National Early Learning and Child Care Program</i>• the principles for the <i>Foundations</i> program will be enshrined in legislation: quality, universality, accessibility, and developmental• provincial programs will have to meet these principles in order to receive federal funding• increase resources for the RCMP to combat the sexual exploitation of children through the Internet	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No Policy



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Anti-Racism	<ul style="list-style-type: none">introduce legislation that would ban racial profiling from federal departments and jurisdictions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">implement <i>A Canada for All: Canada's Action Plan Against Racism</i>, a plan to integrate new Canadians, remove race-related barriers in the workplace; consult racial and ethnic groups on the development of public policy; improve the capacity of police forces to serve diverse communities, and improve data collection on hate crimes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">No Policy
Income and Taxation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">ensure all Canadian who make less than \$15,000 a year pay no federal income taxremove the GST from family essentials, starting with children's clothing and medicine, school supplies, books, magazines, women's hygiene products, and medical equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">No Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">raise thresholds for all tax bracketsphase out the 22% bracket on income between \$35K and \$70K\$2,000 per child tax deduction, phased in over four years — does not say if the deduction is refundable\$6 billion reduction in business taxesreduce capital gains taxincrease the GST Tax Credit by 25%eliminate the GST portion



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Pay Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• introduce proactive and effective pay equity laws, including timely, efficient, non-bureaucratic ways to help workers and employers resolve disputes• funding for education, training, information, and enforcement• work towards applying pay equity law to all employers in the federal sector regardless of size and to all employees regardless of employment status (full-time, part-time, temporary, casual, contract)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No Policy



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Employment Insurance (EI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• reflect changes in the workplace and help women qualify for maternity benefits by extending coverage to dependent contract workers; eliminate the limits on maternity or parental leave that are based on the use of sickness benefits• ease EI eligibility requirements to factor in a worker's years in the workforce, a measure that would help more women qualify and reflect a worker's true attachment to the workforce• reduce the hours required to qualify for EI to 350 and restore benefits to two-thirds of eligible salary to provide a greater buffer between the loss of a pay cheque and poverty• five additional EI commitments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• change EI to correct anomalies that have become apparent as a result of previous changes to eligibility and benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• reduce EI premiums to eliminate the surplus in the EI Account• EI contributions to pay for benefits only, not other expenditures



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Health Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduce the cost of drugs with a national bulk-buying program, introduce a pharmacare program • increase investment in facilities and services for First Nations communities • implement public or non-profit-based home care throughout Canada, based on the successful model in Manitoba; care in hospitals is \$9,000 to \$16,000 more expensive per patient per year than community-based home care, which plans for an aging population while relieving the burden on families, especially on women, who disproportionately care for elderly relatives • establish a Royal Commission to examine bold means to protect medicare's sustainability • work with provinces and territories to establish more community-based clinics (continued) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$3 billion in new money (in addition to the \$37 billion committed under the Health Accord) which meets the funding standard set by the Romanow Commission and a commitment to predictable and long-term federal funding • a <i>National Waiting Times Reduction Strategy</i> with a commitment of \$4 billion to achieve major reductions in wait times in the areas of cancer, heart, diagnostic imaging, joint replacements, and vision • work with provinces to overcome shortages of medical professionals: increase medical spaces — faster accreditation for immigrants with medical credentials, 'top-up' training and clinical experience for 1,000 foreign-trained medical professionals — use of nurse practitioners • national home care program for post-acute patients and coverage for drugs and rehab services, palliative home care services, and mental health management and intervention services (continued) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • build on the 2003 <i>Health Accord on Health Renewal</i>, including the \$37 billion in funding, provided that funding is used to meet the goals of the Accord • the federal government to assume responsibility for a catastrophic drug plan at a cost of \$2.8 billion • support the creation of a Chief Public Health Officer and the Liberal's Canadian Public Health Agency • deregulate drug approval times to bring them in line with the US average



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Health Care (cont'd)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • implement Romanow's solution of fair, predictable, federal funding for public health care; pay 25% of provincial health care costs within two years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$2 billion over five years for provinces providing an agreed to minimum basket of home care services • work with the provinces to design a prescription drug plan to provide all Canadians with basic coverage • \$1 billion over five years to develop a comprehensive strategy to increase support for 'informal' care givers 	
Disability Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work with provincial/territorial governments to set up a single income support mechanism for persons with disabilities, including a system of national disability supports • five additional recommendations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a doubling to \$10,000 of the medical and disability-related expenses that can be claimed by a caregiver on behalf of a dependent relative • See housing section 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • double the size of the caregivers' tax credit to \$7,000 in allowable expenses
Diversity and Immigration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • allow immigration levels to rise to the equivalent of 1% of the population • eliminate the head tax • eight additional commitments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • speed up the immigration process • reduce the backlog of existing applications and work with provinces on integrating immigrants into Canadian society with support systems — language training and credentials recognition • reform and streamline the refugee determination system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure speedier recognition of foreign credentials and prior work experience



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Gays, Bisexuals, Lesbians, and Transvestites' Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• recognize the equality of loving adult partnerships by extending civil marriage equality to same-sex couples, while respecting each religion's right to determine definition of marriage• abandon Paul Martin's appeal of the court decision extending retroactive CPP survivor benefits for same-sex couples• follow the lead of the NWT and amend the <i>Canada Human Rights Act</i> to ensure a person cannot be discriminated against because of gender identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• respecting diversity means respecting the basic human rights of all, including gays and lesbians• will not obligate religious institutions to conduct marriage ceremonies which contradict their beliefs• will not invoke the "notwithstanding clause" of the Charter to deny equal rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• withdraw the current definition of marriage reference before the Supreme Court and allow a free vote in the House of Commons• no clear statement as to whether the Party would use the 'notwithstanding clause' to deny Charter rights



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Aboriginal Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recognize Aboriginal self-governance as a fundamental component of a modern federal state • convene a First Ministers' conference to discuss the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples; representatives of Aboriginal Peoples would attend the conference as full partners • 14 other commitments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide incentives to create comprehensive K-12 First Nations Education systems; develop alternative delivery methods to increase enrollment in post-secondary education; improve access to capital through financial vehicles such as venture capital funds • establish an Aboriginal Health Transition Fund to improve access to quality health services • committed funding of \$600 million to improve the quality of water and waste water treatment in First Nations communities, and a guarantee of clean water and adequate housing by 2008 • work with provinces, territories and municipalities to provide affordable off-reserve housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop a property regime on reserves to allow individual property ownership • develop a matrimonial property code to protect spouses and children • support the principle of allowing parents to choose which schooling they want for their children — funding to follow students

Additional analysis on the positions of the parties on women can be found at the "Vote for Equality" Web site developed by the Disabled Women's Network (DAWN): <http://dawn.thot.net/election2004/gba.htm>

Information on the issues of child care, pay equity, pensions, EI, and health care as they relate to women is available at: <http://www.betterchoice.ca>

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