



2015

Federal Election Resource



The federal election is an opportunity for Canadians to shape the future of our country by evaluating political issues, engaging in public policy conversations, and choosing those who will lead us. As citizens, we have the chance to express the values by which we believe our nation should be governed, and to call on those who run for public office to clearly articulate their convictions on significant issues.

An election is also an occasion for Christians to consider the political implications of our faith—a time to discern with humility how Jesus' call to love our neighbours may be reflected in the public good.

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Canada believes that governments should maintain a just and peaceful social order, and that Christians individually, and churches collectively, have a responsibility to help governments be faithful to this calling. This is why MCC speaks to the federal government, responding to requests from our partners in Canada and around the world in order to advance justice and peace through governmental action.

This resource is structured around a few key issues that are important to MCC and its partners. We hope that you will raise such issues with candidates in your electoral riding.

We also invite you to use this resource to guide Sunday school class or small group discussions, and to share it with family members, friends, and colleagues. Additionally, we invite you to pray for wisdom—for candidates as they campaign, for yourself as you prepare to vote, and for those who will be chosen to provide leadership for our country.

Check the [MCC Ottawa Office Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) pages for further questions and issues over the duration of the election campaign.

Questions for candidates in the federal election

Drawing on the perspectives of our partners in Canada and abroad, MCC offers the following issues and questions for your consideration during this election.

Responding to the TRC's "Calls to Action"

On June 2, 2015, during a ceremony where the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) released a [summary report](#) of its findings, Chairperson Justice Murray Sinclair stated, "My fellow commissioners and I are convinced that for healing and reconciliation to happen in this country, such work must be done as a high—and, in some cases, urgent—priority."

In order to redress the legacy of residential schools and to advance the process of reconciliation with Canada's Indigenous Peoples, the Commission issued 94 "Calls to Action." Many of these recommendations are directed at the federal government, including full adoption and implementation of the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) as the framework for reconciliation, and the appointment of a public inquiry into the causes of, and remedies for, the disproportionate violence perpetrated against Aboriginal women and girls. Since 1980, more than 1,181 Indigenous women and girls have been murdered or are reported missing.

Questions for candidates:

- **Sweeping changes are required in the journey towards reconciliation with Canada's Indigenous Peoples. How will you and your party address the "Calls to Action" outlined in the final report of the TRC?**
- **How should Canada respond to, and develop a clear action plan to address, the continuing reality of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls?**

Increasing Canada's aid budget and investing in small-scale farmers

This fall, the new [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) are to be finalized by the international community. Governments have an important role to play in helping to create a more sustainable life for others by investing in foreign aid. But Canada's aid

budget has fallen in recent years and is now at 0.24 percent of gross national income (GNI), well below the UN target of 0.7 percent.

Moreover, despite Canada's commitment to reducing global hunger by helping small-scale farmers in developing countries, Canada's aid budget for agricultural development has been declining. Funding in 2013 was 25 percent less than the average funding for the years 2009–2011.

Investing in agriculture in developing countries, especially small-scale agriculture, is effective in reducing poverty and thereby overcoming hunger. The right kind of investment empowers women, enables families to improve nutrition, equips farmers to adapt to a changing climate, and contributes to sustained economic growth.

Questions for candidates:

- **How will you work to reverse the overall decline in Canada's aid budget in order to help developing countries overcome poverty and to promote sustainable development?**
- **Would you commit to prioritizing funding for small-scale farmers in developing countries? What actions would you take?**

Responding to conflict in the Middle East

Canada is once again at war, participating in a U.S.-led military campaign to “halt and degrade” the advances of the Islamic State in the Middle East. “Operation Impact,” Canada's contribution to this campaign, began in October 2014 as a six-month bombing mission in Iraq. In April of 2015, [Operation Impact](#) was extended for a year and the mission expanded to include airstrikes in Syria.

The government has justified this military mission as safeguarding Canadians from terrorism, and protecting civilians and minorities in Iraq and Syria. However, experts argue that military intervention fails to address the root causes of such violence, does not advance prospects for long-term peace, and may actually contribute to the rise of further violent extremism.

Experts have advanced suggestions for non-military responses to terrorism: end the flow of weapons and money to all involved parties; invest in socio-economic development in areas where extremist groups are active; support civil society groups working at nonviolent resistance; and encourage regional diplomacy that includes all parties, even extremist groups.

Questions for candidates:

- **What can Canada do to support sustainable peace in the Middle East, particularly in Syria and Iraq, and counter extremist ideology at its roots?**
- **Will you and your party increase Canada's humanitarian assistance for those impacted and displaced by conflict in the Middle East?**

Addressing the global refugee crisis

According to the [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees](#) (UNHCR), by the end of 2014 there were 59.5 million individuals forcibly displaced worldwide due to conflict and unlivable or unsafe circumstances. This staggering number includes 14.4 million refugees (displaced *from* their countries), 5.1 million stateless peoples (mainly Palestinians under UN mandate), 38.2 million internally displaced peoples (displaced *within* their countries), and 1.8 million asylum seekers (not formally recognized as refugees but seeking asylum).

Canada has a long history of sponsoring refugees in times of crisis. Most notably, from 1975–1980, 70,000 refugees from Southeast Asia were resettled here. Since then, fewer refugees have been welcomed into Canada—a trend that began in the 1980s. The government recently promised to welcome up to 10,000 Syrian and 3,000 Iraqi refugees over the next three years. While this is a positive step, the details have not yet been worked out. Moreover, it is important that the focus on Syria and Iraq not divert resources from other vulnerable refugee populations at risk.

Most importantly, as the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Antonio Guterres, has urged, countries must not only take in more refugees but invest in addressing the root causes of forced migration and displacement.

Questions for candidates:

- **How can Canada increase support for, and protect, refugee populations both at home and abroad?**
 - **What role can Canada play in helping address the root causes of forced migration and displacement?**
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MCC Canada works in cooperation with other coalition partners to enrich and strengthen their work and to advance MCC's mission.

For questions related to Indigenous rights, please see the website of KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives: kairoscanada.org

For questions related to international development, please see "We Can Do Better," a Campaign of Canadian Council for International Cooperation: wecandobetter2015.ca

For questions related to investing in small-scale agriculture, please see the website of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank: foodgrainsbank.ca

For questions related to the peaceful resolution of conflict, please see the website of Project Ploughshares: ploughshares.ca

For questions related to refugee issues, please see the website of the Canadian Council for Refugees: ccrweb.ca



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