A close-up photograph of a hand holding a ballot paper, overlaid with a purple semi-transparent rectangle containing the title text. The background is a solid purple color with white geometric lines.

Canadian Federal *Election* **Guide**

Why Your Vote Matters

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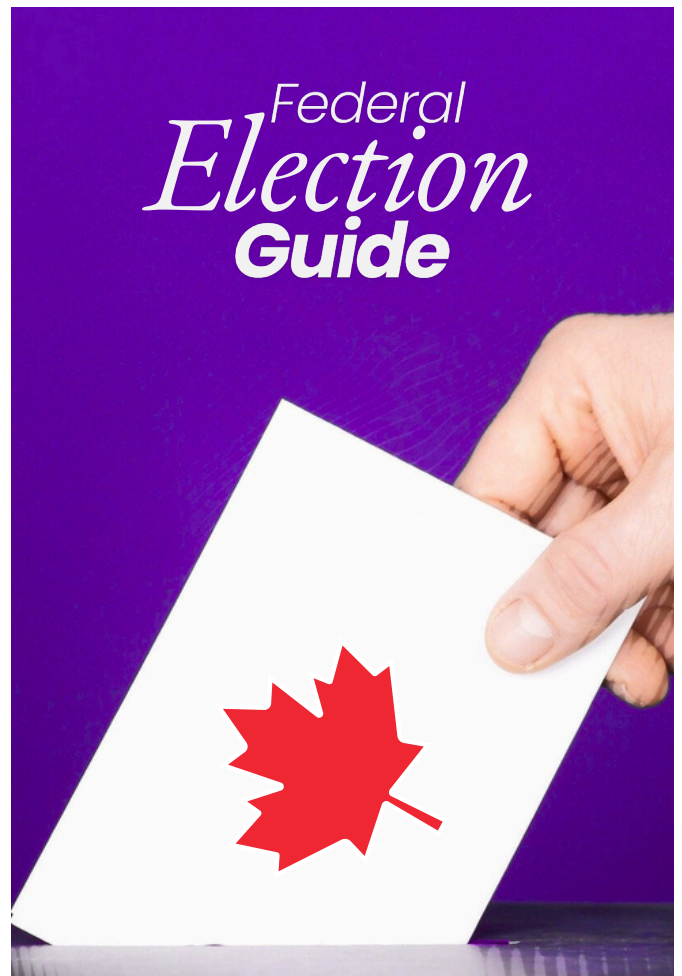
Catholic Social Teaching calls us to uphold human dignity, seek the common good, and advocate for the most vulnerable in our society. As faithful citizens, we have a moral responsibility to participate in the democratic process and elect leaders who will promote justice, peace, and care for those in need. Pope Francis reminds us, "The dignity of each human person and the pursuit of the common good are concerns which ought to shape all economic policies." (Evangelii Gaudium, #203).

At this time of political and economic instability, your vote is essential to creating the Canada we need. A Canada that seeks economic, social, and environmental balance while advocating for equity, dignity, and justice. Stand up for the vulnerable and demand policies that support everyone, those in Canada and across the world.

Catholic Social Teaching

Catholic Social Teaching is an essential part of the Catholic faith, rooted in the words of Jesus and gospel values and further clarified in Church documents. In 1891, Pope Leo XIII wrote *Rerum Novarum*, a reminder to Catholics that people—and not money—are the focus of God's creation. Since then, Popes, ecumenical Church councils such as Vatican II, the world's Catholic Bishops, and the Tradition of the Church have reinforced the need to strive toward justice. These values can be summarized as follows:

- Respect the **human dignity** and realize the human rights of all people
- Commit to community and the **common good**



- Act in **solidarity** with others, recognizing our interconnection and interdependence
- Prioritize the needs of **the poor and vulnerable**
- Protect and cherish **ecological diversity** and the sustaining of life on earth
- Assure that **everyone participates in civic life**
- Ensure **State responsibility** to promote human dignity, protect human rights, and develop the common good at the lowest level of government
- The **economy must serve people and planet:** ensure the rights of workers and care for the planet
- **Citizens claim their rights** and carry out their societal responsibilities
- Promote **peace** through **mutual respect** of peoples and nations.

“We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature.”

-Laudato Si (#139)



How Do You Discern Your Vote?

As Catholics, we are called to bring the voice of our faith to the public sphere. In a tumultuous political climate, how do we do that? Recall the gospel mandate to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, care for the ill and imprisoned (Matthew 25: 31-46) and take some time for thoughtful reflection and prayer as you consider how you might vote. The reflection below offers a way you might do this.

Political Engagement Reflection

In my place of prayer, I take some time to ponder the principles of Catholic Social Teaching. These principles offer a guide for my reflection on the kind of country in which I desire to live and call me to actively create and shape the future of Canada through my participation in the federal election.

First, I consider what influences my vote. What sources of information do I turn to? What attracts me or repels me? What biases or assumptions might be directing the way I vote? I consider the statistical data on social issues provided in this document.

Second, I consider the principles of Catholic Social Teaching. I reflect on the following questions:

- How are these principles embodied by what I understand to be the platform and attitude/behaviour of each candidate in my riding?
- Do the candidates place a special emphasis on the dignity of human life?
- Do they demonstrate compassionate concern for the needs of the poor?
- Are their proposed policies oriented toward the common good or aimed at special interest groups?
- Are candidates committed to real action on issues or mere rhetoric?
- Do they demonstrate a working style that embodies solidarity, subsidiarity, and participation?
- What is their stance on international cooperation?
- What are their proposed actions around the stewardship of the environment?
- What is their commitment to Truth and Reconciliation with Indigenous peoples?

Third, I consider my own desires for the kind of country in which I desire to live.

- What is my vision for Canada?
- Is my vision reflected in any of the platforms of candidates in my riding?
- What is the best way for me to proceed with my vote?

I take my voting decision into conversation with God. I talk to God about the kind of Canada I think we need and I listen for God's response. If I do not receive a sense of clarity about my vote, I consider speaking to trusted others who can help me discern or seek additional sources of information. I then return to prayer to seek clarity and confirmation of the way forward.

Respect for Life and Human Dignity

- Nearly one quarter (24.9%) of Canadians could be 65 years of age or older by 2052 (Statistics Canada, 2022a). Those aged 85 and over are among the fastest-growing age groups (Statistics Canada, 2022b).
- Challenges in accessing services, limited alternative care, including home care, as well as a lack of age-friendly environments, prevent older persons from experiencing a smooth continuum of care in a way that meets their physical, mental, social, psychological, and spiritual health and well-being (Deloitte Canada, 2020).

CONSIDER THIS: Will your candidate advocate for policies that ensure financial stability, accessible healthcare, and social support programs for aging in place for older Canadians?

- 1 in 6 people with disabilities lived in poverty in 2022, representing 1,521,000 people, while 1 in 3 people with disabilities living alone lived in poverty. From 2013 to 2022, the poverty rate for people with disabilities was, on average, twice as high as the poverty rate for people without disabilities (Campaign 2000 and Disability without Poverty).
- People with disabilities would need, on average, 30% more income to reach the poverty line, using the Low Income Measure After Tax (Campaign 2000 and Disability without Poverty).
- The anticipated Canada Disability Benefit (CDB) amounts, when combined with disability assistance rates in every province and territory, will not be sufficient to lift people with disabilities out of poverty.

CONSIDER THIS: How will your candidate ensure that people with disabilities receive the financial and other support they need to live with dignity?

- In 2022, there were 129,876 victims of police-reported family violence and 117,093 victims of intimate partner violence (Statistics Canada).
- For girls and young women in the north, the rate of experiencing violent crime is four times higher than Canada's overall population. The violence is more likely to be severe and result in physical injury (Shana Conroy, Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics, 2021; Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children, 2021).

CONSIDER THIS: Ask your candidate if they are ready to allocate the necessary funding to support community-based agencies providing critical programs, including counselling and accessible housing for abused women and children.

- 97,221 abortions were performed in Canada in 2022. 38,448 were medically induced. Volumes reported are understated since data from Quebec and private clinics are not fully reported ([Canadian Institute for Health Information](#)).
- The number of medically assisted deaths in Canada has continued to grow since MAID was introduced in 2016. According to Statistics Canada there were 12,689 written requests for MAID in 2021, 31.3% more than the 9,664 written requests in 2020. This resulted in 10,029 medically assisted deaths in Canada in 2021, an increase of 34.7% from the 7,446 deaths in 2020. MAID accounted for 3.3% of all deaths in Canada in 2021, up from 2.4% of all reported deaths in the previous year. In 2021, slightly more than half (52.4%) of those receiving MAID were men. Nearly four in five written requests resulted in medical assistance in dying ([Statistics Canada](#)).
- Support for families, palliative care, and rehabilitation services must be a priority.
- Vulnerable groups, including Indigenous communities, persons with disabilities, immigrants & refugees, and seniors, need better support.

CONSIDER THIS: Is your candidate advocating for human dignity at every stage of life?

Poverty and Affordability

- In 2024, there were 2,059,636 monthly food visits to food banks in Canada – the highest number in history – a 90% increase since 2019 ([Food Banks Canada](#)).
- People with the lowest incomes, including those receiving social assistance, spend over 80% of their disposable income on food and housing alone. As non-negotiable costs such as rent absorb more disposable income, the likelihood of needing a food bank increases ([Food Banks Canada](#)).
- Only a small percentage of people experiencing food insecurity use food banks, which were never meant to be a long term solution to food insecurity.
- There has been a significant increase in two-parent households with children under 18 accessing food banks – this group has grown from representing 18.8% of food bank visits in 2019 to nearly 23% in 2024 ([Food Banks Canada](#)).
- Nearly 70% of food bank clients live in market-rent housing ([Food Banks Canada](#)).
- 1,357,630 children lived in poverty according to the Census Family Low Income Measure, After Tax (CFLIM-AT). That is an increase of 195,170 more children living in poverty than 2021 ([Campaign 2000](#)).
- Child poverty increased in every province and territory. The highest increase for children under 18 was in Nunavut (+6 percentage points) and among the provinces in Ontario (+3.5 percentage points) ([Campaign 2000](#)).

- Lone-parent families, the majority of which are female-led, experienced disproportionately higher levels of poverty, entry into poverty, and deeper poverty, including higher rates of receiving social assistance than other family types. One in five or 20.1% of lone-parent families received social assistance in 2022 ([Campaign 2000](#)).
- 2021 census data indicates that Canadian-born Black populations experienced income earning gaps (ranging from \$1,400 to \$4,100) associated with working in lower-level occupations relative to their education and being less likely to have full-time, full-year work, as compared to the non-racialized third-generation or more population ([Statistics Canada](#)).

CONSIDER THIS: How will your candidate address the complex challenge of equality, income security, housing, education, and food security for all?



Social Services and Healthcare

- Declines in self-reported mental health from 2015 to 2021 were observed across all age groups but were especially prominent among young adults aged 18 to 34. In 2021, fewer females (55.1%) than males (63.0%) reported very good or excellent mental health ([Statistics Canada, 2024](#)).
- The prevalence of anxiety and mood disorders increased from 2015 to 2021 and was higher among females (vs. males), First Nations people living off reserve and Métis (vs. non-Indigenous people), and those in the lowest income quintile (vs. the highest income quintile) ([Statistics Canada, 2024](#)).
- In 2021, while most Canadians (85.5%) had a regular healthcare provider, 4.7 million Canadians (14.4%) did not ([Statistics Canada, 2024](#)).
- Almost 2.5 million Canadians (7.9%) reported unmet health care needs in 2021 and approximately 475,000 Canadians (1.6%) reported unmet home care needs in 2021 ([Statistics Canada, 2024](#)).

CONSIDER THIS: How will your candidate invest in access to health services, community support programs, and mental health services?

Affordable Housing and Homelessness

- In 2021, 11.2% of Canadians or 1,690,000 people, reported that they had experienced some sort of homelessness ([Statistics Canada](#)).
- Nearly half (45%) of Canadians reported being very concerned about housing affordability because of the rising costs of housing or rent, but were also challenged by suitability conditions, and experiences of discrimination when seeking housing ([Statistics Canada, 2024](#)).
- 81% of racialized Canadians experienced one or more housing challenges, compared with 63% of non-racialized Canadians. ([Statistics Canada, 2024](#)).
- 21% of Canada's homeless population consists of young people between the ages of 13-24. At least 6,000 young people experience homelessness every night (Gaetz, S., DeJ, E., Richter, T., & Redman, M. (2016). *The State of Homelessness in Canada 2016*. Toronto: Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Press).

CONSIDER THIS: Ask your candidate how they propose to address the housing crisis and support affordable living.



Workers' Rights and Employment Justice

- The proportion of Canadian workers who perform gig work has nearly doubled over the past 15 years, growing from 5.5% in 2005 to roughly 10% in 2020 ([Employment and Social Development Canada, 2023](#)).
- In 2022, approximately 250,000 Canadians performed gig work through digital platforms, with rideshare and delivery services as the most common type of work ([Employment and Social Development Canada, 2023](#)).
- Most gig workers fall under provincial jurisdictional authority, however, around 41,000 gig workers operate in federally regulated industries ([Employment and Social Development Canada, 2023](#)).
- Gig workers do not benefit from key protections such as labour standards coverage: no minimum wage protections, risk of late- or non-payment, unpredictable schedules and earnings, risk of unsafe working conditions, limited access to dispute resolution, unaware of rights and how to file a complaint through the Labour Program ([Employment and Social Development Canada, 2023](#)).
- Temporary migrant workers are overrepresented in the agriculture and agri-food sectors, as well as the service, health, hospitality, and manufacturing sectors (Paquet, 2020; Voronenko, 2020; Castracani, 2017).

- In the agricultural sector, more than 312,000 in Canada work between six and eight months for seasonal work (crops) and two-year contracts in the livestock sector. All of these workers with precarious status have no access to permanent residency in Canada and the associated social protections (CNESST Statistics, 2020–2025).

CONSIDER THIS: Does your candidate support stronger labour laws and employment protections for everyone?

Support for Refugees & Newcomers

- In 2021, there were over 924,000 non-permanent residents, making up 2.5% of Canada’s population. 60.1% of non-permanent residents were between 20 and 34 years of age ([Statistics Canada](#)).
- 1 in 3 non-permanent residents lived in unsuitable housing ([Statistics Canada](#)).
- Among non-permanent residents with a bachelor’s degree or higher, asylum claimants were most likely to be overqualified for their jobs ([Statistics Canada](#)).
- In 2024, 32% of food bank clients were newcomers to Canada who had been in the country for 10 years or less ([Food Banks Canada](#)).
- One-quarter (23%) of the Canadian population were immigrants in 2021. Immigrants tend to be healthier than non-immigrants, but as they spend more time in Canada, their health deteriorates ([Statistics Canada, 2024](#)).

CONSIDER THIS: Ask your candidate how they intend to engage in partnerships that create comprehensive support systems for refugees, address labour exploitation of newcomers, ensure their successful integration into communities, and streamline international accreditation.



Ecological Stewardship and Climate Change

- As a signatory to the 2015 Paris Agreement, Canada announced a commitment to cut its Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions by 40% to 45% below the 2005 levels by 2030. ([Environment and Climate Change Canada](#)) This commitment will not be met without additional measures to further reduce emissions.

- Communities across Canada remain vulnerable to the devastating impacts of climate change (wildfires, floods, droughts, etc.) and the compounding effects of these events (Employment and Social Development Canada).
- Overall, urban greenness in Canada decreased from 2000 to 2022. The average urban greenness declined by 8.0 percentage points at the Canada level. These decreases were most pronounced in large urban population centres, which saw a loss of 10.5 percentage points in the five-year greenness average relative to the baseline period (The Daily – Census of Environment: Urban greenness, 2022).

CONSIDER THIS: Ask your candidate how they will ensure strong environmental protections and fulfill international commitments related to climate change.



Commitment to Truth and Reconciliation

- The federal government remains stalled in its progress to fully implement key Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action, including: reforms to the child welfare, education, health, language and culture, and justice systems; access to affordable, sustainable and clean water; and a royal proclamation and covenant of reconciliation (Indigenous Watchdog).
- Indigenous women and girls are 12 times more likely to be murdered or missing than any other women in Canada, and 16 times more likely than white women (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019).
- Indigenous people comprise approximately 5% of the Canadian population; however, the impacts of colonization, subsequent intergenerational trauma and systemic inequities and discrimination disproportionately negatively impact the health and well-being of Indigenous people (Statistics Canada, 2024).

CONSIDER THIS: Ask your candidate what commitments they will make to advance Truth and Reconciliation.

Solidarity and International Cooperation

- Canada has a strong history of participation in multilateral institutions and in providing development aid to countries in need.
- The Global South and Indigenous communities face a devastating debt crisis,

with many nations spending more on debt repayments than on healthcare, education or climate action. Debt cancellation and global financial reform can help to lift these countries out of poverty. ([KAIROS Canada](#)).

CONSIDER THIS: Ask your candidate how they will ensure Canada remains a leader in international cooperation.

Take Action!
Your vote Matters.

THE MARY WARD CENTRE

Catholic Charities
of the Archdiocese of Toronto

JESUIT FORUM
FOR SOCIAL FAITH AND JUSTICE

Get Informed

Research candidate positions on poverty, housing, social services, and fair wages.

Spread the Word

Talk to friends and family about these critical issues.

Vote on Election Day

Make your voice heard and advocate for a just and compassionate Canada.

For more details, visit [Elections Canada](#) to find your polling station and voter registration information.

Pray

For all elected officials; for all who are seeking our vote; for those who will govern our country; and for peace and unity among Canadians as we engage in respectful political debate in the lead up to the election.