

WOMEN Vote!





FREE TRADE

There has never been a government initiative that is so damaging to women, as the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement, with its far-reaching impact on our economy, social programs, and cultural and political independence.

The most jobs lost under free trade will be in industries which employ large numbers of women, particularly immigrant and visible minority women. Textiles and clothing manufacturing, food processing, electrical and electronic products and other consumer manufacturing, as well as services like banking, data processing, telecommunications and computer services, are at greatest risk.

Lower wages and poorer working conditions in all sectors of our economy will result from the downward pull of competition with American businesses. The most disadvantaged will be affected most severely, and hard fought gains by the women's movement, like Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value, will be threatened.

The quality and universality of our health, child care and social services, are threatened. This deal permits unfettered American investment in these services and the deal moves our society towards 'harmonization' with the U.S. The only type of government subsidies which will not be challenged as 'unfair trading practices' are subsidies to industries that produce for the military. The other allowable subsidies will be determined over the next 7 years. Any of our existing health and social services could end up on this unfair subsidies list.

The free trade deal threatens our current standards on consumer and environmental protection, which are higher than in the U.S. It threatens our ability to maintain independent policies and positions on international affairs, and it does not protect our natural resources including water.

The move towards a Canada which is no different from the U.S. will severely threaten everything the Women's Movement has been fighting for, and the gains Canadian women have made.

We must urge our candidates to commit themselves to tear up this free trade deal.

**WOMEN
Vote**

CHILD CARE

There are 1 million Canadian children with parents who work outside of the home 20 hours a week or more, who need child care.

The Women's Movement worked hard to defeat the Canada Child Care Act in the last session of parliament, because the Act did not guarantee that money would go towards creating new child care places.

The Act lacked national guidelines for quality, availability and affordability, and threatened to entrench the current unsatisfactory and fragmented child care situation across Canada. It introduced new ceilings on spending, introduced small tax credits to parents, instead of direct subsidies to services, and provided incentives to the growth of the commercial sector, which has been shown to provide poorer quality care.

We need a new Child Care Act with national objectives which will:

- establish long-term cost-sharing agreements with the provinces/territories to develop a comprehensive, high quality, accessible, non-profit, ethno-culturally sensitive child care system;
- dispense with schemes to fund child care programs through tax deductions and credits;
- ensure capital and operating funds for child care programs for Native Canadians; and
- guarantee subsidized child care for low-income Canadians under the Canada Assistance Plan until a better funding mechanism is in place.

We must urge our candidates to commit themselves to a national child care policy that puts money directly into services, and solves some of the problems of lack of available, accessible, quality child care places across Canada.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN



Violence against women and children is epidemic in Canada. This is a tragedy and a national disgrace.

A woman is sexually assaulted every six minutes. At least one woman in eight is abused by her husband or partner every year. Four out of every ten girls are sexually abused before they reach the age of 18, and 90% of the perpetrators are male.

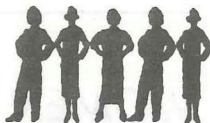
Government funding has been too little, and directed only at creation of facilities, but not

towards their ongoing operation. Funding must be increased and directed towards additional services provided by shelters to include services for children, long-term housing, and follow-up and preventative services.

Our government must establish priorities to deal with services for victims of violence and sexual abuse; the cost of one nuclear-powered submarine would provide 20,000 new shelter spaces for women and children in Canada.

We must urge our candidates to commit themselves to increasing funding for both facilities and ongoing operation of rape crisis centres, services for battered women and their children, and services for the survivors of incest and sexual abuse.

REPRODUCTIVE CHOICE



The right to control our reproduction is basic and fundamental to women's autonomy, including adequate access to birth control, sex education and abortion.

This year's Supreme Court Decision affirming women's right to make their own decisions about abortion is perhaps the most important step forward in women's equality since the last federal election.

This court decision, consistent results in public opinion polls, and most recently, a resolution by the Canadian Medical Association, are all telling our politicians that abortion should remain out of the criminal code.

While the Supreme Court decision was a victory for women, a major problem remains. There is not equal access to abortion services for women in different regions, and with low-levels of income. Without federal guidelines, provinces are developing inconsistent policies on the funding of abortions through their respective provincial medicare schemes, and the availability of services varies greatly by province.

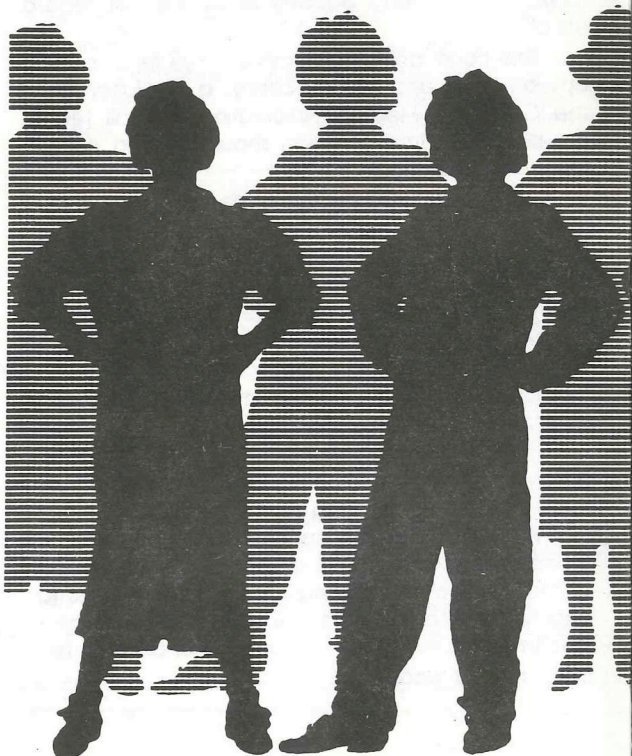
Recent cutbacks in funding for birth control and sex education are also depriving women of their right to choose and plan their families.

We must urge our candidates to commit themselves to ensuring that abortion remains out of the Criminal Code, and that there is access to and funding for birth control and abortion services in every province, through amendments to the Canada Health Act.

*Let's get
out and
work
together
to make
our votes
count.*

**WOMEN
VOTE!**

This federal election is the most important one for women since the campaign for women's suffrage, which women finally won in 1919. Free Trade, Child Care, Reproductive Choice, and Violence Against Women and Children, are major election issues for women and are firmly on the national political agenda in this campaign. The way these issues are resolved by a newly elected government will have a major impact on our lives.



We can make a difference in this election if we:

- know the issues
- get commitments from our candidates on each issue
- talk to other women
- use our hard-won suffrage and vote on our issues

There is a clear gender gap in this election.

We can make a difference across the country if **WOMEN VOTE!**

National Action Committee on the Status of Women
344 Bloor Street West, Suite 505
Toronto, Ontario M5S 3A7
(416) 922-3246

Produced by union labour.

