

IT'S TIME TO CHOOSE GENDER EQUITY

YWCA Ontario urges action on gender equity during #ELXN43

YWCA Ontario calls on all provincial political parties to prioritize gender equity this election and commits to a **five-point, feminist plan**. Support our campaign and let candidates know that you **#ChooseGenderEquity** this election!

INCOME SECURITY

Ontario's social assistance program does not meet basic needs. Ensuring the health and dignity of women and gender diverse people on low and fixed incomes, reducing poverty and supporting families must be of paramount concern to all political parties.

Increase social assistance rates to at least \$2000 per month

- Ontario Works (OW) and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) rates should be raised immediately to \$2000 per month to reflect the federal government's benchmark of a minimum income security program.
- Invest in increases to OW and ODSP until monthly benefits reflect this minimum standard, ensuring that people living with disabilities have access to additional support.
- Ensure women and all people with precarious immigration status have access to income supports and an expedited path to permanent residency.

HOUSING

The lack of affordable and supportive housing in Ontario is at a crisis level. Women and racialized communities are concentrated in industries that have been most impacted by COVID-19 - and face a higher risk of eviction and homelessness. This is particularly true for women, gender diverse and Two-Spirit Indigenous community members. We need more intersectional funding for deeply affordable housing, with special investments in homes for women-led families, particularly those fleeing violence.

Invest in a continuum of housing options for women and gender diverse people - including safe, affordable housing, emergency shelters, transitional and supportive programs

- Invest in a range of supportive housing for specific communities of women including Indigenous women and Two-Spirit People, senior women, and trans communities.
- Invest in culturally-responsive housing supports to ensure women, particularly survivors of violence, and women with experiences of chronic homelessness, institutionalization and substance abuse, can maintain housing.
- Invest in a provincial Portable Housing Benefit to ensure women and other people experiencing income instability can maintain their housing.

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CHILD CARE

Ontario's signing of the federal child care agreement was a historic win for gender equality. However, advocates have been clear that in order for the plan to succeed, it must include a workforce strategy to recruit and retain child care workers. Child care workers deserve decent work and fair wages.

Enhance the federal child care agreement to include decent work and pay provisions for all child care workers

- Address the shortage of early childhood educators and improve the long-term affordability and accessibility of child care by providing enough funding to pay child care workers at least \$25 per hour.
- Ensure federal child care dollars support a public and nonprofit-driven expansion of child care services that offer a range of flexible models for quality early learning.
- Prioritize immediate support for nonprofit child care centres that are currently operating at a deficit to ensure these spots do not permanently close.

WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT

The pandemic brought on the first-ever global she-cession, which saw a significant drop in women's labour market participation. Current gender-specific employment programs simply cannot evolve and strengthen on single-year funding. We need better funding for women-focused employment and training programs, and more comprehensive government action to improve employment and labour standards, particularly for the care economy and other feminized industries.

Implement decent work conditions for women that include gender-inclusive upskilling and other employment programs

- Raise Ontario's employment standards to a decent work floor for care workers and all workers, including a minimum wage that reflects a living wage and adequate paid sick days. Ensure all workers in our province, including seasonal workers, have access to minimum employment standards.
- Invest in multi-year funding for employment, training and upskilling programs for women and ensure programs are offered by women-focused organizations. Modify Employment Ontario to include women as a priority category in order to ensure clear gender targets in funding allocations.
- Take meaningful action to address gender and racial pay disparities and ensure care work is decent work by enhancing public expenditures in the public and non-profit care economy.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GENDER DIVERSE PEOPLE

Gender-based violence was a grave concern for women, girls and gender diverse people long before COVID-19, but that concern has magnified as cases of violence have soared during the pandemic. Violence against women and gender diverse people is persistent, life threatening and on the rise. Significant government action is needed to end gender-based violence.

Create and implement a coordinated province wide strategy to eliminate gender-based violence

- Support permanent, multi-year operating funding for organizations providing support to women and gender diverse people, including violence against women shelters, transitional housing, child care, girls' programs, violence prevention and education work and employment programs.
- Eliminate red tape that prevents women without status from being able to attain housing and social assistance, including child benefits.
- Repeal Bill 124, which disproportionately impacts women-concentrated fields that support women, girls and gender diverse people, such as transitional housing and shelter employees, child care workers and nurses, the very fields that bore the brunt of the pandemic.

[Click here](#) to sign our petition and pledge to #ChooseGenderEquity this #elxn43!

VOTE THURSDAY, JUNE 2 – #ChooseGenderEquity

