

Confederation of Canadian Unions
Political Party Questionnaire for 2019 Federal Election
Liberal Response

The Economy

1. According to Statistics Canada, economic inequality has been on the rise since the 1970s, and the richest 10% of Canadians currently own almost 50% of the country's total wealth. How will your party reverse this trend and reduce the growing levels of economic inequality in Canada?

Four years ago, we gave Canadians the tax break they deserve – putting hundreds of dollars back into the pockets of the middle class by cutting their taxes and increasing taxes for the wealthiest one per cent. Over the next four years, Canadians created over 1 million new jobs, mostly full-time, and our government was able to help lift 900,000 people out of poverty, including 300,000 kids.

A re-elected Liberal government will build on the progress already made by the National Poverty Reduction Strategy, including a new significant tax cut for all but the richest Canadians. Our newest affordability proposal, which would raise the Basic Personal Amount (BPA) to \$15,000, will save the average family nearly \$600 in taxes each year.

With this new change to our tax system, 700,000 low-income Canadians, including seniors and young people just beginning their careers, will pay no federal tax at all. Raising the BPA to \$15,000 will also lift nearly 40,000 Canadians out of poverty. This measure, alongside continued job creating policies, as well as the newly increased Canada Child Benefit, the Canada Worker Benefit, and enhanced benefits for seniors, will keep us on track to reducing poverty in Canada by 50% in time for 2030.

To ensure that we continue to have the resources needed to invest in people and keep our economy strong and growing, we will move forward with a transparent and publicly reported review of several existing tax measures and will take action to make taxes more fair. This includes taking steps to crack down on corporate tax evasion and avoidance, asking the wealthiest Canadians to pay a bit more, and introducing a new 10 per cent tax on luxury cars, boats, and personal aircraft over \$100,000.

If re-elected, we will also increase Old Age Security (OAS) by ten per cent once they turn 75. This will help lift more than 20,000 seniors out of poverty, of whom two-thirds will be women.

2. Federal corporate taxes have almost been cut in half during the past twenty years by Liberal and Conservative governments, supposedly to “create jobs”. Canada now has a federal corporate tax rate that is below even that of the United States and most OECD

countries. At the same time, personal and public debt has soared, and a majority of Canadians, according to opinion polls, support greater funding for social services like health care, child care and education. What will your party do to ensure that corporations are paying their fair share of taxes, like the rest of us?

One of the key priorities of our Liberal government - which remains a priority - was tax fairness. We committed over \$1 billion in our four federal budgets to further help the CRA crack down on tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance. The CRA has increased the number of compliance actions aimed at promoters who encourage abusive or illegal tax arrangements, has hired additional auditors, and has completed more than twice as many offshore audits in the last three years than in ten years under the previous government.

The CRA now has a unit dedicated to offshore compliance and can now risk assess 100% of multinational corporations every year, while out-of-court settlements are done completely independent of the Minister of National Revenue and their office in collaboration with the Department of Justice as to ensure the integrity of our tax system.

In a new mandate, we will also work to implement a consistent national approach to beneficial ownership so tax authorities and law enforcement have the tools they need, while also respecting privacy rights.

Canadians deserve a fair, transparent, and equitable tax system. If re-elected, we will continue to make systemic changes within the CRA to make sure that this is the case. We will introduce new measures to close tax loopholes used by the wealthy and by large corporations, including a modernized anti-avoidance rule.

3. Economic research shows that more of Canada's resource industries are being taken over by international conglomerates. This has led to the loss of thousands of good-paying jobs in Canada and capital flight (in the form of profits) out of the country. What concrete policies will your party implement to protect Canadian resource industries from foreign domination?

International investment across all sectors in Canada is subject to the Investment Canada Act, which has two primary purposes: to review significant investments to ensure they are likely to be of net economic benefit to Canada, and to review investments that could be injurious to national security.

Our government takes a balanced approach to ensuring international investments are of net benefit to Canada and that we protect our national security, while also being open to investment which is important to our economic growth and securing good jobs for Canadians.

Labour

4. Statistics Canada reports that on average, unionized workers enjoy higher wages than non-unionized workers in the same line of work, as well as stronger pensions, superior health and safety standards, longer vacation time, better health and drug benefits, and more rights in the workplace. Does your party believe that unions play a positive role in our economy? If so, what policies will your party implement or revise in order to create a climate that is easier for unions to organize?

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5. Throughout Canada, working people and their unions, especially in the public sector, are under attack by governments who are stripping away their most basic rights and freedoms. What commitments will your party make to ensure workers in both the private and public sectors will maintain their collective bargaining rights?

We value and respect the labour movement in Canada. Unions matter. They represent people who work hard, support their families and contribute to their communities and our economy. Unions fight for the middle class, and have been the driving force behind historic progress for all workers

We are committed to being a real partner to labour. Whether it was through NAFTA negotiations, the most significant enhancements to the labour code and the CPP/QPP in a generation, or banning asbestos, we will always stand with unions and continue to listen to their priorities.

The labour movement deserves fairness, not a government that sees it as the enemy. That's why one of the very first things we did as a government was to repeal Stephen Harper's anti-union legislation: Bill C-377 and Bill C-525. We want to make it easier for workers to participate in unions, not harder.

Social Policy

6. In 1989, the House of Commons unanimously passed a motion calling for the eradication of child poverty in Canada by the year 2000. Yet today, nearly one in eight children throughout the country live under the poverty line, and one in four Aboriginal children. What specific policies will your party implement to end child poverty in Canada once and for all?

The Liberal Party remains committed to reducing poverty by 50% and helping more Canadians join the middle class - and our plan thus far has made immense progress in the last four years by reducing poverty by 20%, three years ahead of schedule for this milestone. This includes having lifted 300,000 kids out of poverty.

A re-elected Liberal government will build on the progress already made by the National Poverty Reduction Strategy, including a significant tax cut for all but the richest Canadians. Our newest affordability proposal, which would raise the Basic Personal Amount (BPA) to \$15,000, will save the average family nearly \$600 in taxes each year.

With this new change to our tax system, 700,000 low-income Canadians, including seniors and young people just beginning their careers, will pay no federal tax at all. Raising the BPA to \$15,000 will also lift nearly 40,000 Canadians out of poverty. These measures, alongside continued job creating policies, as well as the newly increased Canada Child Benefit, the Canada Worker Benefit, and enhanced benefits for seniors, will keep us on track to reducing poverty in Canada by 50% in time for 2030.

For young people in post-secondary education, under the Conservatives in 2015, the maximum Canada Student Grant was \$2,000. As of next year, we will have boosted the maximum grant a student can get to \$4,200.

For education in First Nation communities, we strongly believe every child deserves the best start in life, and this starts with a high-quality and culturally-appropriate education. In the last four years, 15 new schools have been built in First Nations communities across Canada, with 59 new more in progress. With a new co-developed education framework, we finally started funding Indigenous children's education at the same level as non-Indigenous children. Plus, we're funding language and cultural programs, full-time kindergarten and special education.

Furthermore, Bill C-92 will finally put in law what Indigenous peoples across this country have been asking of governments for decades: that their inherent jurisdiction be affirmed so that they can decide what is best for their children, their families, and their communities. It also lays out national principles that will guide the delivery of services for Indigenous children in every jurisdiction and region of this country.

7. Our publicly administered, universal health care system is cherished by Canadians throughout the country. More of our health services, however, are being de-funded and privatized. What policies will your party implement to ensure that health care in Canada is properly funded and remains under public control?

Our government fully supports the principles of the Canada Health Act, including comprehensiveness, universality, portability, accessibility and public administration. The Act ensures that all Canadians have reasonable access to medically necessary physician and hospital services based on need and not the ability, or willingness, to pay.

This is a responsibility that the Liberal Party takes very seriously. Extra-billing and user charges contravene both federal and provincial health care insurance laws, and we will not hesitate to take action against them.

As part of our commitment to introduce new national standards on mental health, we will be examining changes to the Canada Health Act. In that context, should there be more to do we will take additional steps to crack down on extra billing within the Act.

8. Canada is the only country in the world with a universal health insurance system that doesn't include a national drug program. Currently, 2 million Canadians incur over \$1,000 a year in out-of-pocket expenses for prescription drugs, and one in five Canadian families can't even afford to fill their prescriptions because of cost. Yet Canada's parliamentary budget officer stated in 2017 that a national Pharmacare program would save \$4.2 billion every year. What steps will your party take in government to create a universal, publicly administered Pharmacare program?

No Canadian should have to choose between paying for prescription drugs and putting food on the table. While Canadians are proud of our health care system, many are still forced to make sometimes decisions.

As a government and as a party, we gratefully accept the report by Dr. Hoskins and the Advisory Council on the Implementation of National Pharmacare and the report is an important step in laying the foundation for a national pharmacare program.

We have already committed to working together with provinces and territories to create a Canadian Drug Agency that will make medications more affordable by negotiating better drug prices on behalf of all Canadians. In particular, we know that the cost of many drugs for rare diseases can be astronomical, so we are putting in place a national strategy for rare disease drugs to help Canadians get the life-saving drugs that they need.

If re-elected, we will work closely with the provinces and territories, and our partners and stakeholders in order to achieve universal pharmacare so that all Canadians have access to the medications they need at an affordable price. Our newly announced investment of an additional \$6 billion over the next four years will include dedicated funding to further the progress we have already made towards universal pharmacare for all Canadians, as guided by the Advisory Council.

9. Canada's total student loan debt is reaching an incredible \$28 billion dollars, and many governments throughout the country are cutting funding for post-secondary education. What steps will your party take to guarantee funding to Canada's colleges and universities?

A re-elected Liberal government will help more students prepare for good jobs while taking on less debt. To do so:

- We will give students up to \$1,200 more, per year, by increasing Canada Student Grants by another 40 per cent, to help with the rising cost of tuition, books, and rent. Under the Conservatives in 2015, the maximum Canada Student Grant was \$2,000. As of next year, we will have boosted the maximum grant a student can get to \$4,200;
- We will give students two years after graduation to get started before they need to begin paying off their student loans, interest free; and

- We will allow new parents to pause student loan repayments — with no interest — until their youngest child reaches the age of five.

Since 2015, our government has helped make college and university more affordable and accessible by:

- Initially increasing Canada Student Grants by 50 per cent, which put up to \$1,000 more in the pockets of students who needed it;
- Reducing interest costs on Canada Student Loans, saving the average student \$2,000 throughout their education;
- Introducing new grants to help adult students and students with children;
- Boosting the repayment assistance plan so that no student who makes less than \$25,000 has to start repaying their loan; and
- Helping those on EI to go back to school without losing their benefits.

10. Although there have been advances towards greater gender equity in Canada, there is still much work to be done. Women only make 75% of men’s income, one in seven women live in poverty, while five provinces in Canada still have no pay equity legislation on the books. What specific policies will your party propose to ensure greater gender equity and women’s equality in government, business and society?

As a party, we believe in fairness, including the belief that women deserve equal pay for work of equal value – which is why we moved forward with proactive pay equity legislation, which we passed, and have since appointed Canada’s first Pay Equity Commissioner.

Our Liberal government has taken real action to advance gender equality and help women and girls thrive by encouraging more women and girls to pursue careers in STEM and supporting new initiatives for women entrepreneurs, newcomer women looking for jobs, and women in the trades.

We have reshaped the way women and girls are supported by the federal government through the creation of a full department for gender equality and a new sustainable model to fund women’s rights organizations. We’ve also invested \$300 million through the Equality Fund, making Canada the largest investor in women’s rights organizations at home and around the world.

Gender equality is not just the right thing to do, it’s the smart thing to do. A gender equal world is a better world for all—and we will not go backwards.

Democracy

11. Canada is one of the few countries in the western world that uses a Plurality voting system (“First past the post”). This has allowed parties with a minority of the vote to form majority governments. Where does your party stand on reforming Canada’s electoral system to one based on proportional representation?

In 2016, the Special Committee on Electoral Reform held extensive consultations regarding our electoral system. We listened to Canadians, and while we did not find a consensus on this issue of electoral reform, this was an important conversation to have had and reforms to our elections system should always be up for continued and vigorous discussion.

Our government passed Bills C-76 and C-50, which strengthen our democracy and ensure our institutions represent the values of Canadians.

12. Canada’s ethics commissioner recently found that Justin Trudeau improperly influenced several cabinet ministers to intervene in an ongoing criminal case against Quebec-based construction company SNC-Lavalin. What specific policies will your party introduce to fight corporate corruption and influence-peddling at the federal level?

We will move forward with all the recommendations put forward by the Hon. Anne McLellan in her recent review of the role and structure of the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada.

International Issues

13. Canada has one of the poorest environmental records in the entire western world. What policies will your party implement to reduce climate change and protect the environment? Will your party also commit now to end the billion-dollar subsidies given to the oil industry and instead use those funds to invest in environmentally-friendly forms of energy?

The Liberal Party of Canada believes that climate change is an important and urgent challenge facing not just Canada but the world. That is why our government has put a price on carbon, which we believe to be the most efficient way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions across industries and across the country.

To help green our economy and keep it globally competitive, a re-elected Liberal government would follow-through on our existing plan to take climate action by:

- Investing in renewables to get to 90% clean electricity by 2030;
- Supporting over 1,000 public transit projects across the country;
- Making zero-emission vehicles more affordable and accessible;
- Banning single use plastics; and
- Phasing out coal.

We are also working with workers, communities, unions, innovators and Canadians across the country that we can make a just transition to a clean economy. Budget 2019 announced a new investment of \$150 million to invest in infrastructure to support priority projects and diversify coal

Economies.

In this campaign, we have also announced the following new initiatives we would implement, if re-elected:

- Reduce corporate taxes in half for companies that develop technologies or manufacture products that are zero emissions;
- Continue to lead by example and ensure all federal buildings run on clean electricity by 2022; and
- Leverage the purchasing power of the federal government to further drive clean technology adoption.

14. Canada currently provides only 0.3% of its Gross National Income (GNI) to foreign aid, putting us 19th out of 41 donor countries in the OECD. Eight of those countries have already reached their 0.7% commitment. How will your party ensure that Canada keeps its international promises to reach its commitment of providing 0.7% of its GNI to foreign aid?

Our government has demonstrated that we have the vision, political leadership, and ability to mobilize international support to make a difference. We announced historic \$2 billion increase of ODA in Budget 2018, and a further increase of \$100 million per year in Budget 2019.

In our platform, we committed to further increasing that funding by \$150 million each year, in alignment with our commitment to fulfill the Sustainable Development Goals.

Providing international assistance is about much more than just funding. It is measured by our leadership on international issues, through our policies and influence internationally, and how we work with partners to support grassroots organizations that promote transformative change. Through the development of our feminist international assistance policy, our support for grassroots organizations through the Women's Voice and Leadership program, and our funding for initiatives like The Equality Fund, we are taking an innovative and feminist approach to international assistance, which is helping to promote gender equality and development around the world.

The Liberal Party also believes firmly in the adoption of a rights-based approach to international assistance. We are also firm in our adoption of an intersectional lens to analyzing and implementing programs. This requires us to accept the various ways in which systems of social categorization—gender and sexuality, race/ethnicity, disability and social class for instance—intersect with one another.