

There are many important areas which the federal government is responsible for such as the economy, environment and various social issues.



Education:

When it comes to education, it is important to note that the federal government is not responsible for Canada's education system. Decisions made about curriculum, class sizes, etc., are the responsibility

of the provincial governments. This distinction is important considering the current controversy around sexual health education in Ontario. Whichever federal party comes to power will make no difference on what is taught to elementary and secondary students.

Federal governments can however help fund post-secondary education, as well as establish more funding for research.



Economy & Environment:

Each party will release a platform which will include their plans for the economy and for the environment.

What you should pay attention to is what experts say about those plans. Academics and public interest groups will be able to provide critical assessments of each party's proposals. Don't just take the word of your local candidate - do your homework and read, watch, or listen to the local news!

Pay special attention to each party's plan on: public transit, public infrastructure including bridges and roads, and renewable energy.



Social Issues:

Canadians have grappled with the issues of gay marriage, prostitution and abortion rights for decades. It is important to note that all of

Canada's political parties officially support gay marriage and abortion rights.

The issue of doctor-assisted suicide has not yet been fully debated or explored in law. In 2015, the Supreme Court of Canada unanimously struck down the ban on doctor-assisted suicide and has asked the federal government to prepare new legislation.

In 2013, the Supreme Court of Canada also struck down the country's prostitution laws. The Conservative government passed new legislation in 2014.

Aboriginal issues are also a key area that Canadians will be paying attention to. From a social justice perspective, Canadian Muslims should join fellow citizens in advocating for fairer treatment Canada's indigenous communities.



Islamophobia:

We already know that Islamophobia can manifest in devastating ways. In 2013, for example, hate crimes against Canadian Muslims and their institutions rose by 44 per cent according to Statistics Canada while

falling in all other categories. The NCCM's data indicates a likely correlation between negative events involving Islam or Muslims and a subsequent rise in hate crimes and incidents.

This is why NCCM we have long urged leaders to speak thoughtfully and to weigh their words carefully. This is also the advice of Canada's law enforcement communities who have advised against using terminology that casts an unfair pall of suspicion on diverse communities.

The NCCM has spoken out against anti-Muslim statements and actions on numerous occasions and has frequently called on political leaders to condemn Islamophobia. It should be noted that the Conservative Party has spoken negatively about Islam and Muslims in relation to security issues and in relation to women's choices on numerous occasions and in numerous contexts.

The Liberal Party has made public statements condemning Islamophobia and comparing anti-Muslim sentiment to anti-Jewish sentiment in the 1930s and 1940s. The NDP has also called out the Conservative Party for allegedly stoking fear and prejudice against Canadian Muslims and their institutions.



Democratic Institutions, the CBC, & Free-flowing Information:

In the last federal election, many Canadians chose not to vote on Election Day. Experts believe that a prime reason may be the lack of trust and faith Canadians place in their institutions. The recent Senate scandal has likely made this problem worse.

Scientists and journalists have also complained about the clampdown on free-flowing information necessary for the flourishing of our democracy. Researchers have also criticized the elimination of the long-form census by the Conservative government which makes it very difficult for Canadians to plan for the future.

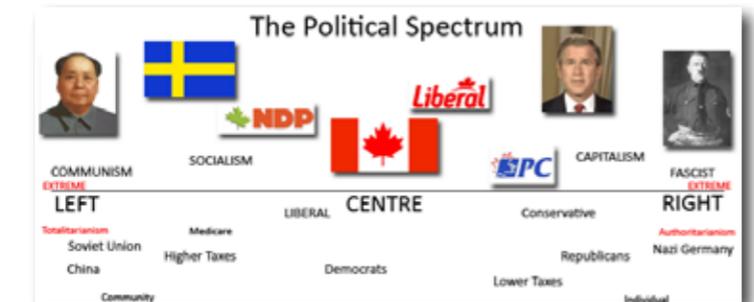
Also, don't forget to ask your local candidates about government funding of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC). As the country's national broadcaster, this crown corporation is committed to reflecting Canada's diversity and nurturing mutual understanding among Canadians. Various governments have cut funding, seriously harming its ability to fulfill its role.



Underlying Ideologies:

Finally, every party has an ideological underpinning. You will often hear the terms right or left-wing, centrist, left-leaning, etc., to describe parties and candidates. What does that mean? It

describes their ideology and their views of the world. Go back to the books to understand "conservatism", "liberalism", and "social democracy".



A very basic visual representation of the "political spectrum"
Source: York District School Board

Questions to ask candidates:

1. How will you make our democracy work better?
2. How accessible should a Member of Parliament be to the people of his or her riding?
3. How would you describe the role of government in the lives of citizens?
4. What responsibility does government have in ensuring that those who are less fortunate are provided with opportunities to succeed?
5. Will you restore funding to the CBC?

Resources: Samara Foundation | New Canadian Media | Institute for Canadian Citizenship
The Canadian-Muslim Vote | Elections Canada
*Listing a Web site in this guide does not imply the NCCM's endorsement.