

Election 2019: CASW Party Platform Guide



CASW advocates for progressive social policy on the national level.

This document is intended to help social workers cross-reference recent CASW policy positions with commitments of the 4 major political parties competing for your vote. Please note this document does not represent all CASW's priorities and positions: to review all CASW's recent statements, [click here](#).

The CASW Party Platform Guide will be updated as the 4 major parties unveil their platforms and commitments for Election 2019.

The New Democratic Party of Canada is the only party that has made its platform public at this time.



CASW fully supports the commitments made.



The commitments made mostly meet the advocacy goals of CASW.



Commitments made will begin to move CASW advocacy goals forward.



No substantial commitment made to move CASW advocacy goals forward.



Commitments are contrary to CASW advocacy goals.

Grades are assigned based on a mix of previous track record and most up-to-date commitments.

MENTAL HEALTH

CASW is asking the federal government [to legislate mental health parity to](#) ensure that all those who live in Canada have **access to mental health care on par with physical health care**.

No party has yet adopted the concept of *parity* through legislation, but short of this policy goal, **CASW also advocates for more mental health funding, better access and reduced barriers** to care, and robust tracking and development of emerging and best practices.

Finally, CASW believes we must **better integrate mental health and ‘addiction’ in Canada**: CASW advocates for **collaboration and sharing between mental health systems and systems to address problematic substance use**.

			
The Conservative Party of Canada (CPC) initiated the Mental Health Commission of Canada and has publicly committed to continuing its mandate. Leader Andrew Scheer has stated that, if elected, the CPC will hold the Canada Health Transfer and Canada Social Transfer at a three per cent increase per year.	The Liberal Party of Canada’s (LPC) track record, from this previous mandate, is quite strong: Budget 2017 committed, through a series of bilateral agreements, \$5 billion over 10 years for mental health care. The LPC also spearheaded the development of performance indicators – since endorsed by Canada’s health ministers – to measure progress and bring accountability.	The New Democratic Party of Canada’s (NDP) platform states: “New Democrats believe that we need to work towards health care that covers us from head to toe. Mental health care should be available at no cost for people who need it.” The NDP’s platform also commits to “confronting the opioid crisis” by “declaring a public health emergency.”	The Green Party of Canada’s (GPC) 2015 platform included a commitment to “Increase transfer funding for non-institutionalized mental health patients including children and youth to provide adequate community-based support and outpatient and inpatient care by mental health practitioners, including in rural Canada where lack of facilities and trained professionals is acute.” It also promised to “provide increased funding for a robust comprehensive mental health strategy for all Canadians in need.”
			

HOUSING

CASW is deeply supportive of the new National Housing Strategy. However, certain aspects remain to be addressed, and as proud members of [the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association](#), CASW advocates for the creation of a **dedicated Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy**, and recommends that the federal government **preserve the existing stock of community housing**, as well as **increase the supply of social and non profit housing**.

			
The Conservative Party of Canada's (CPC) messaging leading up to the 2019 election has focused on making homebuying more accessible, particularly for millennials seeking to enter the housing market. 	The Liberal Party of Canada (LPC) introduced the first ever National Housing Strategy in 2017, which will invest \$40 billion towards creating 100,000 new affordable housing units, repairing and renewing 300,000 units, and removing 530,000 households from core housing need. This strategy was largely lauded by housing advocates. Current Minister of Children, Families, and Social Development Jean-Yves Duclos has publicly stated that the National Housing Strategy is designed to evolve to better meet the needs of those who live in Canada. 	The New Democratic Party of Canada (NDP) promises to “add half a million new units of quality affordable housing over the next 10 years” and “help renters who are at the breaking point before it’s too late with a rental subsidy in the 2019 budget.” Leader Jagmeet Singh has also stated that the NDP will begin this process with “the removal of the federal tax on the building of new affordable housing in the upcoming federal budget.” 	The Green Party of Canada (GPC), in 2015, called for: “Create a culturally sensitive Housing First approach to provide immediate support for those experiencing chronic homelessness.” And to “Increase access to social housing for Indigenous peoples living on and off reserve.” 

SUBSTANCES and the CRIMINAL CODE

CASW recommends the following actions and practices to promote a public health approach to well-being in Canada:

- the [decriminalization of all psychoactive substances](#),
- [harm reduction approaches](#) to problematic substance use,
- and [removal of mandatory minimum penalties](#).

			
The CPC's have been historically against supervised consumption sites, as well as the decriminalization of drugs. The last time the CPC formed government, they passed Bill C-10, which strengthened the use of mandatory minimums in Canada. More recently, leader Andrew Scheer has committed to introducing more mandatory minimum sentencing. 	The LPC passed bill C-2 in 2016, which facilitated the opening of new safe injection sites. During this previous mandate, the LPC also placed the responsibility of federal drug policy under the purview of the Minister of Health – away from Justice. The LPC also decriminalized cannabis during their previous mandate, but leader Justin Trudeau has stated decriminalization of other substances is not in their plans. Though the removal of mandatory minimum sentencing was one of their election promises in 2015, they have not yet taken firm action. 	The NDP promise to “end the criminalization and stigma of drug addiction,” to “work with the provinces to support overdose prevention sites, and expand access to treatment on demand for people struggling with addiction.” Leader Jagmeet Singh also publicly criticized the LPC for failing to roll back “Republican-style mandatory minimums.” 	The GPC has promised to “launch a public consultation on the decriminalization of illicit drugs,” and “Provide increased funding to safe injection sites, treatment facilities, and addict rehabilitation.” They have also promised to “Repeal all the Harper era criminal laws creating mandatory minimum sentences.” 

POVERTY

CASW urges the federal government to [implement a universal basic income guarantee](#) (uBIG) to end poverty in Canada.

Further, to bring the kind of **accountability and transparency** necessary for the success of critical projects such as the new *National Poverty Reduction Strategy*, CASW urges the creation of a new [Social Care Act for Canada](#). Though no party has adopted the concept of a *Social Care Act* proper, CASW is seeking policies and practices that bring increased accountability and cooperative federalism to our country.

			
The CPC have historically, and more recently, approached poverty reduction through the use of tax breaks or incentives. The Harper administration also introduced the Universal Child Care Benefit, which paid flat amounts per month for young children. It was not reduced for high income families or increased for low income families. So far, the CPC is silent on measures to robustly and definitively address poverty in Canada. 	During this past mandate, the LPC introduced the new Canada Child Benefit, which has lifted many families out of poverty. Additionally, the LPC introduced the long-awaited National Poverty Reduction Strategy, which legislates a poverty line in Canada for the first time. This change also brought about a National Advisory Council on Poverty comprised of people with lived experience. 	The NDP have committed to working “with the provinces to launch a national basic income pilot project.” The NDP’s 2019 election platform also lists the following holistic measures toward ending poverty: the development of school nutrition programs, affordable housing, protecting pensions, and better financial security for seniors. 	The GPC would “establish Guaranteed Livable Income to ensure each Canadian can live with dignity and independence.” The GPC also highlights the inefficiencies and problems with current systems: “The current poverty band-aid system encourages an underground economy, in cash-only transactions, to avoid the claw back of poverty payments. We need to shut down the underground economy and ensure proper taxation.” 

CLIMATE CHANGE

As proud members of the Canadian Coalition for Public Health in the 21st Century (CCPH21), CASW is calling on the next federal government to take leadership in the development and implementation of an **effective, evidence-based climate action plan** that will help achieve the **emission reductions needed to keep global warming below 1.5oC.**

			
The CPC's approach to climate change is centered on measures to incentivize green technology and mitigate emissions. One key part of their plan is to "Set emissions standards for major emitters that produce more than 40 kilotonnes per year of greenhouse gases, requiring them to invest in private-sector research and development of green technology." Leader Andrew Scheer has noted the CPC will immediately end all carbon taxing. 	The LPC have committed to some measures to promote a green economy. They have also committed to banning single use plastics by 2021. The LPC plan for climate change also includes a national carbon tax imposed on regions that do not have their own plans. 	The NDP have committed that "A New Democrat government will declare a climate emergency and put in place ambitious, science-based greenhouse gas reductions targets that will help stabilize the global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius." This plan includes 8 concrete actions including retrofitting homes and other infrastructure, addressing transportation, and investing in a carbon-free future. 	The GPC has committed to a comprehensive environmental reforms including around infrastructure, agriculture and water preservation. The GPC states that "Our only possible future is low-carbon. Greens have launched "Mission: Possible - The Green Climate Action Plan" to map a course to a post-carbon, prosperous and safe world." This plan includes 14 concrete steps from reducing carbon emissions to green-retrofit incentives. 

