

# VOTING AS CATHOLICS

## 2019 FEDERAL ELECTION GUIDE



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### **VOTING: A RIGHT AND RESPONSIBILITY**

Canadian Catholics are being called upon as citizens to exercise their right to vote. The Church encourages and reasserts its belief in “the political freedom and responsibility of citizens.”<sup>1</sup> By exercising their right to vote, citizens fulfill their duty of choosing a government and at the same time send a clear signal to the candidates being presented by their political parties for election. The important time leading up to an election also provides Canadians with the opportunity to interact with fellow voters, one’s neighbours, and the candidates themselves (particularly during their visits to neighbourhoods), raising awareness about the values, views, and concerns shared by Catholics across the country.

Political candidates are citizens, too. In addition, they assume responsibility for the well-being of the public. Their commitment and dedication are a generous contribution to society’s common good. Indeed, the purpose of the political community is itself the common good, namely, “the sum of those conditions of [...] social life whereby people, families and associations more adequately and readily may attain their own perfection.”<sup>2</sup>

### **WORKING TO BUILD A BETTER SOCIETY**

While Christian beliefs do not constitute a political platform, they can be seen as a prism through which to analyze and evaluate government policies, laws, and programs. The principles of respect for life from conception to natural death and of the dignity of the human person should influence how Christians assess a party’s position on key moral issues. Choosing life also means being always concerned for the

weakest among us – physically, economically, and socially. It likewise implies the protection of the most fundamental human rights, including the right to religious freedom and freedom of conscience.

A more just society is also built when we live in solidarity and dialogue with different social partners, including Indigenous Peoples, as well as by supporting families and ensuring adequate funding for education, healthcare, housing, and the prevention and treatment of addictions.

Working with fellow citizens to address social concerns is fundamentally built on a view of the person inherently belonging to a community. To ensure our communities are truly welcoming and humane, we must also combat all forms of poverty, which inevitably result in the segregation and isolation of individuals.

## **CANADA IN THE WORLD: PROVIDING LEADERSHIP FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE**

Believing in justice and peace includes daring to take a stand against the arms trade and against human trafficking, which exploits young people and workers. It means entering into international treaties that respect the planet, our common home, as well as tirelessly working for the expansion of peace everywhere.

## **VOTING MEANS USING YOUR JUDGMENT**

Exercising the right to vote means making informed and discerning judgments about the options available. There are times, however, when making a decision about who to vote for may prove very difficult. The Church reminds us that “in this context, it must be noted also that a well-formed Christian conscience does not permit one to vote for a political program



or an individual law in which the fundamental content of faith and morals is replaced by the introduction of proposals differing from this content or opposing it.”<sup>3</sup>

It is a sign of a healthy democratic community when informed and responsible citizens engage in an ongoing dialogue on major social issues with their political leaders. This is precisely the kind of community we should strive to support and develop. No less is expected of us, since all are called to take an active part in morally shaping the societies we inhabit and, Christians in particular, to defend the rights of those who are most vulnerable.

1. Second Vatican Council, *The Church in the Modern World*, n. 76.3.

2. Second Vatican Council, *The Church in the Modern World*, n. 74.1.

3. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Doctrinal Note: On Some Questions Regarding the Participation of Catholics in Political Life*, 4. See also the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 2242.



## September 2019 | Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops | Permanent Council

After the Plenary Assembly of Bishops itself, as the second highest instance of authority within the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCCB), the Permanent Council, acting on behalf of (and reporting to) the former, is authorized to speak on behalf of the entire membership of the CCCC between plenary meetings, among its other responsibilities. Elected for a two-year term by the members present at the Plenary Assembly, the Council is composed of a minimum of 12 Bishops, equally represented by English and French speaking parts of the country.

### ***Voting as Catholics: 2019 Federal Election Guide***

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