



**WOMEN'S  
CANVASS  
KIT**

## What's In This Kit?

**WELCOME  
OFL SECRETARY-TREASURER MARIE KELLY**

**ON-THE-JOB CANVASS KIT INTRODUCTION**

**ORGANIZING FOR CHANGE STRATEGY**

**COMMUNICATION TIPS**

**ACTIVIST ACTIONS LIST**

**BASED FACT SHEETS**

- Women Need Child Care
- End Violence Against Women
- Women Need Pay Equity
- Women Need Good Jobs
- Eliminate Poverty

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# HISTORICAL VOTING FACTS

**August, 2011**

Welcome to the **Women Vote '11** election on-the-job canvass of women, by women. This kit, which has become an important vehicle for ensuring a women's voice in Ontario elections, has been developed by the Ontario Federation of Labour Women's Committee.

The upcoming Ontario election is critical for working women, their families and their communities. It comes at a time when the economy is still struggling to recover from the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression and when the political and economic climate for Ontario women has undergone many drastic, negative changes.

We all know that social spending cuts have had a dramatic impact on women. The burden of filling the gaps left by cutbacks to government programs falls disproportionately on women, increasing our load of unpaid care-giving work and decreasing our access to supports such as child care, health care, violence protection and prevention services. Women are also experiencing an erosion of workplace rights such as access to good jobs, pensions, pay equity and we are facing greater obstacles to unionization.

Cuts to all these services have put in place insurmountable barriers for thousands of Ontario women. Especially impacted are Aboriginal women, lesbians, trans-identified, immigrant and racialized women, women living with disabilities, single parents, rural women and low-income households. So many obstacles have been put in place by harmful government policies that all these women have been affected socially, economically and politically.

In the upcoming election, Ontario women find ourselves at a crossroad. We have a lot at stake in this election. In an election period, politicians do a lot of talking about women's issues but after the polls close, commitments to women are often broken. Our future and that of our families and communities deserve more than lip service and empty promises.

Our goal is to mobilize women voters to use their voting power to influence the election agenda and determine its outcome. The purpose of **Women Vote '11** is three-fold:

- **Putting women's issues and concerns front and centre on the political agenda**
- **Obtaining a commitment from women to vote**
- **Drawing more women into the election process**

This campaign has been developed based on the successful models of previous OFL Women Vote election canvasses, the Canadian Auto Workers and the Canadian Union of Public Employees election kits.

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Our campaign has two phases: a pre-election on-the-job canvass and the mobilization of women during the election period to get the vote out.

This election is about basic kitchen table economics! Women are working longer and harder for less and less and are worried about making ends meet. We are worried about putting food on the table. We are worried about sick kids and sick parents. We are worried that the government will continue to balance the budget on our backs while they hand out tax breaks to their banker and corporate friends. Too many women sit down at the kitchen table at night to juggle the bills while carrying the burden of worrying about whether our jobs will be there in the morning.

Women know what matters in this election year. Education and child care matters. Health care matters. Ending violence against women matters. Good jobs and pay equity matters. Obtaining and keeping pensions and benefits matters. The future could be different for women. We make up 51% of Ontario's electorate! This election year, women have the voting power to set the future political direction of Ontario.

Women across this province are swinging into election alert. **Women Vote '11** is about giving voice to women's concerns about our families, our future and our fate as workers in a volatile economy. Together – mother to daughter, sister to sister, friend to friend, worker to co-worker - **Women Have The Deciding Vote.**

In Sisterhood and Solidarity,

Marie Kelly  
OFL Secretary- Treasurer

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# On-The-Job Canvass Kit

## Canvass Introduction

The goal of the canvass is to have women speaking with women in our workplaces, unions and communities. The purpose of **Women Vote '11** is three fold:

- **Putting women's issues and concerns front and centre on the political agenda**
- **Commitment from women to vote**
- **Drawing more women into the election process**

## Why Now?

Ontario has fixed election dates. Our next election will be held on October 6, 2011. Over the last four years, women have seen some progress in their day-to-day lives – whether it is in the home, workplace or community. But it has been painfully slow. Most often we feel like we take two steps forward and one step back. In this election period, it is critical that Ontario women send a strong message to the politicians that “Enough is Enough”! The reality is that if we are to continue to move forward, we must bring political pressure to bear on politicians and carry that pressure all the way to the ballot box.

## Will It Work?

You bet! In the past four years, women continue to mobilize across the province, from all walks of life, with one common goal – the protection of our society and ensuring our rights. We can organize for change one-on-one: be it at a neighbour's kitchen table, the grocery store or lunch break at work. Politicians need to know that women are taking an active role in the next election and know our pathway is straight to the ballot box. We have already seen a massive ad campaign to repackage the Conservatives as kinder, gentler and more caring. The Liberals have, in this pre-election period, rediscovered women's issues. The equality has always been a fundamental principle for the New Democratic Party. We need to let all three political parties know that we will be fully informed when we exercise our voting rights.

## How It Will Work?

The canvass has been designed by women, for women. There are issue sheets, activists' action lists and window decals. At the end of the canvass or in the follow-up, it is our goal that women will commit to at least one action - get out the vote.

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The issue sheets are not meant to cover every issue in exhaustive detail. They have been designed to focus on 5 key areas. Unions and community organizations are encouraged to develop fact sheets that address issues key to their members in community and workplace. The campaign is designed to provide contact, a toll-free number and a website link to allow for distribution of more information on more issues. The action sheets are a useful tool to begin the discussion. In your discussions, build the links between the issue sheets and the experiences women are facing in their day-to-day lives.

The activists' action list has been designed to acknowledge the realities of women's busy, busy lives. In a 29-day campaign period, most people can find 5 minutes, 5 hours and even 5 days to commit to an action. The idea is to get a commitment at the end of the canvass. However, if that is not possible, leave the kit with the sister and do a follow up the next day.

The goal of the distribution of the window decals is to have them everywhere in the province, displayed in the front window of every woman's home, child care centre, community centre and where possible workplaces and schools. Everywhere in this province where a politician drives, walks and visits, it is our goal that they will see the decal – wherever they go.

The OFL Women's Committee has also developed a companion piece to this kit. The Women's Vote '11 Women's Café is a two-hour workshop designed to mobilize women to get out the vote. For copies of the kit or information on the Café workshop, please contact Carrol Anne Sceviour at 1-800-668-9138 ext. 670 or (416) 443-7670, email [csceviour@ofl.ca](mailto:csceviour@ofl.ca) or download from the OFL website.

For more information on issues link [www.ofl.ca](http://www.ofl.ca)

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# Women Organizing For Change

## PLANNING AND ACTION

### OUR VISION

To build a more equitable and better Ontario that works for women and children by empowering women to exercise their right to have their voices heard through the vote. To elect a government whose leadership is accountable to all constituents particularly working class women and families whereby they work to improve the standards of living for all residents of Ontario. Union women want to create a future where our elected officials reflect the Ontarians they represent by encouraging more women to seek positions of leadership.

### OUR OBJECTIVES

1. To empower the women of Ontario to recognize and exercise their political power!
2. Work collectively through the joint efforts of union and community women to deliver an issue-based campaign to women in workplaces and to women in our communities through local strategies and actions.
3. Raise awareness by talking about issues facing women and children in Ontario in a non-partisan way to create accountability of political parties and leadership to every constituent.
4. Encourage women to exercise their political power by exercising their right to vote by securing verbal commitments to action from women.

**TAKING ACTION – WHEN, WHERE AND HOW?**

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## **OUTCOMES – GATHERING RESULTS**

### **EXPECTATIONS**

Making a difference is what this election is about – women voting to create change. The stakes are clearly too high for anyone of us to be a spectator in the 2011 Ontario election. Today in Ontario women make up 51% of the electorate. We have a powerful force at our disposal. Voting is our moment of power. **GET WOMEN TO THE POLLS!**

### **MEASURING RESULTS**

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### **FOLLOW-UP MEETINGS**

**Local**

**Community**

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# Woman-To-Woman Communication Tips

## THE APPROACH

- Approach women in a way that makes you comfortable, be yourself.
- Introduce yourself and why you would like a couple of minutes of their time.
- Use everyday language and keep political jargon to a minimum.
- Think about who it is you are approaching, women you haven't yet met or sisters you know.
- Remember that women's knowledge of the issues will vary, don't make any assumptions.
- Talk with women and not at them.

## TIMING - WHEN TO APPROACH AND FOR HOW LONG?

- At work – in the parking lot, while walking into work, during breaks, during lunches, at union meetings, in the change room, at training sessions or conferences, etc.
- In the community – when picking up children at child care, on the bus, at the grocery store, at functions or family events, at other social or recreational gatherings, etc.
- Canvass at any time you think it is a good opportunity to do so.
- Keep it short 2-3 minutes, the shorter the conversation the more you will keep their attention.
- The faster and more authentic one exchange is the quicker you can get to another meaningful exchange with the next woman.
- Remember you are on their time and women value their time!

## ASK QUESTIONS AND DISCUSS THE ISSUES

- To draw women into a conversation by asking questions such as:
  - **Do you vote?**
  - **Are you happy with the present provincial government's actions?**
  - **If you could change anything in government what would it be?**
- Be sure to read up on facts about the issues in this kit and familiarize yourself with the campaign materials.
- Introduce women to the campaign issues and point out that this is just the tip of the iceberg.
- Suggest that women read the materials for themselves.
- If women feel the issues do not affect them directly suggest that family or friends may be affected or try to connect the issues with other concerns they may have.

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## QUESTIONS, RESPONSES AND CLOSING COMMENTS

- You are not expected to be an expert.
- Take time to carefully listen to questions and responses.
- **Deflect tougher questions to the candidates and their political parties and encourage women to ask the candidates/parties tough questions.**
- Recruit women to do the same as you and encourage them to talk with other women, co-workers, friends and family about the issues.
- Don't argue with women who give unfavourable responses, be polite and thank them for their time (don't take it personally).
- Ask women to have a '**critical eye**' during the election campaign and to question everything, including reports of the media.

## WOMEN HAVE THE POWER – WE HOLD 51% OF THE VOTE

### WHERE TO GET MORE INFORMATION

- Feel free to copy and distribute any of the information in this campaign/canvass kit
- Elections Ontario 1-866-566-9060 (in campaign material) or [www.election.on.ca](http://www.election.on.ca)
  - All information about voting, registering to vote, polling stations and times etc...
- Party information
  - Attend debates and meetings of the candidates
  - Watch the media – newspaper, television adds, radio stations
  - Internet – access available through local libraries

**ENCOURAGE WOMEN TO VOTE BY ASKING  
FOR A VERBAL COMMITMENT  
AND  
THANK WOMEN FOR THEIR TIME**

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## ACTIVIST ACTIONS

Women have busy, busy lives. Here are some ideas of how you can be an advocate whether you have 5 minutes, 5 hours or 5 days! On October 6, 2011 women have the voting power to set the future political direction of this province.

### 5 Minute Activist: 5 minutes in a 28 day election campaign can go a long way!

- Ensure you are on the voters list. While you are at it ask your friends and family to check the list too!
- Display "Women Vote '11" posters at home and post others at work, community centres and child care centres.
- **VOTE!!!**

### 15 minute Activist:

- Share canvass information with friends, family, co-workers and neighbours.
- Talk to candidates at the door on issues important to you and your family.
- VOTE

### 5 Hour Activist: Dedicate time all at once or throughout the month.

- Attend an all-candidates' meeting and question the candidates on their party's record on women.
- Send a letter to the Editor of your local newspaper voicing your views on issues important to you and your family.
- Participate in workplace leafleting.
- Participate in community leafleting— grocery stores, shopping malls, day care centres.
- Join a women's walk or door-to-door canvass.
- Create a social event bringing family and friends to the polls.
- Participate in door-to-door mailbox information distribution.
- **VOTE!!!**

### 5 Day Activist:

- Organize an event to raise support and awareness of our issues.
- Organize an all-candidates meeting.
- Sign up to volunteer at a campaign office.
- **Vote, Vote, Vote!**

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## Woman-To-Woman Historical Voting Facts

### DID YOU KNOW?

The Federal Government determined who had the right to vote in federal elections; the provincial governments determined who had the right to vote in provincial elections. Therefore the struggle for women to win the right to vote had to be won at the federal level as well as province by province. The right of women to vote was obtained after 50 years of struggle. The first women's suffrage organization in Canada was the Toronto's Women's Literary League which was formed around 1886.

- ♀ Ontario was the fifth province where women won the right to vote in 1917.
- ♀ It wasn't until 1919 that women of Ontario could run for office.
- ♀ Women did not gain the right to vote in federal elections until 1918 and even then, not all women gained the right.
- ♀ Women were not legally recognized as persons until 1929.
- ♀ **First Nation women covered by the Indian Act** were prohibited by federal legislation from voting for band councils until 1951, and in federal elections until 1960.
- ♀ **Most women of colour** - Chinese women, "Hindu" or East Indian and, Japanese women - were prohibited from voting at the provincial and federal level until the late 1940s.
- ♀ **To vote in Ontario today you must be:**
  - **18 years or older**
  - **A Canadian citizen**
  - **A resident of Ontario**

### **WHY SHOULD WOMEN VOTE?**

Women exercising their right to vote demonstrates proactive action. We have the voting power to drive and set the political direction of Ontario, so let's create a government that works for us. Don't waste your vote – use it.

**CALL ELECTIONS ONTARIO TO GET ON THE LIST 1-866-566-9066 WWW.ELECTION.ON.CA**

Knowing you have power means being able to negotiate from a position of strength. It means getting done what you want to get done, what you want to achieve for yourself and others. When we talk about power, we mean using it in a democratic way: empowering others. Power as a verb not a noun. Power is meant to be shared, that it is both for the individual's benefit and the common good. Power can't be bought but it may have to be fought for, and it does have to be claimed. - **The Women's Power Handbook**

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