



National Day of Action on Gender Equality

Women in the Canadian film and television industry to initiate a social media campaign, #WomenVote National Day of Action on gender equality, Sept. 20.

September 9, 2015, Vancouver – Women’s issues have been noticeable by their absence in the political conversation leading up to the Canadian federal election on October 19. Women in Film and Television Vancouver, working with other media industry leaders from across the country, want to stimulate more public dialogue on gender equality with a “National Day of Action” on social media on September 20, 2015.

Women and men all across Canada who support gender equality are being asked to take to social media on Sunday, September 20, especially between the hours of 1 PM and 4 PM EST (10 AM to 1 PM PST). People can tweet on Twitter or post to Facebook and change their social media profile pictures. Tweets can be on any subject related to women’s equality and should include the hashtag **#WomenVote** as well as the hashtags **#elxn42** and **#cdnpoli**, if possible. “Social media can be a powerful tool for political activism and for amplifying voices,” says Annelise Larson, a digital strategist and mentor with Veria Search Media Marketing. “We will be tracking the Twitter conversation on **#WomenVote** that day and hope the volume will help shine the light on these issues in Canada.”

“We’ve been tracking and documenting the huge gender disparity in our own industry for several years and the statistics are staggering,” says Sharon McGowan, a Vancouver filmmaker and Associate Professor of Film Production and Creative Writing at UBC, “But that’s only the tip of the iceberg. Women in Canada made advances towards overall gender equality in the 1970s and 1980s but now progress has stalled. In fact some problems, like gender-based violence, seem to be getting worse.”

The last time women’s issues were debated in a federal election was 1984. At the start of 2015, “Up For Debate”, an alliance of over 175 women’s organizations and their allies across Canada, representing more than four million people, proposed another federal leaders’ debate on key women’s issues. After working on this for over a year, they were unable to get agreement from all political parties, including the Prime Minister, to participate. They were able to secure one-on-one interviews with some of the party leaders and these interviews, dealing with questions focused exclusively on women, will be presented along with comment and analysis at a live event on September 21 at Toronto’s Isabel Bader Theatre.

Organizers of the National Day of Action feel it is imperative that women’s equality be discussed during the election campaign and would like this Day of Action to draw audiences to the interviews by Up For Debate and to bring more attention to the issues raised. “We’re not a special interest group; women represent 50% of the population,” says Barbara Janes, a former National Film Board

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executive who now serves on the Board of Directors of the St. John's International Women's Film Festival. "It's unimaginable that in 2015 it's still considered acceptable in Canada that women occupy only 25% of the seats in Parliament, that the income gap between men and women still remains at 20%, and we have no comprehensive national strategy to address violence against women. What's even more shocking is that these issues are not even on the political agenda anymore."

More information on the #WomenVote National Day of Action can be found at https://docs.google.com/document/d/1HQidXPWx5pu0EPmBkd_4P6gTwuwWjrS0G-J-ue8gt6Y

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