



#WomenVote National Day of Action Trends on Twitter

Social media campaign organized by women in the Canadian film and television industry trended #1 on Twitter Canada Sunday afternoon.

September 22, 2015, Vancouver – Nearly 900 Twitter users from all across Canada took part in a social media discussion in support of gender equality on Sunday, September 20, that was seen over 5 million times by nearly 1.4 million users. The #WomenVote National Day of Action trended #1 on Twitter Canada for 4½ hours during the peak hours of the campaign and beyond between 11 AM and 3:30 PM PST.

Organized by Women in Film and Television Vancouver (WIFT-V), working with other media industry leaders and women’s organizations across the country, #WomenVote National Day of Action was designed to stimulate more public dialogue on gender equality during a federal election campaign that so far has not addressed issues of women’s equality. Planned to complement the Up For Debate public event in Toronto scheduled for September 21, the conversation was centred on the hashtag #WomenVote, as well as political hashtags #elxn42 and #cdnpoli.

“This campaign was a natural fit for WIFT-V because gender equality for our members is central to our mandate,” says Sharon McGowan, a filmmaker and UBC Associate Professor of Film Production and Creative Writing who sits on the Board of Women in Film and Television Vancouver. “We want women filmmakers to have access to higher paid decision-making jobs in a male-dominated industry and to have the opportunity to tell stories featuring a diversity of complex female characters that don’t conform to sexualized stereotypes. The work we do in showing strong women onscreen can help young girls imagine themselves as leaders in a variety of situations.”

During the online event on Sunday women and men all across Canada who support gender equality were asked to take to social media and to tweet on any subject related to women’s equality. The organizers felt sure they were tapping into a growing sense of unease among many female voters that there has been no mention in the election campaign of the obstacles still faced by women in Canada. “There were a lot of highly publicized cases of sexual harassment, date-rape and assault in the past couple of years and women are very concerned that gender-based violence in general hasn’t decreased,” says Barbara Janes, a former National Film Board executive who is now on the Board of Directors of the St. John’s International Women’s Film Festival. “On the economic front, the gender gap in income is still around 20% and lots of women have to take low-paying part-time work because they don’t have access to affordable day-care. So it’s a complex web of problems that really requires a comprehensive approach from government.”

Annelise Larson, a digital strategist and mentor with Veria Search Media Marketing, tracked Sunday’s Twitter conversation on #WomenVote and feels the volume of participation shows there’s a strong desire across Canada for the kind of leaders’ debate the Up For Debate coalition had

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requested. “Women’s issues are Canadian issues and we expect the conversation around #UpforDebate will prove that point even further. We can’t wait to see the full interviews with the leaders that participated on TheStar.com in English and LeDevoir.com in French. We expect the online conversation will continue and be an important part of the election,” she said.

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