

Shopping for candidates [CA-ON] ^[1]

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See text below.

EXCERPTS

Ontario Women: You're stressed, you're exhausted, the kids are fighting WWII and the radio and TV have nothing but political attack ads.

A pox on all their houses, you say? Why not just tune out and leave them to their petty feuds? Sounds tempting, but don't do it. This Ontario election is just too important to sleep through.

It will determine who gets to make the rules for the next four years about everything from our kids' schooling, to how much money there is for our cities and towns, to the quality of the air we breathe, the water we drink and the food we eat.

As irritating as all the political noise is, and as corny as all the ads are, we do need to dig out the differences between the parties.

This is especially important for women voters who make up 51 per cent of the electorate.

As women, we are less likely to be seduced by claims that "my tax cut is bigger than your tax cut."

We know that big tax cuts (which lead to "cutting the fat" out of government) has meant that we all pay a lot more down the road.

We have seen up to 50 kids crammed into a school classroom, textbooks shared among six kids and art and music courses chopped.

Polls show that as women we are more likely to care about social programs such as licensed child care, where funding has been cut and federal funding blocked.

Unlike most European countries, or even Quebec which enrolls kids in high quality, licensed child development programs for \$5 a day, in Ontario, your children are your responsibility and yours alone. This not only holds kids back in their social and educational development, it places huge stress on the whole family.

Some of us live in nice homes in decent neighbourhoods. But we can't stomach the thought that thousands of kids are living in poverty and chaos because of a lack of rent controls and no new, affordable housing is being built. Child poverty has increased by 41 per cent since 1989. This is almost half the future citizens of our city.

While polls confirm that, as women, we see many of the issues differently than men, our views are too often left out of the equation. If we ignore the election, we guarantee the status quo, or worse. But if we decide to exercise the power we have because of our numbers, what a huge difference we could make.

What if we decided to vote for a party that cares about public education, or clean water, or the environment, affordable housing, or getting kids out of poverty?

What if we exercised our collective vote for a party that would help women and their kids trying to get out of an abusive relationship?

So shop around for the right candidate. Beware of political deals and promises that seem too good to be true - they probably are. Read the fine print, and check out the features you are interested in from public education to women's counselling programs. Don't be afraid to test drive a politician at an all-candidates meeting by asking a tough question about a feature (or an issue) you care about.

The absolute worst way to vote is to impulse shop, doing no research and then voting for the name you recognize. You'll pay way too much and probably won't get what you want.

When women get together we can make a difference.

On Oct. 2, women of Ontario unite, use your power and vote for a government that works for us.

- reprinted from Toronto Star

Region: Ontario ^[2]

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