



Marking a Century of Women's Suffrage
Commémorer un siècle du droit de vote des femmes

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Making Change: Participating in a Policy Convention

Making Change is a collection of skill-based education modules, created to equip young women for a variety of political engagement.

These toolkits have three objectives:

1. To **engage and educate** women on a variety of issues that affect their daily lives in work and day-to-day
2. To **enable** women across Canada to explore different pathways to make change and engage in politics and policy on these issues
3. To **provide** policy options, strategies for engagement, and tools of empowerment to allow women to participate in the political and policy process in Canada



Engaging in your party's policy convention is a way to influence the direction and priorities of your party, a way to push a particular policy on the agenda, and a way to make change through the party you align with.

In addition to the national policy convention, many national parties have provincial conventions, and some parties, both national and provincial, have a specific day or convention for youth.

There are two main ways to engage.

First, you can obtain voting delegate status and attend your party's convention, and have a say on resolutions that come to the floor.

Second, you can work on a specific resolution as a way to influence your party.

Whether you are involved in a provincial or federal party, a voting delegate, or engaged in drafting a resolution with your electoral district association or special commission, a policy convention can be a great way to have your voice heard.

The Basics: Attending and Voting

To participate in a convention you need to register. **The fees associated with conventions can be prohibitive.** Your riding association likely has some funds available to support travel and participation. Look into this in advance to make sure you can attend. If your party has a youth wing, they may also have supports to help you travel to and participate the convention.

To actually vote on the resolutions that come forward you need to be a **delegate**. The process of becoming a delegate varies by party, but your involvement in your local electoral district association is often key.

Getting involved in your local party organization is important.



The Basics: Proposing a policy resolution

Need-To-Know-Info:

- The first thing you should do is check timelines! When is your party's policy convention? When do proposals need to be submitted? **Get started early.**
 - Too late for this year? Get the wheels in motion for the next policy convention, and use this year as an opportunity to learn.
- Make sure you are familiar with the process.
 - In most cases your proposal must pass through your Electoral District Association (EDA) before it will be moved to the national policy convention. **This approval can take up to three months.**
 - Going through a committee - like a women's or youth commission - is another option to move a policy resolution up the ladder.

Things to consider:

- Check whether the issue you care about has been part of a resolution in the past.
 - Did it pass? If so, don't duplicate the work. Focus instead on making sure the issue stays on the agenda of the party and informs decision making and policy.
 - Did it fail? Find out why it failed so you can maximize your chances of success.
- Policies with large budget implications are least likely to pass, especially at a provincial level.



Drafting a Policy Proposal:

What makes a good proposal? How to draft research? Are there any issues outside the scope of a policy convention? How do I conduct research?

- To start, check out examples of past proposals to see what has been proposed and what has passed. This will help you:
 - Craft a success policy proposal;
 - Make sure you are not repeating a previously passed resolution;
 - Evaluate what kind of groups propose and move resolutions, this can help you identify who you may consider approaching for support of your idea;
- Your party probably has a guide for resolutions, use this to make sure your resolution fits the required form. You might be able to find it online or by contacting your local electoral district association.
 - For example, there might be a specified number of words, a requirement for consultation with party members, or have specific sections that must be included.
- Do research, find some concrete data that supports the policy proposal. Use this data to root your 'whereas' clauses. But don't leave out value statements. Include one 'whereas' clause that communicates the principal behind your resolution.
- Find someone with common policy interest and write together - multiple ideas and perspectives of the policy problem and landscape will yield stronger policy solutions. Consider working with another electoral district to start building relationships right from the start.

A proposal should be kept to one page maximum and should be as specific as possible throughout.



Gaining Support: How do you get your policy to the convention floor?

Whose support do you need? How can you get support? What makes a strong team? How should you consult on policy draft and revise it based on input?

- Depending on the rules of your party, your policy may only make it to the floor if it is submitted through your electoral district association, through the provincial organization, or a committee.
- Networking and recruiting supporters is key before convention. You'll need individuals on specific committees to help you prioritize your resolution and general members to vote for it. Recruiting specific groups will also give you a greater chance.
- What groups you should approach depends on your party and whether it is a provincial or federal party. For example, you may want to approach like provincial caucuses (who can endorse motions at their meetings during convention).

Party-Specific Suggestions

Federal Liberals:

If you are under the age of 25, the easiest way to get your policy to the convention floor is to become a member of Young Liberals of Canada and/or your provincial youth association. You can also do this through campus associations. Young Liberals will send out a call for proposals about 6 months prior to a national convention (the next is Halifax 2018). The national youth VP policy will sift through national policy proposals and suggest edits or the amalgamation of similar policies.

On the provincial level, the provincial chapter of Young Liberals will typically hold a policy convention with campus associations and registered YLs. At this conference, anyone can propose any policy and the members of the convention will vote for the top two to take to the provincial caucus, held annually. This is your strongest "in" provincially.

NDP:

The Federal NDP also has a youth wing. Whether you decide to work through your local electoral district association or the youth wing depends on where you are located, where you have allies and networks, and the issue you are focusing on.

There are also opportunities for "Emergency Resolutions" - the call will open at the start of convention and close some time on the first day. These resolutions must be in response to something that happened very recently - ie a resolution to fight climate change wouldn't work on its own, but a resolution to implement a policy in response to a recent hurricane would.



CPC:

Ahead of party conventions, EDAs form policy review subcommittees to closely review the most recent policy document and highlight areas that they feel need revision. Any resolutions are put forward by individual members to the EDA, which then collectively decides how best to draft and present proposals. Then, EDAs meet in progressively widening district groups to discuss and debate each committee's resolutions.

All proposals that make it to the end of the process are then presented at the federal convention. Campus Conservative groups are another avenue for engaging with policy and are structured in a way that members are part of the CPC team and can contribute to the party itself without the limitations of operating within an exclusively youth wing. Overall, working through EDAs and joining policy review committees is the most effective way to influence policy and these groups are always appreciative of and welcoming to young voices!

At the Convention: How does a policy get passed? How do you campaign? How do you present/write/pitch policy?

Policy is passed based on a vote among voting delegates or in some cases, all party members present at a convention.

This process is often governed by Robert's Rules, a system of rules commonly used in meetings. Make sure you are familiar with these rules and have hand cheat sheet. Here's one [example](#) from the University of Northern Carolina.

Because there is not enough time to build all the necessary networks at the convention, it can be helpful to partner with other wings of the party or electoral district associations **before** you get to the voting stage.

You should also think about the format of the final debate on the convention floor. You'll want a **strategy to handle debate**.

- Make sure you identify supporters to crowd the "Yea" microphone.
 - Consider whether they will have speeches ready and what background visuals they might need.
 - Also consider whether anyone can anyone join them at the microphone, either to speak or whose presence is powerful or symbolical. For example, having someone personally impacted by the policy alongside an MP is particularly powerful.
- It is also common to have supporters at the "nea" microphones, for example, making a "this doesn't go far enough" statement.



Tips on Presenting:

- Use data as a strong hook. Big numbers are better than statistics. Start your floor pitch with “500,000 people in (province) are unemployed” rather than “2% of residents face unemployment”.
- Stories are particularly powerful for garnering an emotional response
- Speak slowly and loudly. Feel free to take your time and use silence and pauses as necessary
- Think about what the opposition might say and try to acknowledge such issues

Google your provincial party to find their most recent convention and any plans for upcoming conventions. You may also be able to find a record of resolutions proposed and passed.

	Liberal	Conservative	NDP	Other
Federal	Liberal Guide to resolutions 2016 Liberal policy resolutions Next Policy Convention	Next Policy Convention	2016 NDP Policy Resolutions Note: does not indicate what passed. Next Policy Convention	Green Party 2016 Resolutions