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Canadian Muslim Voting Guide: Federal Election 2019

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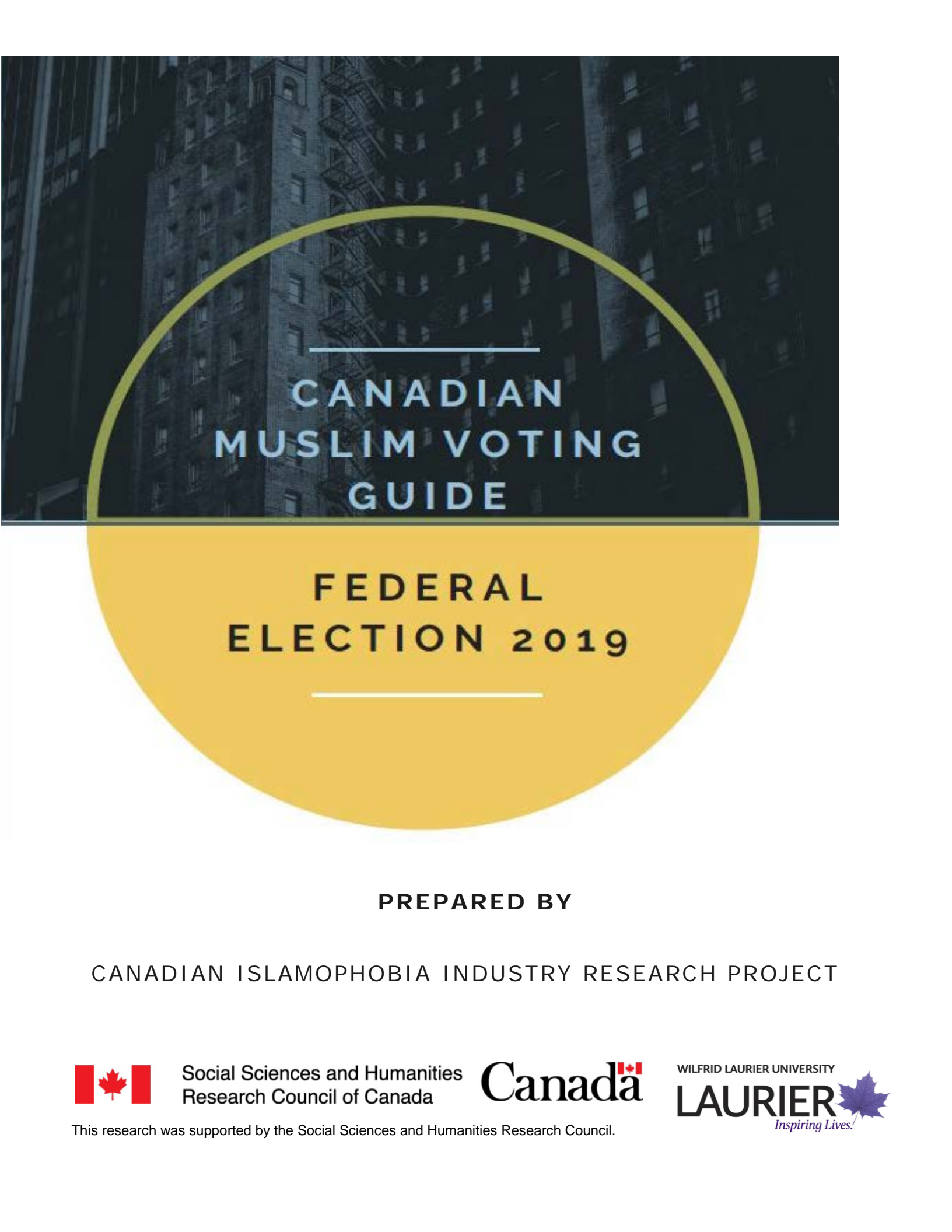
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CANADIAN MUSLIM VOTING GUIDE

FEDERAL ELECTION 2019

PREPARED BY

CANADIAN ISLAMOPHOBIA INDUSTRY RESEARCH PROJECT



Social Sciences and Humanities
Research Council of Canada

Canada 

WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY

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SUMMARY OF FEDERAL PARTY GRADES

| Key Issues | Justin Trudeau | Andrew Scheer | Jagmeet Singh | Elizabeth May | Maxime Bernier |
|---|----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| Alt-Right Groups and Islamophobia | P | F | P | P | F |
| M103 | P | F | P | P | F |
| Religious Freedom and Dress in Quebec | N | N | N | F | F |
| Immigration/Refugees | P | F | P | P | F |
| Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) Movement | F | F | N | F | F |
| Foreign Policy | F | F | P | P | F |
| Overall | N | F | P | N | F |

Grades: P – Pass; N - Needs Improvement; F – Fail.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide assigns a grade to each federal political party Leader's response to identified key issues of importance to the interests of Canadian Muslims and the wider geopolitical concerns that affect Muslims globally. The criteria used to determine these grades has been based on whether a party leader's particular political standpoints and/or policy initiatives are positive or detrimental to the interests of Canadian Muslims and the wider geopolitical concerns that affect Muslims globally.

INTRODUCTION

On October 21st, Canadians will be voting in the 2019 federal election after what has been a very tight and heated election campaign. The four major national parties include:

- Justin Trudeau's Liberal Party of Canada
- Andrew Scheer's Conservative Party of Canada
- Jagmeet Singh's New Democratic Party
- Elizabeth May's Green Party of Canada
- Maxime Bernier's People's Party of Canada.

Party leaders have participated in four Leader's debates and town halls across the country, including National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM)'s Town Halls so far having featured Jagmeet Singh and Elizabeth May.^[1]

MUSLIM CANADIAN VOTERS

As reported by the Toronto Star,^[2] the Canadian-Muslim community heads to the polls more than the national average. During the 2015 federal election the Muslim voter turnout was 79% in comparison to the 67% national average. In the 2011 federal election, this number was only 46.6%, indicating an over 20% increase in voting by the Muslim Canadian community.^[3] There are 23 ridings across Canada with a Muslim population of 10% or more, many of which are swing ridings in the GTA. As such, the evaluation and analysis of the Candidate's positions on various issues is of vital importance to a growing Muslim voting base.

KEY ISSUES

This guide is focused on current issues and concerns, however the candidate's views on topics such as the Quebec Mosque shooting and the Omar Khadr case would also tell us how they stand in relation to these important flash points

that are of concern to Canadian Muslims. While the guide does not provide an exhaustive overview of all the wider issues that concern Muslims such as the environment, economy, and government policies, it does provide a snapshot of some of the key issues relating to Muslim cultural politics in Canada that will remain salient far past the upcoming election.

This guide **highlights key issues** for the Canadian Muslim community for the federal election that include the leaders' positions on:

- a) Alt Right Groups and Islamophobia,
- b) M-103 (a nonbinding motion condemning Islamophobia, religious discrimination and systemic racism in Canada passed by the House of Commons in 2017),
- c) Religious Freedom,
- d) Immigration/Refugees,
- e) Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions Movement,
- f) Canadian Foreign Policy.

The candidates' stances on these key issues are drawn from media interviews, parliament voting history, tweets, official statements and public appearances. The description and impact of each issue is outlined in this guide along with the documented views of each candidate.

In order to make informed decisions about issues that matter to our families and communities, it is important to investigate the views of each of the federal candidates in order to understand the kind of vision they have for Canada's future as a diverse democratic nation.

This guide provides a resource for not only Canadian Muslims but for anyone interested in the issues identified here as important markers for political decision making that will affect the future of our country.

KEY ISSUES

ALT-RIGHT GROUPS & ISLAMOPHOBIA

Islamophobia is best understood as a system of oppression that involves a) individual actions (e.g. name calling, vandalism, harassment, etc.); b) ideologies and stereotypes (e.g. Muslims are terrorists and “invaders,” Muslim women are backward and oppressed) and c) systemic practices (institutional forms of discrimination such as the denial of jobs or housing, racial profiling, security policies targeting Muslims, etc.).^[4]

Islamophobia impacts not only Muslims but anyone perceived as Muslim, so Sikhs for example have mistakenly been subject to Islamophobic violence and harassment. According to a 2018 survey^[5] by the Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East^[6] more than half (57%) of Canadians responded that Islamophobia is “an increasingly disturbing problem in Canada,” and 60% agreed that the government “must take action to combat Islamophobia” in Canada.

In addition, one in three Canadian Muslims reports having experienced discrimination in the past five years, primarily due to religion or ethnicity.^[7] The Alt-Right is a political movement comprised of

a constellation of individuals and groups purveying various extreme far-right ideologies largely thorough the internet and social media platforms that include white supremacy and white nationalism, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism and homophobia as well as anti-feminist groups advocating men’s rights and eco-fascists (an amalgam of environmentalism and white supremacy).

In the case of Islamophobia, groups based in far-right Christian and Zionist ideologies also play a prominent role. The unfolding rise of Alt-Right and white nationalist groups have been tied to the escalation of hate crimes against Muslims and other minority groups. According to a Statistics Canada report published in 2017, hate crimes towards Muslims tripled between 2012-2015.^{[8][9]} Canadian white nationalist groups are also gaining traction in the political sphere with the Canadian Nationalist Party headed by Travis Patron receiving official status to run as a federal party.^[10]

In this section we examine the Candidate’s responses to, and in some cases their demonstrated connections with various groups under the Alt-Right umbrella.

| Key Issue | Justin Trudeau | Andrew Scheer | Jagmeet Singh | Elizabeth May | Maxime Bernier |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| Alt-Right Groups and Islamophobia | P | F | P | P | F |

ANALYSIS

Justin Trudeau

Trudeau has not been connected to Alt-Right or anti-Muslim groups or individuals the way in which Scheer has (see below), a point that he emphasized when highlighting that Scheer has yet to condemn far-right conspiracy theorists and has spoken at white nationalist rallies^[11] Trudeau is a common target of the Alt-Right and its propaganda machine in the name of promoting Islamophobia. Alt-Right media outlets have continued to utilize anti-Muslim rhetoric as a means of creating propaganda against Trudeau.^[12] An example of this is Rebel Media’s Ezra Levant calling Trudeau’s political platform an “Islam-loving election strategy” and pejoratively stating that Trudeau “loves Muslim immigrants.”^[13]

PASS

PASS: Trudeau has no known ties to white nationalist groups and has in fact been the target of their Islamophobic hate campaigns. Despite the recently uncovered photos of his problematic past actions engaging in racial and cultural mockery by wearing Orientalist costuming, a turban, and brown face make-up^[14] which raise serious concern, the pass is based on his public stances against Islamophobia and hate while an elected official.

Andrew Scheer

Andrew Scheer's connections with Alt-Right and anti-Islam groups, organizations, and individuals have been increasingly uncovered prior to the beginning of this year's election run. Along with other members of the Conservative Caucus, Scheer spoke at a Yellow Vest rally where attendees, such as neo-Nazi supporter Faith Goldy and other members of far-right groups were present.^[15] At the rally Scheer declared: "We're fighting for you. We're standing with you."^[16]

Scheer's campaign manager for the federal Conservative Party, Hamish Marshall was an IT specialist for the far-right Canadian media outlet Rebel Media. Marshall played a key role in Scheer's 2019 election as the Conservative Party leader. In an attempt to distance himself from the controversy surrounding Marshall's association with far-right Rebel Media, Scheer unconvincingly claimed that he was uncertain of Marshall's past clients.^[17]

Another example of Scheer's involvement with Islamophobic public figures includes his connection with Ghada Melek who ran for the Ontario Progressive-Conservative Party in 2016. She dropped out of the running when some of her homophobic and Islamophobic tweets from 2013-2014 came to light, including a retweet stating: "Anywhere Islamists live it turns into an Economic Hell.. Look at Detroit!!!!!"^[18] Melek later joined the federal Conservative party. Scheer made it clear that he would not be vetting Conservative party members for any past racist or homophobic comments they had made as long as they apologized.^[19]

FAIL

FAIL: Scheer's well documented association with controversial far-right and Islamophobic public figures makes him complicit with their actions through his tacit endorsement and their integration into the Conservative party.

Jagmeet Singh

Singh filed a complaint over PPC leader Maxime Bernier for being allowed to participate in the national leaders' debates stating that: "It is wrong that Mr. Bernier be given a platform to promote an ideology of hate that spreads prejudice and disinformation."^[20] In addition, Singh has outlined plans for confronting systemic racism, including a proposal for banning carding, increasing funding for hate crime units, and tackling online racism.^[21]

PASS

PASS: Singh has openly denounced racism and hate and outlined actionable strategies to tackle systemic forms of discrimination.

Elizabeth May

The Green Party was forced to respond after a federal candidate posted an image of three men standing in front of a barbeque with the caption: "Schomanner roasting a pig (we sent the leftovers to Denmark in support of the protesters of the Muhammed comic)." The official policy states, the party "has zero tolerance for sexism, Islamophobia, antisemitism, misogyny, homophobia or hate speech of any kind."

The candidate in question, Erik Schomann, eventually resigned after apologizing for his comments as a result of NCCM's call for Elizabeth May to have him removed from the party.^[22] His comments elicited a wide array of reactions, calling him "embarrassing" and "disgusting" but nevertheless he continued to garner support from members of the Green party.

Elizabeth May also made a statement supporting the proposed National Day of Remembrance and Action against Islamophobia. The Green Party was the first federal party to endorse the proposal which commemorates the Quebec mosque terror attack. She raised concerns over the threat posed by the Alt-Right movement acknowledging that: "The growth of far-right movements across North America and in other Western countries threatens the safety of anyone deemed – through the colour of their skin, their accent, their attire, or their beliefs – to be unwelcome." She went on to state that Canadians needed to come together to condemn violence against Muslims and bigotry.^[23]

PASS

PASS: May has made statements in support of the proposed National Day of Remembrance and Action against Islamophobia and vocalized her opposition to the hate-mongering of the Alt-Right.

Maxime Bernier

There are multiple instances of Bernier's support to individuals aligned with blatantly Islamophobic and anti-Muslim views and movements. For example, Bernier has been pictured with neo-Nazis who are part of the Northern Guard.^[24] He went as far as to expel a candidate who asked him to denounce white supremacy.^[25] Though he stated that racist people are not welcomed in his party, photos have surfaced of Bernier posing with white nationalist Paul Fromm and the Northern Guard. He has been endorsed by other white nationalists such as Kevin Goudreau, and had members of PEGIDA Canada attend his speeches, representing the type of people that are being attracted to his platform.^[26] When asked whether he can guarantee none of his party's candidates have similar connections to white nationalist or racist groups, the leader said he could. (see below) "Yeah," he said, "all our candidates have been approved by the party."^[27]

According to a Toronto Star investigation, Bernier had three riding association executive members and a provincial organizer for the People's Party of Canada who were identified as making hateful comments about immigrants, Muslims and other visible minorities.^[28] On September 23rd, the PPC Facebook page posted a video deriding multiculturalism in Canada, stating: "in the past, immigrants who came to Canada readily integrated into our society," while showing pictures of Japanese-Canadians being loaded onto trains for internment.^[29] At his party's inaugural conference in August 2018, Bernier stood with his keynote speaker Benjamin Dichter who claimed Islamists were "infesting" the Liberal Party of Canada.^[30]

Bernier himself has made inflammatory statements that purvey Islamophobic ideologies including: "Islamism, or radical Islam, is the biggest threat to freedom, peace and security in the world today"^[31] and "if you're afraid of Islamist terrorism, Sharia law, or traditionalist Muslim teachings then you're considered an Islamophobe by the Left."^[32]

FAIL

FAIL: Bernier indicates little concern for the plight of oppressed people around the world and international human rights violations. His take on Canada playing a smaller role in foreign affairs is not substantiated with a concrete plan of what this would entail nor has he provided an accounting of the consequences of selective withdrawal from foreign affairs.

KEY ISSUES

MOTION 103

Motion-103 was introduced in December 2016 by Liberal MP Iqra Khalid. It is a non-binding motion that calls on the Canadian government to condemn Islamophobia and recognize the need to “quell the public climate of fear and hate.”^[33] The Motion called on Canadian parliament to “condemn Islamophobia” and asked for a parliamentary committee to launch a study on how the government could address Islamophobia.^[34] The motion passed in March 2017 following the Quebec mosque shooting.^[35]

In response to tabling the motion, MP Iqra Khalid received over 50,000 emails regarding the motion including highly offensive racist, Islamophobic, and sexist comments many of which were directly threatening. Many Canadian politicians held

reservations regarding the non-binding motion as singling-out Muslims, limiting free speech (specifically by curtailing open criticism of Islam) and that Islamophobia is too ambiguous to define. The motion elicited a number of counter-protests and triggered responses from far-right white nationalist street movements.^[36]

M-103 is of importance to Canadian Muslims because it not only provides the acknowledgement that Islamophobia is a problem of national concern, but also emphasizes the need to combat religious discrimination and systemic racism. The Candidate’s views and responses to M-103 indicate their commitment (or lack thereof), in challenging Islamophobia and related forms of oppression.

| Key Issue | Justin Trudeau | Andrew Scheer | Jagmeet Singh | Elizabeth May | Maxime Bernier |
|-----------|----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| M103 | P | F | P | P | F |

ANALYSIS

Justin Trudeau

The report based on the Parliamentary hearings on M-103 recommended^[37] that the government commemorate January 29th as a National Day of Action and Remembrance on Islamophobia.^[38] On the one-year anniversary of the attack, Justin Trudeau made a statement condemning the shooting and emphasized the importance of tackling Islamophobia, but did not go as far as to declare a National Day of Action. As M-103 was proposed by a Liberal MP, Trudeau received both the credit and critique that came along with the process of passing the motion.

PASS

PASS: While Trudeau did not go far enough to endorse the National Day of Action and Remembrance he openly supported the motion and the intent behind it.

Andrew Scheer

Scheer voted in opposition of M-103 stating that he “was fighting for free speech.”^[39]^[40] He went on to stipulate that Universities that undermine free speech would not receive federal funding.^[41] This move undermines M-103, while using free speech as a guise to promote unlimited hate-speech and threats as “the free expression of ideas.” Simultaneously, Scheer condemns the BDS movement (see below).

Scheer's campaign Outreach Chair, Georgeanne Burke was a founder of Canadian Citizens for Charter Rights and Freedoms. The group protested M-103 bringing together anti-Islam pundits and anti-Muslim groups.^[42] She was listed as having an advisory role on the Facebook page while working on Scheer's campaign. Burke stated she was part of the group for only a few weeks after its inception and her continued commenting on the Facebook page does not constitute involvement. These facts place Scheer in close company with Islamophobic hate groups.

FAIL

FAIL: Scheer's opposition to M-103 under the guise of free speech and his proximity & connection with known anti-Muslim organizers raises serious concerns.

Jagmeet Singh

When asked about his stance on M- 103, Jagmeet Singh highlighted the importance of naming injustices in order to better combat hate.^[43] His comment responds to the critique of "singling out" Muslims for favourable treatment when naming Islamophobia specifically. He indicated his own first-hand experience with Islamophobia as a result of his appearance and the general perception of "what a Muslim looks like." Singh made headlines in 2017 regarding his response to a racially charged disturbance at a campaign event. During the disruption he was accused by an attendee of having ties to the "Muslim Brotherhood" and of being "in bed with Sharia." Rather than clarifying that he is not Muslim, Singh challenged the heckler on her hate and eventually had the crowd cheering "love and courage" to drown out her comments.^[44]

PASS

PASS: Singh's response affirms the need for M-103 and offers a first hand account for the saliency of Islamophobia that is experienced not only by Muslims but anyone perceived to be Muslim.

Elizabeth May

Elizabeth May voted in favour of M-103 and posted a segment on her website discussing the way in which fake news has impacted the way in which the discourse surrounding M-103 was unfolding. She debunks the way in which the Bill has been critiqued as a means to single out and privilege Muslims.^[45]

PASS

PASS: May has helped to counter the misperceptions of M-103 and highlight the role of fake news in purveying false narratives.

Maxime Bernier

Bernier publicly opposed Motion-103,^[2] on his website claiming the bill is a threat to "free speech."^[46] He argues that the motion is a first step "towards restricting our right to criticize Islam" and that "given the international situation, and the fact that jihadi terrorism is today the most important threat to our security, I think this is a serious concern we have to take into account." Bernier called for the amending of the Motion to remove the word "Islamophobia" before it passed.

FAIL

FAIL: Bernier relies on Islamophobic fear-mongering by using rhetoric that invokes "jihadi terrorism" as a means of countering M-103 and along with Scheer weaponizes free speech to condemn the motion.

KEY ISSUES

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND DRESS IN QUEBEC (BILL 21 & BILL 62)

Quebec's Bill-21, passed into law June 2019 sponsored by Simon Jolin-Barrette, the Minister of Immigration, Diversity, and Inclusiveness as an act "respecting the laicity of the state."^[48] The bill included a notwithstanding clause that allowed for an override of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms for the duration of five years (Chapter C-12). Bill 21 would prevent public servants/ employees from wearing religious symbols while at work. The bill has been met with controversy as it specifically impacts religious minorities who wear hijabs, turbans, and kippahs.^[49]

As a provincial bill, the federal government's jurisdiction is limited,^[50] but the topic has become a point of contention for the candidates attempting to balance a non-discriminatory stance with appeasing the province of Quebec. Also of concern is Bill-62, otherwise known as the Niqab Ban, which forbids providing public services to people who have their face covered

within the province of Quebec. This includes using public transportation and all other city services.^[51] Muslim women who wear the niqab (face veil) must now apply for exemption from the law each time they attempt to access public services.^[52] Quebec Superior Court Justice Marc-André Blanchard suspended the bill in 2018, stopping the law from going into effect due to the "irreparable harm" it would cause Muslim women.^[53]

Legislation that allows the state to regulate and control religious dress codes undermines religious freedom and civil liberties. Bill-21 specifically affects Muslim women who have become exiled from civic spaces and employment since the law forbids public servants including police officers, prosecutors, and public-school teachers from wearing religious symbols. Some Muslim teachers who under this law would lose their jobs if they continue to wear the hijab (headscarf), have filed a lawsuit in Quebec Superior Court on the grounds of religious and gender-based discrimination.^[54]

| Key Issue | Justin Trudeau | Andrew Scheer | Jagmeet Singh | Elizabeth May | Maxime Bernier |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| Religious Freedom and Dress in Quebec | N | N | N | F | F |

ANALYSIS

Justin Trudeau

In a speech he gave in June 2019, Trudeau condemned Bill-21 but also did not speak to a course of action following his stance on the issue.^[55] He stated: "I have been very clear on this issue and on issues that have preceded that my government, and I personally, will always stand up to defend minority rights everywhere across Canada. We do not feel that it is the government's responsibility or any government's interest to legislate what people should be wearing. We have a strong Charter of Rights and Freedoms that guarantees freedom of religion, freedom of expression and we will certainly ensure that our views are well known and continue to defend Canadian's rights."^[56] However, unlike Bill-62, Bill-21 was filed using a notwithstanding clause, allowing it to override the Charter of Rights and Freedoms thereby circumventing the Constitutional protection of religious rights.

Commenting on Bill-62 Trudeau stated: “I don’t think it’s the government’s business to tell a woman what she should or shouldn’t be wearing.”^[57] He further stated that the federal government would be looking at the implications of the law, but gave little direction as to what this meant.^[58] A day prior to making this statement, he stated that the federal government would not interfere with the rights of the provincial government in passing their own legislation.

Needs Improvement

NEEDS IMPROVEMENT: More decisive leadership is required to act on the stated concerns with these laws.

Andrew Scheer

Scheer addressed the topic of Bill-21 during the first National Debate, stating that the Conservative party would always stand up for individual liberties such as freedom of expression and would never impose such a Bill at the federal level. However he also stated that he would not act on the Bill as “right now people in Quebec who are opposed to this legislation, or affected by this legislation, are pursuing it in the courts, as is their right. And ultimately the courts will make a decision on that. We’re not going to intervene in the case that people who are against this Bill are doing that. They are using the courts as is the right and the courts will ultimately decide on that.”^[59]

Needs Improvement

NEEDS IMPROVEMENT: More decisive leadership is required to propose actions that address the stated concerns with these laws.

Jagmeet Singh

When discussing Bill-21, Jagmeet Singh draws on the socio-emotional implications it brings to bear on religious minorities. He describes feelings of unbelonging that are attached to allowing legislation like Bill-21 to come to fruition and calls it legislated discrimination.^[60] During a campaign stop, Singh was told to cut off his turban in a confrontation with a Montreal man. He was told that if he removed his turban, he would look more Canadian but Singh responded saying that Canadians looked like all sorts of people.^[61] Despite his concerns with Bill-21 and his personal encounter with the backlash that has arisen from it, Singh made headlines on September 22nd as he appeared on Quebec talk show Tout le Monde en Parle and stated that while he was against laws that divided people, an NDP government would not join legal challenges to the law.^[62]

Needs Improvement

NEEDS IMPROVEMENT: More decisive leadership is required to propose actions that address the stated concern with these laws.

Elizabeth May

Elizabeth May stated that she found Bill-21 “very distressing” as an infringement on individual human rights. Addressing the issue in the first national debate, she stated the importance of considering the history of division in Canada and that she would not want to fuel this discord by also infringing on Quebec’s provincial rights. Her ill-conceived, untenable, and problematic solution was that she would relocate Quebecers wearing religious symbols by finding them jobs in other provinces. This would effectively banish religious minorities exercising their right to freedom of expression from the province. May does not force party candidates to publicly oppose the ban^[3] though she made her disapproval of the law clear in April.^[64]

At a National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM) Town Hall, moderator and Executive Director of NCCM Mustafa Farooq asked: “will you tell your candidates that they have no business policing what Canadians or Quebecers wear?” May replied: “It’s not just a question of one issue at a time where the leader can insist on an issue or not,” she said. “I have no powers to insist that our members of Parliament vote with me, nor do I have any powers to insist on what they say.”

To this Farooq replied: “There is nothing conscionable about second-class citizenship...When we say that people who work with us can say that some of our colleagues, like a Jewish colleague wearing a kippah...in 2019, couldn’t become a prosecutor, that’s unacceptable.” An NCCM press release later stated that: “NCCM finds it unacceptable that candidates would shy away from talking about one of the biggest attacks on civil liberties in Canada in a decade.”^[65]

FAIL

FAIL: Inconsistent views, problematic and untenable suggestion of relocating Quebecers wearing religious symbols to other provinces and an overall inability to provide clear leadership that protects civil liberties and religious freedom.

Maxime Bernier

Bernier criticized the other federal leaders for speaking out against the Quebec secularism law, saying they should “mind their own business” and “follow the constitution.” He has also stated that a PPC government would not intervene in court challenges against the law.^[66]

FAIL

FAIL: Bernier upholds Bill-21 despite the fact it undermines the constitutional right of religious freedom.

KEY ISSUES

IMMIGRATION/REFUGEES

The candidates hold various positions on immigration policies, refugee sponsorship, and the immigration process that reflect the opinions of their respective parties. Notions of citizenship and belonging within the nation are being both affirmed and challenged in these debates in ways that shape the national imaginary in Canada^[67] and speak to the way Canadian multiculturalism is being re-configured to suit either liberal or far-right agendas.

The public discourses surrounding immigration can affect how open Canadians are to welcoming immigrants and refugees in our country and can create competing claims over who is deemed “citizenship worthy.” Increasingly, these distinctions are being made along problematic racial and cultural lines and openly xenophobic platforms.

Public polling on this topic is mixed, but a recent survey by Environics suggested that general views on immigration have changed little over the last eight years. In 2011, 47% of respondents said immigration made Canada a better place, while 16% said it made Canada a worse place. In 2019, those numbers were 44% and 15%. In 2011, 58% disagreed with the statement that immigration levels were “too high.” In 2019, 59% disagreed.^[68]

Other recent polls also reveal discriminatory views regarding Muslims and immigrants. In May 2019, independent market research company Ipsos published a public opinion poll for Global News which found that one in four Canadians (26%)^[69] responded that,

over the past five years, it has become “more acceptable” to be prejudiced against “Muslims/Arabs.”^[70] 23% responded that that it has become “more acceptable” to be prejudiced against “immigrants,” and 21% responded that it has become “more acceptable” to be prejudiced against refugees. Canada has taken a leading international role in the development of the Global Compact on Safe and Orderly Migration^[71] and endorsed the Global Compact on Refugees.^[72] The Global Compacts create a structure for global migration, by proposing to better respond to migration through international cooperation. These new frameworks provide ways to respond to the movement of people in a safe, effective, and predictable manner that is equitable and sustainable.^[73]

The Safe Third Country Agreement (STCA) is a border pact between Canada and the United States that allows each country to block certain would-be refugees from making asylum claims at official ports of entry. In effect, since December 2004 the STCA allows for Canada and the US to each declare the other country safe for refugees and thereby close the door on most refugee claimants at the US-Canada border. Both the Global Compacts and the STCA are issues that the federal candidates have addressed and challenged. How each candidate weighs in on immigration and refugee policies will have a significant impact on Muslims who are seeking asylum, better economic opportunities, or family reunification.

| Key Issue | Justin Trudeau | Andrew Scheer | Jagmeet Singh | Elizabeth May | Maxime Bernier |
|------------------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| Immigration & Refugees | P | F | P | P | F |

ANALYSIS

Justin Trudeau

Since his election in 2015, Trudeau has maintained that Canadians feel positively towards immigration in comparison to other nations.^[74] When faced with critique regarding the Syrian refugee program he rejected that there was a correlation between violence and increasing the number of immigrants. The Liberal party platform states that they would continue to increase the amount of immigrants as part of contributing to economic growth. The predicted number is 350,000 immigrants in 2021.^[75] Under Trudeau Canadian officials took a leading role in the development of the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact on Safe and Orderly Migration. Trudeau has welcomed refugees seeking asylum and increased immigration opportunities for students and employment seekers.^[76] Unlike May and Singh, Trudeau has rejected the idea of suspending the Safe Third Country Agreement,^[77] but unlike Scheer he has not called to further develop the agreement.^[78]

In the face of the US Muslim ban, Trudeau made a statement highlighting that Muslim Canadians are an essential part of the success of the country and will continue to be in the future.^[79] While Trudeau did not explicitly condemn Trump's Muslim ban, his reactive tweets signalled his disapproval.^[80]

PASS

PASS: Trudeau was key in facilitating the immigration and resettling of Syrian refugees in Canada. He has consistently emphasized a positive discourse surrounding immigration and has rejected xenophobic fear-mongering rhetoric. He endorses Canada as a signatory to the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact Safe and Orderly Migration.

Andrew Scheer

Scheer asserted that Liberals immigration policies have compromised Canadian's confidence in the fairness of the system.^[81] He has stated that the Liberals "undermine the long-standing consensus that immigration is indeed a positive thing for this country."^[82] Scheer's plans are to reform immigration by emphasizing economic immigration, promoting private sponsorship over government sponsored refugees and to "set up immigration levels consistent with what is in Canada's best interest". His rhetoric in relation to refugees and asylum seekers follows a similar American trajectory of "stopping border crossings" and preventing people from "skipping the line;" an unfounded claim that has been debunked.^{[83] [84]}

Scheer argues that the United Nations Global Compact on Migration erodes Canada's sovereignty and is tantamount to erasing its borders.^[85] Furthermore, he is the only candidate that has stated he would "close the loophole" of the Safe Third Country Agreement by making it a more rigid policy.^[86]

FAIL

FAIL: Scheer's proposed immigration and refugee reforms create and reinforce conditions (e.g. creating more rigid enactment of the Safe Third Country Agreement) that compromise asylum seekers. He also does not support the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly Migration signed by the majority of UN member states with the exception of the United States.

Jagmeet Singh

One of the immigration issues the NDP have promised to rectify was the discriminatory clause within the immigration system that allows rejection of an entire family if one family member has a disability or medical concern.^[87] Under Singh specifically, the NDP party has promised to "make sure that our immigration policies and levels meet Canada's labour force needs and recognize people's experiences, contributions and ties to Canada."^[88] In regard to refugees and asylum seekers Singh states a need to fix the immigration backlog as well as suspending the Safe Third Country agreement, thereby allowing people to claim asylum when entering Canada despite passing through another country where they could have done so.

PASS

PASS: Singh's proposed immigration and refugee reforms support family reunification and reinforce the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly Migration by calling for the suspension of the Safe Third Country Agreement.

Elizabeth May

Under May's leadership the Green Party has stated they would attempt to speed up family reunification and allocate money for language acquisition and immigrant support in addition to eliminating the Temporary Foreign Workers Program and address labour shortages by increasing immigration. Their platform also addresses working with employers to establish pathways to permanent residency for the employees.^[89]

May advocates repealing the Safe Third Country Agreement, citing the "disarray" of the state of processing refugees under the Trump administration, raising concerns over whether the USA could even be considered a safe country for refugees anymore.^[90]

PASS

PASS: May's proposed immigration and refugee reforms take into account re-settlement funding and resources vital for supporting newcomers as well as provide pathways for foreign workers to gain permanent residency.

Maxime Bernier

Bernier is a staunch critic of Canada's immigration policies, having billboards erected by a third-party organisation promoting the People's Party of Canada (PPC), with the slogan "Say no to mass immigration."^[91] Bernier's platform seeks to limit the number of immigrants to Canada to 150,000 a year.^[92] To support his position he infamously tweeted that "Trudeau's extreme multiculturalism and cult of diversity will divide us into little tribes that have less and less in common, apart from their dependence on government in Ottawa. These tribes become political clienteles to be bought with taxpayers \$ and special privileges."^[93]

Bernier regularly uses anti-immigrant and anti-refugee rhetoric such as differentiating between "real" and "false" refugees. His website notes: "Our current refugee policy is unsustainable, costly, and it is being abused by false refugees at our borders. This must end. The moral obligation of Canada's government is to first help those in need among our own population, and then to give priority to real refugees."^[94]

Bernier promises that a PPC government will "give priority to refugees belonging to persecuted groups who have nowhere to go in neighbouring countries... (including) members of other minority religions in majority Muslim countries; members of the Ahmadi community, and other Muslims in these countries who are persecuted because they reject political Islam and adhere to Western values."^[95] These statements create false moral and political divides between the superiority of western values and the political aggression of Islam.

Bernier raises unfounded concerns about demographic replacement arguing that: "Immigration must not be used as a tool to forcibly change the cultural character and social fabric of Canada."^[96] His views regard Islam as a cultural threat as he declares that: "Shariah law is not part of our country" playing into far right ideologies that Islamist Muslims plan to overthrow Canadian democracy and instill Islamic law.^[97] These ideas lead to further xenophobic remarks by Bernier that the PPC is against immigrant "ghettos" in Toronto like the ones found in France.

His platform also incites moral panic by linking immigration and security concerns through calls for increasing “resources for CSIS, the RCMP, and Canadian immigration officials to do background checks and interviews as necessary” allowing wider sweeping powers that can lead to further practices of racial and religious profiling and the erosion of civil liberties.^[98]

Bernier is in favour of stronger regulations for immigrants and strengthened procedures including personal interviews with immigration officials where it will be determined whether they hold societal norms congruent with “Canadian values” akin to an earlier proposal by Conservative MP Kellie Leitch that immigrants be subjected to a “values test.” Ironically during the Conservative leadership debate Bernier (then a member of the Conservative Party) chastised Leitch’s immigration concerns as being a “karaoke version of Donald Trump.”^[99] Now abandoning his critique of Leitch’s version of immigration control through social and cultural “testing” Bernier has further announced plans that the PPC would prioritize economic immigrants, accept fewer refugees, “considerably limit” those accepted under the family reunification program, and scrap the option to sponsor parents and grandparents.

In relation to Canada’s signing of the UN’s non-binding policy document entitled “Global Compact on Immigration” Bernier inaccurately called it a “treaty” where the “main goal is to make the migration of millions of people from poor and unstable countries a normal thing to be embraced and facilitated.”^[100]

FAIL

FAIL: Bernier’s rhetoric and proposed policies are blatantly xenophobic and Islamophobic reinforcing far-right ideologies and white nationalism.

KEY ISSUES

BOYCOTT, DIVESTMENT, SANCTIONS (BDS) MOVEMENT

The Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement began in 2005 by 170 Palestinian civil society organizations in response to Israel's colonial occupation of Palestine.^[101] The BDS movement demands a boycott of the state of Israel until it adheres to international law and recognizes the Palestinian's rights to self-determination. Palestine-Israel conflict remains an important subject for Muslim communities in Canada. While the BDS movement has received support on international platforms, it has received little support from Canadian politicians

and has even been labeled as anti-Semitic.^[102] According to the Canadian BDS Coalition, the organization aims to: “promote, support and help coordinate boycott, divestment, and sanctions activities in Canada, provide Canadians with resources to help them understand and take action in support of the Palestinian call for BDS, and promote and defend the right of Canadians to freedom of expression in support of BDS.”^[103] No political party in Canada explicitly supports the BDS movement.

| Key Issue | Justin Trudeau | Andrew Scheer | Jagmeet Singh | Elizabeth May | Maxime Bernier |
|---|----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) Movement | F | F | N | N | F |

ANALYSIS

Justin Trudeau

While Harper's government cut funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), an organization that provides aid to Palestinian refugees in the Middle East, Trudeau has reinstated \$50 million in contributions starting in 2018.^[104] A spokesperson for Global Affairs Canada stated that the government would undertake an investigation concerning allegations regarding nepotism and sexual misconduct in the organization.^[105] Trudeau claims that the BDS movement is targeting the State of Israel and is therefore a form of anti-Semitism and has led to an unsafe feeling for Jewish students on university campuses.^[106] He stated: “I will continue to condemn the BDS movement,” adding that Canada supported a two-state solution “that will be negotiated directly by Israel and the Palestinian people.” Trudeau was thanked by the current of Israeli President Reuven Rivlin for condemning BDS as well as for Parliament's freezing of relations with Iran.^[107]

FAIL

FAIL: Trudeau claims that supporting the BDS Movement and thereby holding the Israeli state accountable for its actions against Palestinians is anti-Semitic. This rejection turns a blind eye to the suffering of Palestinians and the global efforts to use BDS as an economic strategy to push for peace and justice.

Andrew Scheer

Under Scheer's watch, the Conservative Party has continued to use anti-BDS rhetoric, with several party members actively condemning Canadians who support the movement.^[108] In the first National Debate between the federal candidates, Scheer stated he would pull Canada's financial contributions to the United Nations' Relief Works Agency (UNRWA), an agency supporting Palestinian refugees in the Near East. The mandate of UNRWA is "human development and humanitarian services encompass primary and vocational education, primary health care, relief and social services, infrastructure and camp improvement, microfinance and emergency response, including in situations of armed conflict."^[109] Scheer described UNRWA as "highly flawed" and an institution that would "foment and encourage antisemitism and terrorism."^[110]

He accused the Liberal government of "abandoning Canada's principled support for Israel" when it abstained on a vote at the United Nations that condemned the US for recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital.^[111] Similar to Donald Trump's attempt, Scheer stated he would move the Canadian Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem thereby undermining unresolved Palestinian claims to the city.^[112]

FAIL

FAIL: Scheer's vilification of UNRWA and of supporters of the BDS movement along with his proposed plan to move the Canadian Embassy to Jerusalem poses a threat to the health, safety, and sovereignty of Palestinians and falsely relegates legitimate critique against the state of Israel as anti-Semitism.

Jagmeet Singh

The NDP has not announced an official position on the BDS movement; previous candidates such as Jack Layton and Thomas Mulcair have not been supportive of the movement. The party has voted against anti-BDS legislation in the past, but remains ambiguous as far as support and has been more supportive of general economic pressure tactics.^[113] Nonetheless, Singh spoke out against the anti-BDS movement and has stated his belief in the right of dissent.^[114] On a visit to the region he stated "I witnessed the technology and development in Israel. I was shocked by the contrast I saw in Palestine. I witnessed the presence of the military occupation in Hebron and the frustrating conditions created by the settlements deep in the West Bank,"^[115] Singh has issued a strong statement calling Israel's killing of Palestinians a violation of international law. He has urged the Canadian government to condemn the violence and support independent investigations into the violence.^[116]

Needs Improvement

NEEDS IMPROVEMENT: Singh has made important statements that highlight the oppression of Palestinians by the Israeli State but has not clearly aligned his support with the BDS movement.

Elizabeth May

The Green Party has been placed at a crossroads for their stance on BDS. While once having passed a motion in support of BDS (causing May to question whether she would continue as Party leader since she opposed the motion) the "compromise" draft stated that the Green Party would be in favour of placing economic pressure on Israel but not directly towards supporting BDS.^[117]

May has vocally denounced Israel's treatment of Palestinians in the occupied territories. She has also stated that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's policies are "dangerous" for the region and that the "illegal appropriation of Palestinian land" was a "terrifying situation" and a "humanitarian crisis."^[118] She also rejected that Israel acted in justified self defence in the murder of Palestinian protestors the way Liberals and Conservatives claimed.^[119]

**Needs
Improvement**

NEEDS IMPROVEMENT: May has endorsed a revised version of BDS but does not support the global movement, even when a majority of her party members voted in favour of supporting it.

Maxime Bernier

Bernier has been vocal against "pleas[ing] the foreign affairs establishment and the United Nations, a dysfunctional organization" citing the "UN General Assembly adopted 20 resolutions targeting Israel, while passing one each about the human rights situation in North Korea, Syria, and Iran."^[120] He argued that the UN has "disproportionately focused its activities on condemning Israel as if it were the source of most conflicts in the world."^[121]

FAIL

FAIL: Bernier fails to acknowledge the oppression and violence perpetrated by the State of Israel against Palestinians.

KEY ISSUES

FOREIGN POLICY

The foreign policy that directly impacts Muslims involves Canada's relations with North Africa, South Asia, and the Middle East. Other pressing international concerns involve the persecution of the Rohingya in Burma and Uyghurs in China as well as the political and military violence in Kashmir. The regional issues that are taken up by the party candidates include responses to Saudi Arabia's human rights violations, the Yemen crisis, and responses to Egypt's human rights abuses. Of related concern are the candidate's stances on the Arms Trade Treaty that regulates international trade in conventional weapons.^[122]

Burma is a nation in Southeast Asia that adheres to Buddhism as a state-sponsored religion. Certain politicians and fundamentalist Buddhist groups have used anti-Muslim rhetoric and fear mongering against the Rohingya minority. This anti-Muslim rhetoric has led to widespread mass violence and persecution, forcing the Rohingya to become refugees, often fleeing to Bangladesh. The Burmese campaign against the Rohingya and the attempt to cover-up sites of violence has been labelled as a form of ethnic cleansing and the UN has acknowledged they are living under the threat of genocide.^[123]

In China, millions of Muslim Uyghur minorities have been targeted by the government for

surveillance, arrest, and have been forced into "re-education camps" meant to enforce Communist ideology over religious Islamic thought.^[124] Facial recognition technology, phone tracking, and other methods of surveillance have been used by the Chinese government against the Uyghurs in the autonomous Xinjiang province.^[125] Entire families are removed from their homes and relocated to re-education camps which force Uyghurs to swear allegiance to the Communist party while denouncing symbols of Islam.^[126]

Recently, India has renounced the special status of the autonomous region of Kashmir and Jammu. Included with this move has been a complete cutting of technological communication, including phone and internet services, a ban on public gathering, a curfew, and increased military occupation and violence.^[127] This region is famously claimed by two warring states, India and Pakistan, with the Muslim majority in Kashmir being perceived as a threat for India under the Modi government. Pakistan has strongly condemned the move by India. Under Modi's BJP government, Hindutva political views are often used to subsume minority religious traditions, which some fear in renewed efforts against the Muslim population of Kashmir.^[128]

| Key Issue | Justin Trudeau | Andrew Scheer | Jagmeet Singh | Elizabeth May | Maxime Bernier |
|----------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| Foreign Policy | F | F | P | P | F |

ANALYSIS

Justin Trudeau

During the Harper government, Canada was the only NATO country that did not sign on to the international Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). This treaty could have limited and potentially stopped trade deals such as the \$15 billion arms deal that Canada made with Saudi Arabia as the treaty makes it more difficult to make arms deals with nations that violate human rights.^[129] Trudeau attempted to rectify this by introducing Bill C-47, a bill that would regulate arms deals. However, this Bill was heavily criticised for being able to override the ATT and would not regulate arms trades to the United States.^[130] Canada acceded to the treaty under Trudeau in 2019. Trudeau has refused to alter the \$15 billion contract for light armoured vehicles with Saudi Arabia.^[131] In a recent interview he justified this lack of action by stating that Canada takes the breaking of contracts very seriously and would not take action on Canada's exporting of arms to Saudi Arabia.^[132] Trudeau has expressed frustration with Saudi Arabia's human rights violations through tweets, but maintains a strong relationship with the country. In light of Jamal Khashoggi's murder,^[133] he stated that Canada would be "pressing" the issue with Prince Mohammed bin Salman until he attained answers but has not spoken of canceling the arms trade deal.^[134] Trudeau persists in staying this course despite evidence that Canadian light armoured vehicles were being used in Saudi Arabia's war with Yemen resulting in a large scale humanitarian disaster.^{[135][136]} Under Canada's regulations, Canadian military equipment can be exported only when there is "no reasonable risk" that the weapons could be used against civilians.^[137]

Canada was one of the first to respond to the humanitarian crisis of the Rohingya in Myanmar and has pledged \$300 million in aid. Trudeau condemned the human rights violations against the Rohingya people and offered strategies of support based on the Rae Report.^{[138][139]} However, Trudeau and Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland have been criticized for their silence on the violence and oppression against both the Uighur Muslim minority in China and the Kashmiris at the hands of the Modi government in India.^{[140][141]} Trudeau later made an announcement that included verbal support for Uighurs in China on the anniversary of the Tiananmen Square Massacre.^[142]

FAIL

FAIL: While Trudeau showed leadership with the Rohingya crisis and offered verbal support for Uighurs, he has not equally condemned India for its human rights abuses and campaigns of state sanctioned violence. His refusal to alter the multibillion dollar arms deal with Saudi Arabia despite the Khashoggi murder and the devastating consequences in the Saudi-UAE led war in Yemen have resulted in a failing grade.

Andrew Scheer

Like Harper, Scheer has been staunch about his opposition to the Arms Trade Treaty, despite the decision receiving criticism and Canada becoming isolated from allies who did sign the agreement. Scheer's justification has followed the rhetoric set forward by the previous Conservative foreign affairs spokesperson, falsely stating that it would "infringe on the rights of Canadian firearms owners."^[143]

Scheer repeatedly condemns the use of Saudi Arabian oil over Canadian, but does not raise criticisms regarding human rights violations.^[144] When asked about the Saudi arms deal Scheer redirects the question to Canadian oil and neglects to answer the question.^[145] Scheer has condemned the role of Saudi Arabia and Iran in the Yemen crisis but still looks to maintain "strategic cooperation" with Saudi Arabia.^[146]

In a statement on Kashmir, Scheer condemned attacks against the Indian army by a Kashmiri extremist group but has not spoken out against the brutality of military violence by India in this region.^[147]

Scheer also called on the Burmese government to stop the attack on the Muslim Rohingya and stated that Canada should have done more in response to the crisis and that the issue was not pressed forcefully enough by the Liberal government.^[148]

Scheer has yet to comment on the plight of the Uighur Muslims in China.

FAIL

FAIL: Scheer's foreign policy statements are uneven and do not involve what concrete steps the Canadian government might take in response to humanitarian crises. He is opposed to the Arms Trade Treaty which regulates international trade in conventional weapons to appease gun owners.

Jagmeet Singh

Jagmeet Singh supports ceasing all arms exports to Saudi Arabia, pointing out that the Saudis are responsible for a "war-induced famine that threatens the starvation deaths of 14 million people in Yemen."^[149] He has urged the Liberal government to send humanitarian aid to help with the crisis in Yemen. The NDP released a statement in 2019 condemning the execution of nine men in Egypt who faced alleged torture and an unfair trial. The statement further noted Egypt's military dictatorship's crackdown by Egypt's military dictatorship on human rights activists, journalists, and members of the LGBT community who were critical of the regime. The statement highlighted Human Rights Watch's condemnation of Abdel Fattah Al Sisi's use of forced disappearances, the death penalty, and torture along with the 2013 Rab'a massacre as potential crimes against humanity and called on the Liberal government to break their silence by condemning the humanitarian conflicts in Egypt.^[150]

Singh was very clear in his stance of denouncing human rights violations in India against the Kashmiri people and that he stands in solidarity with the people of Kashmir.^[151] The NDP statement regarding Kashmir also posed a critique of the Liberal party in terms of not effectively standing by human rights and international law.^[152] He also tweeted that everybody had an obligation to stand with the Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar as they faced systematic oppression and violence.^[153] The House of Commons also unanimously passed an NDP motion calling for justice for the Rohingya people.^[154]

Singh has yet to comment on the plight of the Uighur Muslims in China.

PASS

PASS: Singh explicitly states his condemnation of human rights violations around the world, including Canada's participation in providing Saudi Arabia with weaponry. He has consistently called for action to support the various populations facing oppression.

Elizabeth May

Elizabeth May has made numerous statements in support of Yemeni human rights in the House of Commons. She has called for an immediate halt in aid to Saudi Arabia, citing carnage inflicted on Yemen with U.S. arms. Prior to the 2015 Elections, May issued several statements condemning Egypt's arrest of Canadian journalists and other Canadian citizens. She has used Twitter on several occasions to vocalize opposition to the Saudi arms deal. The Green Party released a statement expressing concern over the media communications blackout and the restriction of freedoms in Kashmir.^[155] There has been no statement directly from Elizabeth May regarding Kashmir. The Green Party released a statement

regarding the displacement of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar quoting Elizabeth May: “The Canadian government as well as the international community needs to keep a close eye on the human rights situation in Burma.” as early as 2011.^[156] May has yet to comment on the plight of the Uighur Muslims in China.

PASS

PASS: May has been consistently outspoken on several international crises citing human rights violations and calling for action.

Maxime Bernier

Bernier is in favour of a smaller government that takes on a smaller role in foreign affairs. According to a statement on his website, Bernier vows to “ensure our country’s foreign policy will be refocused on the security and prosperity of Canadians.” He calls for the restructuring of Canada’s relationship with the UN, who he describes as “a dysfunctional organization which for years has disproportionately focused its activities on condemning Israel.”^[157]

Bernier has yet to comment on the plight of the people in Kashmir, Rohingya, or Uighur Muslims in China.

FAIL

FAIL: Bernier indicates little concern for the plight of oppressed people around the world and international human rights violations. His take on Canada playing a smaller role in foreign affairs is not substantiated with a concrete plan of what this would entail nor has he provided an accounting of the consequences of selective withdrawal from foreign affairs.

CONCLUSION

In an election cycle continuously marked by anti-Muslim, anti-migrant, and xenophobic rhetoric, it is imperative that Muslim communities consider what impacts various leaders would have on their communities if elected.

The topics covered in this report seek to bring together resources and news stories covering the ever-changing dynamics of this election in order to provide Canadian Muslim voters and anyone concerned with the issues represented in this guide, with pertinent facts and information to support their decisions at the upcoming polls so that they may make informed decisions about the future of Canada.

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