

NATIONAL WOMEN'S LIBERAL COMMISSION

A POLICY PROCESS PLATFORM

Inclusive, Continuous, Issue-Led Policy Development for Every Woman in
Canada

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Women's Liberal Commission · March 2026

"Good policy is not a document — it is an ongoing relationship between listening, learning, and acting. This platform is about building that relationship at national scale."

"You have to start with the truth. The truth is the only way that we can get anywhere. Because any decision-making that is based upon lies or ignorance can't lead to a good conclusion."

— Julian Assange

This platform sets out how the National Women's Liberal Commission will work — not just what it will say. It proposes a permanent, inclusive, digitally-enabled policy process grounded in international best practice, co-designed with women from every community, and structured to produce continuous, evidence-grounded policy output that outlasts any single government. As a volunteer-led organization operating without a budget, every element is designed to run on free tools, in-kind contributions, and the dedication of its members.

Role sought	National Women's Policy Chair, Women's Liberal Commission
Credentials	MA Political Science · MBA · PhD, AI in Public Policy
Experience	BC Women's Liberal Commission (WLC) Policy Chair (current) · Alberta WLC Policy Chair · EDA Director · Campaign manager · Candidate, Edmonton Meadows
Advocacy	Human rights organizations · Women's empowerment · Domestic violence research and advocacy · Disability rights · Seclusion room ban campaigns (AB & BC) · Funding Following the Child policy author
Research	AI reverse-engineering of historic policy outcomes (PhD) · AI-assisted policy analysis · Healthcare AI educator · mariaomar@gmx.com

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Executive Summary

The National Women's Liberal Commission has the potential to be the most powerful policy engine in Canada — a permanent, living institution that brings the voices of women from every province, territory, background, and lived experience into the centre of national policy-making. That potential is only realised if the *process* is right.

This platform is not a list of policy positions. It is a proposal for how the Commission works: how it listens, how it organises knowledge, how it develops policy continuously and in parallel, how it holds itself and government accountable, and how it ensures that no woman's voice is lost because she lives too far from a meeting room or hasn't been a member long enough.

Six Process Pillars

1 • Inclusive Participation — Policy Cafés & Open Door

Policy Café conversations — in person, online, and hybrid — bring women into the process who would never make it to a formal meeting. The open-door model means every woman can shape policy on the issues she knows best.

2 • The Digital Policy Platform

A 24/7 national platform — submit, annotate, vote, track — accessible, multilingual, and open-source. The connective tissue of a coast-to-coast policy community.

3 • The Living Library

A searchable, growing archive organised by issue, not by year or region. Policy memory that doesn't disappear when a chair changes.

4 • Issue-Led Organisation

The Commission organises its work around issues and themes — disability, housing, care, climate, representation — not around provinces or regions. Women connect across geography through shared concern, not administrative boundaries.

5 • Continuous Parallel Policy Development

Multiple policy working groups run simultaneously and continuously — not one topic at a time, not only in the months before a convention. Policy development never stops. When government moves fast, the Commission is already ready.

6 • Shadow Reports & Accountability

The Commission publishes regular shadow reports assessing government action against its stated commitments — submitted to MPs, Senate standing committees, and international bodies including the UN Commission on the Status of Women. Honest, independent, and on the record.

The Continuous Policy Cycle



Part I — The Case for a New Process Model

Women’s commissions and policy bodies fail — not because women lack ideas or expertise, but because the *process* is not designed to capture and sustain those ideas at scale. Meeting schedules are not designed around women’s lives — shift work, caregiving, time zones, and family responsibilities mean that the women most affected by policy are the least able to participate in making it. Party structures do not consistently preserve data or institutional memory: research, positions, and hard-won knowledge are routinely lost when members step back or terms change, with no reliable handoff to those who follow. Committees work in silos — separated from other commissions, EDAs, and caucuses — duplicating effort, missing connections, and leaving the same questions answered differently in different rooms. Good policies get voted in and stay on paper without implementation — or slide under the radar of short-term political hype and never get the attention they deserve. The Women’s Liberal Commission will be different: every policy output, research note, and working group finding is published openly and made available first to all members, EDAs, and partner commissions to read, build on, and share.

International research confirms this diagnosis. A 2024 scoping review in *Frontiers* found that participatory policy processes only improve democratic quality when they are continuous, structured, and genuinely inclusive — not one-off consultations. International IDEA’s review of legislative gender commissions found that the most effective bodies maintain permanent policy pipelines, not episodic ones. The Hewlett Foundation’s evidence-informed policymaking strategy calls for civil society to function as both producer and consumer of evidence — not just a sounding board.

■ *Participatory Processes in Public Policy-Making: A Scoping Review, Frontiers (2024); International IDEA, One Size Does Not Fit All (2022); Hewlett Foundation, Evidence-Informed Policymaking Strategy 2024–2027*

1.1 What Needs to Change

The six shifts this platform proposes

- Policy development must be continuous — not event-driven or convention-led
- Participation must be accessible to all women — not only those who can attend in-person meetings in major cities
- The Commission must be organised around the issues women care about — not around administrative or regional boundaries that mean nothing to the woman experiencing them
- Institutional knowledge must be captured and preserved in a searchable living system — not held in the memory of individuals
- The Commission must hold government accountable — independently, publicly, and on record — not only celebrate when things go right
- Every woman who contributes an idea must be able to see what happened to it

1.2 Why This Matters Now

Duverger’s Law warns that majoritarian political systems eventually fracture without strong participatory infrastructure. The tools now exist — AI, digital platforms, asynchronous collaboration — to build that infrastructure at national scale, at low cost, and in ways that are genuinely accessible. The OECD has documented 200 real-world government AI applications that enhance participation, synthesise evidence, and improve accountability (2025). Generation Equality’s coalition delivered nearly 2,000 new policies through digitally-enabled coordination in a single cycle (UN Women, 2024). The question is not whether this is possible. It is whether the Commission will lead it or watch others do it first.

■ *OECD, Governing with Artificial Intelligence (2025); Generation Equality Forum, Action Coalitions Progress Report (UN Women, 2024); Duverger, M. (1956). Political Parties*

The author presented this vision at the Mill Woods library in 2019 — including to Amarjeet Sohi — calling for digital democracy and a connected policy model. The technology has caught up. The Commission must now lead.

Part II — Inclusive Participation: Policy Cafés & Open Door

The single greatest barrier to women's participation in policy is not lack of interest — it is lack of access. Access to meetings. Access to the right networks. Access to a process that feels like it was designed for them. The Policy Café model, combined with a permanent open-door contribution system, removes those barriers entirely.

2.1 Policy Cafés

The World Café methodology — developed by Brown and Isaacs (2005) and validated across hundreds of civic and policy applications — uses small-group, hosted conversations to surface collective intelligence on complex questions. Participants rotate between tables, building on each other's ideas, and the host synthesises emerging themes. Adapted for the Women's Commission, Policy Cafés can be held anywhere: a church basement in Moncton, a community centre in Prince George, a living room in Iqaluit, or a Zoom call hosted by a volunteer in any time zone. The World Café has been used by OECD governments, the EU, and UN agencies to generate participatory policy input at scale. It is not a focus group. It is structured collective thinking.

The New Zealand Citizens' Assembly model offers a further dimension: randomly-selected participants, briefed with expert evidence, deliberating across multiple sessions to produce recommendations that carry democratic legitimacy precisely because they are not produced by the already-organised. The Commission's Policy Cafés adopt the same principle — accessible entry, structured deliberation, evidence-based outputs — without requiring government mandate or budget, because they run on volunteer energy and free tools.

■ Brown, J. & Isaacs, D. (2005). *The World Café: Shaping Our Futures Through Conversations That Matter*. Berrett-Koehler; OECD, *Innovative Citizen Participation and New Democratic Institutions (2020)*; *New Zealand Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform (2024)*. Final Report.

How Policy Cafés work

- Any member, volunteer, or community organisation can host a Policy Café on any issue — in person, online, or hybrid
- Standardised but flexible facilitation guides provided in English, French, and Indigenous languages
- Every Café produces a structured one-page summary uploaded to the Living Library and tagged by issue — not by region
- Cafés can be themed: housing, disability, climate, representation, newcomer women, 2SLGBTQ+ issues, elder care — or open-topic
- A national Café calendar published quarterly — any woman can find one near her or host one of her own
- Annual synthesis: all Café outputs across the country reviewed and consolidated into Commission policy positions

2.2 Open-Door Contribution Model

The author introduced an open-door contribution model in BC Women's Commission: anyone can contribute ideas on topics they care about, at any time, with affected organisations actively brought into the process rather than consulted after the fact. At national scale, this means the Commission actively reaches out — to women who gave up because they felt unheard, to those who never joined because the process didn't seem designed for them, and to new members who bring energy the Commission needs.

■ *International IDEA, One Size Does Not Fit All: Lessons from Legislative Gender Commissions and Caucuses (2022)*

How the Open Door works

- Permanent open submission portal — any woman, any time, any issue
- Every submission publicly acknowledged, assigned to an issue cluster, and tracked through the mentorship and working group network
- Quarterly themed open roundtables — streamed online, free to attend, no membership required
- Direct re-engagement outreach to women who disengaged — personal, not mass email
- Affected community organisations (shelters, disability groups, newcomer services) invited as standing participants — not one-off consultees
- Youth and student engagement stream: partnership with university clubs and student associations in every province

Part III — The Digital Policy Platform

A coast-to-coast, 24/7 digital platform is the connective tissue of the new Commission. It is where Policy Café outputs are uploaded, where individual contributions are made, where working groups collaborate across provinces, where shadow reports are published, and where any woman can watch her idea travel from submission to policy position. It is not a website. It is infrastructure.

Generation Equality's coalition delivered nearly 2,000 policies through digitally-enabled coordination (UN Women, 2024). International IDEA's research found that digital tools significantly expand women's political participation when they are designed with safety, accessibility, and genuine influence built in — not as an afterthought. The EU AI Act (2024) and OECD governance frameworks provide the ethical foundation for AI-assisted participation tools.

■ *Generation Equality Forum, UN Women (2024); International IDEA, Digital Tools for Women's Political Participation (2023); OECD, Governing with Artificial Intelligence (2025); EU AI Act (2024)*

3.1 Core Platform Functions

Platform functions

- **Submit:** Any woman submits a policy idea, question, or concern — tagged by issue, not region
- **Annotate:** Others can build on, question, or support existing submissions — collaborative, not siloed
- **Vote:** Community prioritisation of emerging policy positions — transparent, weighted by engagement
- **Track:** Every submission has a visible status — received, under review, in working group, in shadow report, submitted to government
- **Connect:** Women working on the same issue find each other regardless of province or time zone
- **Archive:** All content flows into the Living Library — searchable, permanent, attributed

3.2 Safety and Language Access

A platform that exposes women to harassment is not safe — and a platform only available in English is not national. Safety and language access are built in from the start, not added later.

Safety and language standards

- Available in English and French at launch; actively recruiting volunteer translators for Indigenous languages — prioritising rural, remote, and Indigenous communities where language access is most critical
- Dedicated outreach to rural communities, Indigenous communities, and communities with specific regional issues to ensure materials, facilitation, and participation opportunities reach women who are structurally furthest from national conversations
- Anonymous submission option for sensitive issues — identity held by Commission but never publicly displayed
- Moderation, harassment reporting, and escalation pathways built into every participation channel

3.3 AI-Assisted Policy Synthesis

The author's PhD research uses AI to reverse-engineer historic policy outcomes — asking not just 'what was the policy?' but 'what went wrong, and why?' Applied to the Commission's platform, AI tools can synthesise hundreds of submissions into coherent issue clusters, identify gaps in representation, flag contradictions between emerging positions, and surface research that participants may not have found. AI assists human judgment — it does not replace it.

■ *OECD, Governing with Artificial Intelligence (2025); EU AI Act, Rights-Based Framework (2024); African Union Continental AI Strategy (2024)*

AI tools — human-led, AI-assisted

- AI synthesis of Policy Café outputs into draft issue positions for working group review
- Automated gap detection: which communities, issues, or perspectives are underrepresented in current submissions?
- Research matching: submitted ideas linked to relevant academic literature, international precedents, and government data
- Shadow report drafting support: AI-generated first drafts reviewed and approved by human working groups before publication
- Strict ethical boundaries: AI for analysis and synthesis only — no autonomous decision-making on policy positions

3.4 Sample Platforms — Built Here, Used Here

Canada has no shortage of homegrown and Canada-adopted digital engagement tools. The Commission does not need to build from scratch or import solutions. The following are sample platforms — proven, free or low-cost, and already in use by Canadian civic organisations, municipalities, and advocacy groups. They can be adopted immediately while a purpose-built Commission platform is developed, or combined as a lightweight suite from day one.

Sample platforms — Canadian-built and Canadian-adopted

- **Ethelo** ■ *Vancouver, BC* — Canadian-built democratic engagement platform used by Canadian municipalities and public bodies. Allows complex multi-option policy decisions with weighted preferences — purpose-built for exactly the kind of prioritisation the Commission needs. Free tier available. ethelo.com
- **Loomio** ■ *Strong Canadian nonprofit adoption* — open-source platform for inclusive group decision-making: threaded discussion, proposals, and transparent voting. Widely used by Canadian co-ops, advocacy groups, and civil society organisations. Free for small groups. loomio.com
- **CitizenLab** ■ *Used across Canadian municipalities* — structured public consultation platform already deployed by Canadian city governments. Idea submission, community voting, and transparent outcome tracking. Free for qualifying organisations. citizenlab.co
- **Pol.is** ■ *Open-source, globally adopted* — consensus-mapping tool that surfaces shared positions across large, diverse groups. Powerful for identifying agreement across issue clusters without requiring consensus on everything. Used by the Taiwan government for national policy engagement. Fully free. pol.is
- **Discourse** ■ *Open-source, used by Canadian advocacy networks* — structured, searchable forum that feeds naturally into a living library. Can be self-hosted at no cost or hosted free for nonprofits. discourse.org
- **ActionNetwork** ■ *Free for Canadian nonprofits and advocacy groups* — widely used by Canadian civil society for organising, petitions, event coordination, and member communications. Bridges digital engagement with real-world action. actionnetwork.org

Part IV — The Living Library

Judith Quinn's twelve years of delivering high-quality policy from the NWLC — earning recognition from NGOs and international organisations for alignment with global standards — represents the most valuable asset the Commission possesses. It is also the asset most at risk. Institutional knowledge held in people, not systems, disappears when those people step back.

The Living Library is the Commission's permanent policy memory. It is not a document repository. It is a structured, searchable, growing knowledge base where every piece of work the Commission produces — every Policy Café output, every working group draft, every shadow report, every research citation, every government response — is preserved, attributed, and findable. Any woman can study it, contribute to it, and build on it.

4.1 What the Living Library Contains

Library contents

- **Policy submissions:** Every contribution ever made, tagged by issue, date, and status — never deleted, always accessible
- **Working group outputs:** Draft positions, debate records, evidence reviews, and final adopted positions
- **Shadow reports:** Full archive of all accountability reports published by the Commission, with government responses where available
- **Research base:** Curated, annotated library of peer-reviewed research, UN and OECD reports, and international policy precedents — searchable by issue
- **Policy outcomes:** Tracking of what happened to Commission positions — adopted, ignored, partially implemented, overturned
- **International comparisons:** How other countries and women's commissions have addressed the same issues — what worked, what didn't

4.2 How the Library Grows

The library grows through every action the Commission takes. Policy Café summaries are uploaded automatically. Working group outputs are archived at each stage. Shadow reports are published in full. Research identified by any member can be submitted for inclusion. The library is a living system — it compounds knowledge over time rather than resetting with each new leadership cycle.

How the library grows

- Every Policy Café output automatically archived and tagged on completion
- Working group members upload drafts, revisions, and supporting evidence at each stage of development
- Any member can submit research or international precedents for library inclusion — reviewed by the relevant issue working group
- Government responses to shadow reports logged and linked to original reports
- Annual library review: gaps identified, priority research commissioned, outdated positions flagged for update
- Library is public — any woman, researcher, journalist, or MP can search it

Part V — Issue-Led Organisation

The Commission's current model organises participation primarily through regional and provincial structures. This made sense when policy work required physical presence. It no longer does — and it creates a fundamental problem: a woman in rural Nova Scotia and a woman in suburban Alberta who both care deeply about disability policy have no natural pathway to find each other, collaborate, or build a shared position. They are separated by administrative geography, not by interest.

The new model organises the Commission's policy work around **issues and themes** — not around provinces. Women connect across the country through shared concern. Regional and provincial structures remain for organising, outreach, and political work — but policy development happens in issue clusters that span geography.

5.1 Issue Clusters

Issue clusters are the Commission's policy working units. Each cluster is a self-organising, multi-provincial group of women working on a shared policy area. Clusters are open — any woman can join the one that matters to her. They are living communities of practice — open, fluid, self-directed.

Disability & Inclusion

CRPD implementation · National Disability Strategy · UDL · Neurodivergence

Women & Political Representation

Candidate parity · Mentorship · Harassment · Electoral reform

Housing & Gender-Based Violence

Shelters · Transition housing · National GBV Action Plan · MMIWG2S+

Care, Family & Work

Childcare · Parental leave · Elder care · Care economy

Climate & Environmental Justice

Climate impacts on women · Indigenous land rights · Just transition

Health & Reproductive Rights

Reproductive autonomy · Mental health · Healthcare access · Aging

Newcomer & Racialised Women

Immigration policy · Anti-racism · Islamophobia · Community funding

Digital Rights & AI

AI governance · Online safety · Digital access · Privacy

Rural, Remote & Indigenous Communities

Infrastructure gaps · Food sovereignty · Regional resource issues · Remote healthcare · Land rights · Isolation · Community-specific policy needs

5.2 How Issue Clusters Work

How issue clusters operate

- Any woman joins the cluster(s) most relevant to her experience and expertise — no geographic restriction — open to any woman, any time
- Each cluster has a volunteer convener responsible for synthesising inputs and maintaining the working group's section of the Living Library
- Clusters meet asynchronously on the digital platform and synchronously via online calls — never requiring physical presence
- Cross-cluster collaboration flagged automatically when issues overlap (e.g. disability intersects with housing, newcomer women intersect with GBV)
- New clusters can be proposed by any member and activated when five or more women commit to convening it
- Annual cluster showcase: each group presents progress, emerging positions, and gaps to the full Commission
- Region-specific and community-specific issues — including those affecting rural women, Indigenous communities, and communities with distinct regional concerns — are fully supported within relevant clusters; a dedicated Rural, Remote & Indigenous Communities cluster ensures these voices are never subsumed into national averages

5.3 Inter-Commission Collaboration

The Women's Liberal Commission does not work in isolation. Issues that intersect with the experiences of Indigenous peoples, seniors, or young women are developed in active collaboration with the relevant Liberal commission. This is not a courtesy copy: substantive policy work touching those communities is shared for review and approval before it is finalised.

Working in collaboration

- Any issue cluster whose work intersects with Indigenous rights, land, sovereignty, or MMIWG2S+ is shared with the National Indigenous Peoples' Commission for review and approval before publication
- Policy work affecting seniors and older women is co-developed with and approved by the Seniors Commission
- Policy work affecting young women and girls is co-developed with and approved by the Youth Commission
- A liaison volunteer is designated for each partner commission to maintain ongoing communication and flag overlapping issues early
- Joint Policy Cafés can be convened with any partner commission where shared issues warrant combined engagement
- Where commissions hold different positions, a shared review process is used before any position is published — no commission publishes unilaterally on shared issues

Part VI — Continuous Parallel Policy Development

The most significant structural weakness of most women's commissions is the sequential, event-driven nature of policy work: one topic at a time, in the months before a convention, producing a position paper that may or may not be acted on before the next cycle begins. This model cannot respond to a government that moves fast, to a crisis that demands immediate analysis, or to the complexity of issues that intersect in ways a sequential process cannot

capture.

The new model runs all issue clusters simultaneously and continuously. Policy development never stops. When a budget drops, when a court rules, when a report is released, the relevant cluster is already active — already has the evidence base, already has the relationships, already has a draft position to update. This is what it means for the Commission to be a genuine policy institution rather than a periodic policy event.

6.1 The Development Cycle

Each issue cluster runs on a continuous 12-month rolling cycle — not locked to the political calendar. The cycle has five phases that repeat and overlap, so at any given moment the Commission has positions at every stage of development across every issue cluster.

Phase 1: Listen

Policy Cafés, open submissions, and community outreach gather new input on the issue. Runs continuously — there is no 'consultation period' that closes.

Phase 2: Synthesise

Submissions and Café outputs are synthesised — with AI assistance — into draft issue positions. Research gaps identified and filled. Contradictions surfaced and debated. All work archived in the Living Library.

Phase 3: Develop

Working group drafts, revises, and stress-tests the policy position against evidence, lived experience, and international precedent. Cross-cluster consultation where issues intersect.

Phase 4: Submit

Adopted positions submitted via shadow reports, MP briefings, Senate committee submissions, and — where relevant — UN/OECD reporting processes. Every submission is public and archived.

Phase 5: Evaluate

Government response (or non-response) tracked and documented. Position updated in light of new evidence or changed circumstances. Cycle begins again — informed by what was learned.

6.2 Rapid-Response Capacity

Because clusters are always active and the Living Library always contains current evidence, the Commission can respond to breaking policy developments within days — not months. A government announcement on childcare, a Supreme Court ruling on reproductive rights, a new Statistics Canada report on gender-based violence: the relevant cluster already has the context, the relationships, and the draft language needed to respond with authority.

**Continuous parallel development means the Commission is never caught flat-footed.
When government moves, we are already there.**

Part VII — Shadow Reports & Accountability

A Women's Commission that only celebrates government action when it agrees with it is not a policy body — it is a communications vehicle. Real friends, as the author notes, tell you there is something in your teeth before the speech, not after. The Commission's shadow report function is its most important accountability mechanism — and the one most often underdeveloped.

Judith Quinn's 12-year record of delivering NWLC policy that earned recognition from international organisations for its alignment with global standards is the model. Shadow reports work when they are rigorous, independent, evidence-grounded, and public — and when they are submitted to bodies with the power to act on them.

7.1 What Shadow Reports Are

Shadow reports are the Commission's independent assessment of how government — at any level — is performing against its stated commitments to women. They are not partisan attack documents. They are structured, evidence-based evaluations: here is what was committed, here is what was delivered, here is the gap, here is what must change. The best models come from civil society organisations that submit shadow reports to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), and the Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

■ *UN Women, CSW69 — Beijing+30 (March 2025); CEDAW Committee, Reporting Guidelines; International IDEA, One Size Does Not Fit All (2022)*

7.2 The Commission's Shadow Report Framework

The five report types

- **Annual domestic report:** Assessment of federal government action across all issue clusters — submitted to relevant MPs, Senate committees, and published publicly
- **Pre-budget submission:** Evidence-based analysis of what the federal budget must contain to advance women's policy — submitted before every federal budget
- **CEDAW shadow report:** Submitted to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women whenever Canada undergoes its review cycle
- **CSW submission:** Annual submission to the UN Commission on the Status of Women — aligned with the priority theme and Canada's Beijing Platform commitments
- **Election platform assessment:** Non-partisan evaluation of all major party platforms against the Commission's evidence base before each federal election
- **Response tracking:** Every shadow report submission tracked — government responses (or non-responses) documented publicly in the Living Library

7.3 Independence and Credibility

Shadow reports are only credible if they are independent. The Commission must be willing to identify failures as well as successes — on any issue, regardless of which government is in power. This requires structural independence within the party, a clear separation between the Commission's policy function and its political support function, and a culture of honest, evidence-grounded analysis that all members understand and commit to.

It is better to get things right than to hire a professional apology giver. Shadow reports are how the Commission earns — and keeps — its credibility.

7.4 Mentorship and Next Generation

The process platform is only sustainable if the next generation of women knows how to use it, contribute to it, and eventually lead it. Shadow report writing, Policy Café facilitation, Living Library curation, and working group convening are all learnable skills — transferred through mentorship and deliberate duty handoffs, not only through manuals. Torch-passing here means making sure nothing is lost: active members share what they know, document how things work, and train others in the roles they carry — so the Commission's knowledge grows with every member who joins, and survives every member who steps back.

Next generation mentorship

- Young Women’s Policy Fellowship: volunteer roles working across issue clusters, the digital platform, and shadow report production — open to any woman who wants to learn by doing
- Annual Next Generation Policy Challenge: women under 30 submit positions to the Living Library; strongest submissions fast-tracked to working groups
- Policy Café facilitation training available to any woman who wants to host — online, self-paced, free
- Annual Volunteer Recognition: certificates of appreciation and public acknowledgement of every volunteer’s contribution to the Commission’s work
- Letters of recommendation provided to young volunteers and fellows on request — for university applications, scholarships, employment, and professional development
- Mentorship matching: experienced members paired with newer volunteers to transfer knowledge, build confidence, and grow the next generation of policy leaders

There is no greater honour than stepping up to get things done, mentoring the next generation of women, and ensuring the flame burns bright for those who come after us.

Part VIII — Risks, Mitigation & Sustainability

Every participatory process carries risks. International evidence is clear on this: digital platforms become echo chambers when not moderated; rural and remote communities are systematically underrepresented; volunteer organisations face burnout and turnover; and sensitive disclosures require careful data governance. Early EU citizen consultation tools and post-pandemic digital fatigue in Generation Equality both illustrate how well-designed processes can still underperform without proactive mitigation. This platform addresses each risk directly.

Low Engagement

Volunteer-led social media outreach and partnerships with organisations like YWCA Canada, LEAF, and the Canadian Women’s Foundation to recruit participants through trusted networks. Gamification through recognition shout-outs and visible progress tracking keeps members engaged without requiring constant involvement.

Digital Divide

Offline submission options via email, voice notes, and paper forms processed by volunteers. Partnerships with public libraries and community organisations for device access and digital literacy training. Hybrid Policy Cafés ensure no one is excluded by connectivity.

Bias and Echo Chambers

Annual volunteer-led diversity audits of participation data. Moderation guidelines trained through peer-led anti-oppression workshops. Cross-cluster collaboration requirements prevent siloing. External bias checks through partnerships with organisations like the Canadian Women’s Foundation (in-kind).

Cybersecurity and Data Privacy

Use of secure, PIPEDA-compliant free tools (Google Workspace with Canadian data storage where available). Anonymous submission options. Volunteer training on digital security best practices. Data ownership policies documented in shared governance docs.

Volunteer Burnout

Defined role rotation and term limits for conveners. Explicit recognition culture. Distributed leadership so no single person carries critical knowledge. Torch-passing as a membership practice ensures continuity when volunteers step back.

Resource Shortfalls

Zero-budget design from the start: all tools are free or available through TechSoup Canada for nonprofits. In-kind venue contributions for Policy Cafés. Scalability through volunteer moderators. Fallback to core free tools (email, Google Docs) if any platform becomes unavailable.

Part IX — Implementation Timeline

All implementation is volunteer-paced and zero-budget. Milestones are tracked via shared Trello boards accessible to all Commission members. The timeline is designed to be resilient — phases can overlap or extend based on volunteer capacity, without derailing the overall model.

Q2 2026 — Foundation <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Digital platform beta using free tools: Google Workspace setup, Slack workspace, Trello boards (volunteer configuration)• Advocacy Committee established under Judith Quinn's leadership• Issue cluster structure agreed and publicised• Policy Café facilitation guide drafted by volunteers• Living Library architecture established in Google Drive
Q3 2026 — Implementation <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Policy Cafés launched across BC and Alberta (leveraging existing volunteer networks)• Open-door submission portal live and accepting contributions• First issue cluster working groups convened (minimum 3 clusters)• Diversity and intersectionality audit of initial participants conducted
Q4 2026 — National Launch <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Policy Cafés expanded to all provinces and territories (volunteer coordinators recruited)• Living Library publicly accessible• First shadow report cycle initiated• Full platform suite live: Ethelo for voting, Loomio for deliberation, Discourse for threaded discussion
2027 Onward — Continuous Operation <ul style="list-style-type: none">• All issue clusters active and running parallel development cycles• First annual shadow reports submitted to MPs and standing committees• First CEDAW shadow report cycle contribution• Annual volunteer-led evaluation and platform review• Expansion: international connections with women's commissions in comparable democracies (NZ, Nordic countries, EU)

Part X — Diversity, Equity & Intersectionality Framework

Inclusive process design is not enough on its own. Without explicit mechanisms to centre marginalised voices, participatory processes reproduce existing power imbalances — the same women who are overrepresented in formal political structures end up dominating digital ones too. This framework embeds equity from the start.

10.1 Participation Targets

Participation targets

- At least one representative from Indigenous, racialized, and newcomer women actively engaged across all issue clusters and Policy Cafés
- At least one newcomer woman included in every working group — bringing lived experience of immigration, settlement, and cultural transition that cannot be replicated by proxy
- At least one representative from women with disabilities and 2SLGBTQ+ women in each working group
- Annual diversity audit of participation data — results published transparently
- Working groups flagged and actively recruited when targets are not met

10.2 Culturally Sensitive Policy Development

Policies that affect diverse communities must be developed with those communities — not about them. Cultural sensitivity is not a checklist item: it shapes how consultations are designed, how materials are written, how facilitators are trained, and whose expertise is centred at the table.

Culturally sensitive practice

- Policy materials reviewed for cultural assumptions before publication — by women from the communities they affect
- Facilitation guides include culturally specific protocols for engaging Indigenous, Muslim, South Asian, East Asian, African, and Caribbean communities
- No single cultural lens applied as default — working groups identify whose voices are missing and actively recruit before finalising any position
- Translation and cultural interpretation support provided for Policy Cafés in communities where English or French is not the primary language
- Community-specific shadow reports possible — where a policy issue affects a particular cultural community in a distinct way, the Commission can produce a focused supplement rather than absorbing that experience into a general report

10.3 Reconciliation and Indigenous Inclusion

The Commission's work takes place on the ancestral and unceded territories of Indigenous Peoples across Canada. Reconciliation is not a standing item — it is embedded in every element of the process. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action (2015) provide the framework; the Commission commits to explicit alignment with relevant Calls in its policy work.

■ *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015). Calls to Action.*

Reconciliation commitments

- Land acknowledgements at all Policy Cafés — specific to the territory, not generic
- Indigenous-led issue cluster on land, sovereignty, and MMIWG2S+ — convened by and for Indigenous women
- Volunteer facilitation training includes Indigenous cultural competency developed with Indigenous partners
- Submissions from Indigenous women on all issues flagged and centred in synthesis — not averaged into majority positions

10.4 Anti-Oppression and Accessibility

Anti-oppression and accessibility commitments

- Peer-led anti-oppression training for all volunteer facilitators and conveners
- Anonymous channels for sensitive disclosures — handled by trained volunteers
- Screen-reader compatible tools throughout (Google Workspace, Discourse)
- Sign language volunteers at in-person Policy Cafés where requested
- Facilitated dialogue protocols for managing power imbalances within groups
- All Policy Café materials available in plain language and large print

Part XI — Advocacy Committee for Implementation

A policy process platform is only as strong as the people who champion its implementation. To ensure this platform moves from document to practice, an Advocacy Committee will be established to oversee rollout, coordinate volunteers, monitor progress, and remove barriers as they arise.

11.1 Mandate and Composition

The Advocacy Committee is initiated by Judith Quinn — Policy Chair Elect for the National Women's Liberal Commission and a tireless advocate for women's rights in Canada since 1999 — whose 12-year record of delivering high-quality NWLC policy, recognised by NGOs and international organisations, provides exactly the institutional knowledge and credibility this committee needs. The committee draws directly on Quinn's experience bridging policy development with actionable change within the party's structures.

Committee structure

- Open to all volunteers — diverse backgrounds, regions, and areas of expertise welcome
- Meets quarterly via free online tools — no travel required
- Reports annually to the full Commission on implementation progress
- Operates by consensus, with anonymous voting for contested decisions
- Open to any Commission member who commits to the implementation mandate

11.2 Responsibilities

Committee responsibilities

- Monitor the implementation timeline (Part IX) and escalate delays to Commission leadership
- Coordinate volunteer recruitment and onboarding across issue clusters and Policy Café networks
- Review annual diversity audits and recommend corrective action when participation targets are not met
- Maintain the Living Library governance framework — curation standards, version control, and annual review
- Liaise with external partners (YWCA, Canadian Women's Foundation, TechSoup Canada) to secure in-kind resources
- Review shadow reports before submission for quality, evidence standards, and political independence

11.3 Advocacy Tools and Outreach Navigation

The Advocacy Committee equips every member with practical tools to advocate effectively and navigate the political and civil society landscape — so that no woman has to figure out how to be heard on her own.

Tools to advocate and navigate

- Advocacy toolkit: plain-language guides on how to write to your MP, present to a party committee, submit to a Senate inquiry, and engage with media — available to all members in the Living Library
- Party navigation guide: how the Liberal Party structure works — EDAs, caucuses, commissions, conventions, and resolutions — so members understand where their voice fits and how to use it
- Outreach templates: customisable letters, briefing notes, and social media posts for members to adapt and send under their own names on Commission issues
- Media and communications support: committee members available to help draft op-eds, talking points, and interview prep for members engaging publicly
- Political navigation coaching: one-on-one or small-group sessions for members new to political advocacy — how to build relationships, make asks, and follow up effectively
- EDA and commission connection: the committee actively introduces members to their local EDA, partner commissions, and caucus contacts — breaking the silos that have historically kept good ideas in the room
- Annual advocacy day: a coordinated national day when members contact their MPs simultaneously on a shared Commission priority — amplifying individual voices into a national signal

Judith Quinn asked me to pick up the torch — to keep the flame of good policy alive and pass it on. The Advocacy Committee is how that flame stays lit.

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