

The federal elections are set for May 2, 2011. Campaigns are in full swing. Muslims' reaction to elections and political campaigns vary significantly. Some participate for personal reasons, others for community considerations, and many others do not participate at all.

What is the proper attitude in this respect and what is not? To help Muslims answer this question, the following points are presented for your reflection:

1. Every eligible Muslim must vote in elections, and should consider it as a religious duty because:
  1. It is a duty of a Muslim to ensure that they are governed by the best people available;
  2. The right to vote is a trust which must be given to whom it belongs;
  3. Voting is giving witness and witness must be given justly, not withheld.
  4. If it is done with the right intentions and for the right reasons, it will be rewarded as a good deed.
  
5. Those who do not cast their votes are guilty of committing a sinful act because:
  1. By not voting, a person shirks his responsibility of ensuring the best available people govern the country.
  2. Not voting is, in fact, voting for the worst candidate. When the best candidate is not supported by your vote, the worst candidate's chances to win increase. In that way, "not voting" effectively becomes: judging people wrongly, giving trust to the undeserving; and giving false witness; which are all sins and thus strongly prohibited.
  3. In addition, not voting is concealing one's witness, which is a grave sin in Islam.
  
4. Muslims must vote on the basis of each candidate's personal excellence as a human being, his/her ethics and integrity, concern for justice, contribution to community and track record of service to humanity. Selecting candidates on the basis of personal merits – and disregarding any other considerations such as party affiliation, ethnic considerations, friendships, personal agendas, etc.— will ensure that only the most excellent of the available candidates on a riding-by-riding basis make-up the elected parliament. This is the only way of ensuring that we do justice to our responsibility to give witness and to minimize the chance that an Islamophobe or an otherwise inappropriate person gets our vote.
  
5. **Who to vote for or support?** If a person has a clear and consistent track record of standing up for the issues that are important to us, we must support that person. On the other hand, if a person has shown clear prejudice against our community, either openly or behind closed doors, we must oppose that person and do our best to see him or her lose.

For all other cases, we must determine the best candidate to support by evaluating all candidates in a riding in a systematic manner, using the following criteria:

1. Personal credibility, ethics and integrity
2. Stand on pertinent issues and priorities (see point 5)
3. Qualifications (including education, knowledge of the political system, experience in parliamentary procedures) and skills (including communication skills in official Canadian languages)
4. Attitude towards the Muslim community and awareness of its needs
5. Past record of community involvement, volunteerism and activism
6. If two candidates are equal or very close to each other in the above five points, then the alignment of party policies to our issues and the attitude of the leader of the party towards the Muslim community should be taken into account.

### 7. **Issues of Importance**

First of all, we should support only those non-Muslim candidates who are willing to present and support a private members' bill that will outlaw any association of Islam to terrorism. The bill should declare it a hate crime for any person or organization to link the religion of Islam to terrorism by written, spoken or published word in print or on electronic media. Secondly, we must take a balanced approach by basing the evaluation on some key issues (about 5 to 7 issues including the aforementioned private bill which should have the highest weight), instead of being carried away by a single issue. The following are examples of other important issues against which we should evaluate all candidates (for details refer to “

[Questions for the 2011 Federal Election Candidates](#)

”):

1. Discrimination against Muslims in matters of immigration and visitor visas and insufficiency of consular staff in the Muslim countries to handle case loads.
2. Huge increase in military spending that could be channelled to health and social programs.
3. Strategy and time frame for deficit reduction
4. Role of Canada in the world arena such as peace keeping vs. warmongering.
5. Withdrawing completely and immediately from current military missions.
6. Use of immigrant population to promote trade with other countries and reducing dependence on the USA.
7. Attitude towards racial profiling of Muslims and misuse of antiterrorism and security certificate legislations.
8. Respect of basic rights of Muslims as opposed to pressuring them to surrender through “reasonable” accommodation pressure.
9. Strengthening of human rights legislation and human rights tribunal as compared to weakening them or abolishing them.
10. Balance in Canadian foreign policy.
11. Promoting multiculturalism versus assimilation.
12. Reform of pensions (CPP) and old age security (OAS).
13. Stance on abolition of court challenges program that helped people use courts to obtain their rights under the Charter.
14. Environment issues and issue of subsidies to oil companies who pollute environment.

In conclusion, we strongly urge all Muslims to fulfil their civic as well as religious duty by actively participating in the Federal elections and by exercising their right to vote. They must be the well-informed voters who make their decisions rationally for the betterment of the community and the Canadian society as a whole.