



LGBTQ Candidates in the 2015 Canadian Federal Election: Stalled Progress?

The dramatic victory of the Canadian Liberal Party has generated optimism that progressive politics will have more space in the new government. Prime Minister elect Justin Trudeau has stressed his commitment to LGBTQ rights and equality. However, the story of out LGBTQ candidates in the Federal Election was one of progress stalled. Only two more out candidates ran than four years ago (21) and only six were elected - the same level of representation as in 2011, 2008 and 2006.

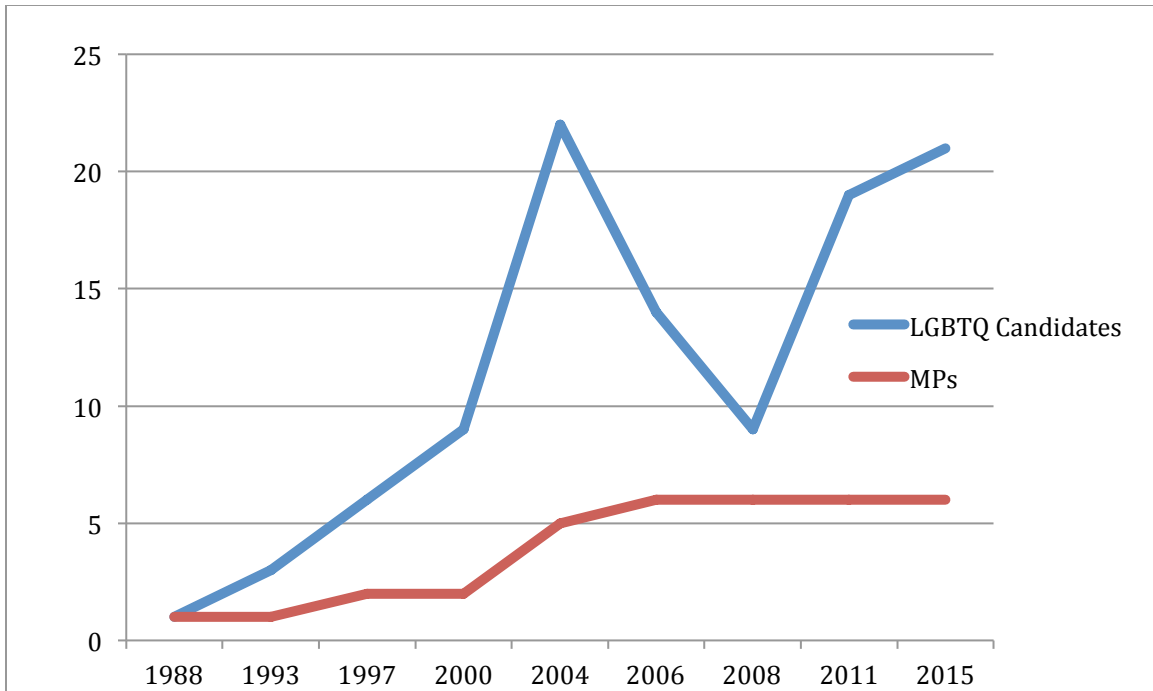
In 2015 three incumbent LGBTQ identifying MPs lost their ridings (NDP MPs Toone, Morin and Scott) while two new Liberals won seats (O'Regan and Boissonnault) and one new NDP MP was elected (Benson).

For the last 14 years there has only been a single LGBTQ woman in the Canadian House. However, the newly elected six are very geographically diverse – representing seats from Newfoundland to Vancouver Island (BC) and coming from six different provinces. There are no out MPs in Quebec.

Canada is one of the most progressive nations in the world when it comes to gay rights. Marriage equality was instituted in 2005, there have been openly gay members of parliament for 26 years, and over 80% of Canadians say society should accept homosexuality. Nevertheless, openly gay or transgender candidates remain a rare breed. The progress of LGBTQ identifying Canadians in electoral politics resembles the slow progress in the United States rather than the rapid leap forward seen over the last decade in the United Kingdom.

Key Data:

- In 2011 there were 19 out LGBTQ candidates in the federal elections, on October 19th there were 21. The 2015 candidates cut across gender, identity, party and region. After rising from a single out candidate in 1988, to a highpoint of 22 in 2004, the number of LGBTQ candidates has declined slightly over the last decade.



- In 2011 only one LGBTQ woman was elected, that was repeated in 2015. All the LGBTQ winners have been white. One of the twenty-one candidates identified as transgender.
- There have been fifteen out gay and bisexual MPs in Canada's history since Sven Robinson came out in 1988: 8 NDP, 5 Liberal and 2 Bloc Québécois. In 2011 five of the six were NDP MPs, but in 2015 the split was Liberal 4, NDP 2.
- Currently there are 136 out LGBTQ MPs in office in 30 counties.
- There is scant reason to believe that LGBTQ identifying Canadians struggle to be elected because of their identity.
- There are significant examples of LGBTQ leaders in office at other levels of government in Canada: two premiers, a senator, countless provincial legislators and cabinet members, and local officials, but the breadth of those successes is not replicated in the federal parliament.

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Data: Out LGBTQ Candidates and Elected MPs

Elected

NDP Sheri Benson - Saskatoon West (Saskatchewan)
LIB Randy Boissonnault - Edmonton Centre (Alberta)
LIB Scott Brison – Kings-Hants (Nova Scotia)
NDP Randall Garrison - Esquimalt-Saanich-Sooke (BC)
LIB Rob Oliphant – Don Valley West (Ontario)
LIB Seamus O'Regan - St. John's S-Mount Pearl (Newfoundland)

Incumbent losses

NDP Phil Toone - Gaspésie-Les Îles de la Madeleine (Quebec)
NDP Craig Scott - Toronto-Danforth (Ontario)
NDP Dany Morin - Chicoutimi-Le Fjord (Quebec)

Candidates

NDP (10)

Randall Garrison - Esquimalt-Saanich-Sooke (BC)
Craig Scott - Toronto-Danforth (Ontario)
Dany Morin - Chicoutimi-Le Fjord (Quebec)
Phil Toone - Gaspésie-Les Îles de la Madeleine (Quebec)
Jacqui Gingras - North Okanagan-Shuswap (BC)
Sheri Benson - Saskatoon West (Saskatchewan)
Scott Bell - Saskatoon-Grasswood (Saskatchewan)
Paul Harris – Red Deer-Mountain View (Alberta)
Andrew Thomson – Eglinton-Lawrence (Ontario)
Deborah Chief - Selkirk-Interlake- Eastman (Manitoba)

Liberal (6)

Scott Brison – Kings-Hants (Nova Scotia)
Rob Oliphant – Don Valley West (Ontario)
Seamus O'Regan - St. John's South-Mount Pearl (Newfoundland)
Randy Boissonnault - Edmonton Centre (Alberta)
Jeffrey Rock - Red Deer-Lacombe (Alberta)
Christopher Brown – Peace River Westlock (Alberta)

Green (3)

Tamela Friesen - Regina–Lewvan (Saskatchewan)
Linh Nguyen – Mississauga Center (Ontario)
Cyrille Giraud - Laurier--Sainte-Marie (Québec)

Conservative (1)

Julian Di Battista – Toronto Center (Ontario)

Strength through Democracy (1)

Jennifer McCreath – Avalon (Newfoundland and Labrador)

International Comparison

Canada October 2015

LGBTQ Candidates: 21 (6% of ridings)

Elected: 6 (1.7%)

Marriage equality introduced: 2005

First out LGBT MP: 1988 (Svend Robinson)

LGBT cohort previous parliament: 6

USA November 2016

LGBTQ Candidates (declared as of Oct 2015): 7 (2% of districts)

Likely elected: 7 (1.6%)

Marriage equality introduced: 2015

First out LGBT Representative: 1983 (Gerry Studds)

LGBT cohort current Congress: 8

UK May 2015

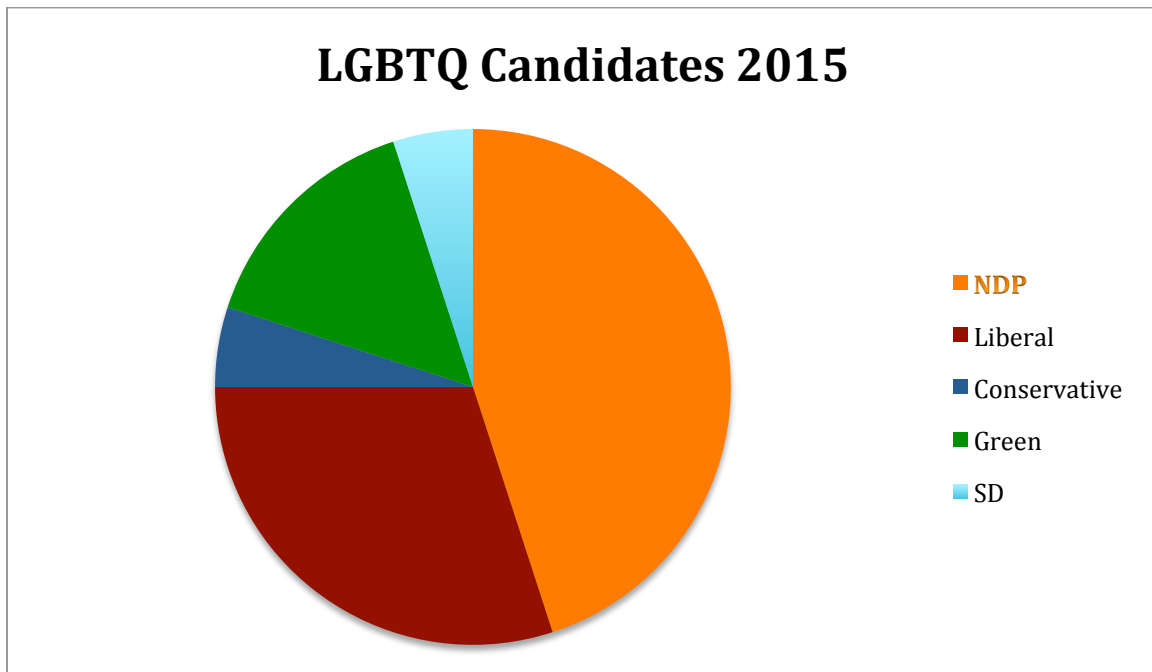
LGBTQ Candidates: 155 (21% of constituencies)

Elected: 32 (5%)

Marriage equality introduced: 2013

First out LGBT MP: 1984 (Chris Smith)

LGBT cohort previous parliament: 24



NB: Thanks to Rob Salerno, Joanna Everitt, Curtis Atkins and David Rayside for their guidance in the preparation of this release. Support received from USAID and the Victory Fund.