Listening Canvass package

In this political moment, people are feeling angry, scared, and unheard. Building a better future will only happen if we make space for those feelings, listen to where people are at, and work together to build the political power we need to win the progressive policies we deserve, regardless of who wins the April 28th federal election.

Canvassing is a great way to get out, learn where people are at, and invite them to actively take part in building the world we want. Grab a buddy (always canvass in pairs if you can), and check out the materials list for what you'll want to bring. The script below will guide you through connecting conversations with people you meet at rallies, at markets, on the street, or at the door.

A few notes before you go:

- If someone you're talking to makes you feel unsafe, you are under no obligation to continue to talk to them. Thank them for their time and walk away. Your safety comes first.
- Some topics that come up will likely be challenging or emotional for the person you're talking to, or you. Emotions are one of the best ways we can connect with each other, but if something is overwhelming or you don't feel safe, you can take a break or walk away. Be compassionate with yourself and with the people you meet!
- Make sure you have someone to debrief with after the canvass. It can be your canvassing buddy, a friend, a partner, or one of the Council of Canadians' staff. Canvassing is hard work, and it's important to process what you learned and felt so that you don't carry it with you.

Materials:

- A clipboard
- A copy of your script
- A few blank sheets to take notes
- Several pens (someone will walk away with one)
- Council of Canadians sign-up sheet https://canadians.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/2025-election-sign-up-sheet.pdf
- Council of Canadians election leaflet https://canadians.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/2025-election-brochure.pdf
- A buddy

Canvassing Script

This script is intended as a conversational guide only. Don't be afraid to go off script if the conversation gets good – but make sure to get their information and invite them to future events!

Hi, how are you today?

I'm ***[name]***, and this is ***[name]***, and we're out here chatting with folks because a lot of people are really struggling right now. We're involved with the Council of Canadians, a non-partisan organization that works for people, planet and democracy. We are deeply concerned about the influence that corporations and billionaires have over our political system, and about the impact it is having on people.

What are the issues that feel most pressing to you and the people in your community right now?

[Listen to their response - ask follow-up and clarification questions, especially around how they feel about the things they care about or are struggling with.]

Thank you so much for sharing what you and the people in your life are struggling through right now. We're out here today because many of the struggles that you and I are facing are because of the same people: billionaires and big businesses are making record profits, and our elected officials aren't doing anything about it. Instead of making sure that people and communities have what they need, our MPs are letting their grocery store CEO and landlord buddies call the shots.

The situation is bad now, and I'm afraid that it could get even worse after this federal election. The only way that we're going to be able to change that is if our governments listen to people and communities instead of their rich friends.

If you were talking to your federal candidates right now, what would you ask them to do to address ***[the thing that they shared that is a struggle in their life?]***

[If they aren't sure, see below for policies that would address those problems (See* **Annex 1: Policies for the Canada We Want for more info):]***

> **We need to stand up to Donald Trump**, hitting him where it hurts while making sure no one gets left behind.
>
> **We need to protect and expand public health care**, building community clinic, improving working conditions for health care workers, and rolling out pharmacare
>
> **We need to tackle the housing and cost-of-living crises** by building public housing and cracking down on price-gouging by corporations
>
> **We need to create green jobs and invest in publicly-owned renewable energy**

We need a government that will rebuild public services that make life cheaper for everyone

We need a foreign policy devoted to peace and human rights

[Listen to their response - ask follow-up and clarification questions, especially around how they feel about the things they care about or are struggling with.]

We are deeply concerned that a federal government led by Pierre Poilievre and the Conservatives will make things worse for ordinary people.

[Relate the issue they expressed concern about to how Poilievre would make things worse, see below for some examples; See Annex 2: The Threat of a Poilievre Government for more details]

We are concerned that Pierre Poilievre will cave in to Trump's economic coercion.

We are concerned that Poilievre will open the door to even more privatization in health care

Pierre Poilievre may pose as a champion for the working class, but we are worried he will in fact pander to price-gouging corporations

Poilievre doesn't give a damn about the climate crisis and just like Trump only want to "drill, baby, drill"

Pierre Poilievre will take a DOGE-style chainsaw to our public services, cutting nearly $100 billion dollars from the federal budget

Pierre Poilievre will turn Canada towards more militarism and war

This federal election, we are urging people to vote to keep the Conservatives out.

[Make sure you know who is likely to win in the riding you are canvassing in – and who is best placed to beat the Conservatives by checking 338Canada.]

But at the Council of Canadians, we also believe we can't sit back and wait for a politician to come along and save us.

Corporate lobbyists and the billionaire class are determined to push their agenda no matter who gets elected. The only way we can counter them is with a powerful, united movement fighting for a Canada that puts people, the planet, and our democracy before profit.

Would you like to join thousands of people across the country as we work to win good policies that will improve things for you, me, and everyone in this country?

[IF YES] Here's our sign-up sheet! We'll be in touch to invite you to ***[share information about your next event or another way to be involved].***

It's been really nice to chat with you, thank you for taking the time. Looking forward to taking action for the future we deserve with you soon!

Annex 1: Policies for the Canada We Want

We need to stand up to Donald Trump, hitting him where it hurts while making sure no one gets left behind.

Trump wants to grab our resources, decimate our auto industry and even steal our water. We have to be ready for a fight – and most Canadians are. We can hit back with export taxes on critical resources like oil and potash that American depend on. We can expand Employment Insurance to protect laid off workers and block companies from moving their plants south.

We need to protect and expand public health care

Canada's public health care system is in critical condition. We need to improve conditions to bring nurses back, expand community clinics, and clamp down on out-of-control drug prices through pharmacare, a public drug plan that covers everyone. And we can't do it without serious federal leadership.

We need a government that will tackle the housing and cost-of-living crises

Making life more affordable means cracking down on corporate price-gouging, giving workers more power to organize unions, and massively building public, non-market housing. Rent controls and measures to clamp down on housing speculation are urgently needed to ensure housing for all.

We need to create green jobs and invest in publicly-owned renewable energy

We need a green industrial policy that will build up publicly-owned renewable energy sources and an east-west electric power grid, high-speed rail and zero-emission vehicle manufacturing, so we wean ourselves from the fossil fuel industry once and for all.

We need a government that will rebuild public services that make life cheaper for everyone

Public services like pharmacare, dental care and $10/day child care need to be expanded rapidly to help people cope with the cost of living crisis. Years of underinvestment in health care and education have undermined these vital parts of our social safety net. We can reverse this trend, and we can pay for it through by taxing the corporations and the wealthy.

We need a foreign policy devoted to peace and human rights

Canadians have a long and cherished history of standing up against international wrongs, from fighting fascism in Spain in the 1930s, to opposing South African apartheid in the 1980s to the Palestine solidarity movement today.

We need a government that will defend human rights and oppose arms sales to regimes like Israel that are committing crimes against humanity. We need to review our security ties with the U.S. empire and our reliance on American arms manufacturers, starting with the $70 billion F-35 fighter jet contract.

Annex 2: The Threat of a Poilievre Government

We are concerned that Pierre Poilievre will cave in to Trump's economic coercion

Many of his top advisors are admirers of Trump, and some, like Conservative MP Jamil Jivani, have close ties to the authoritarian regime. Some conservatives, like Alberta premier Danielle Smith, have even been lobbying the U.S. government to intervene in Poilievre's favour, saying Poilievre's approach is "in sync" with Trump's.

We can't face this existential crisis with a Prime Minister afraid or unwilling to take tough measures against the U.S. president and his billionaire backers.

We are concerned that Poilievre will open the door to even more privatization in health care

Pierre Poilievre has cozied up to private health care providers and promised to massively cut federal spending, which will inevitably impact health care spending. Poilievre says he "rejects" pharmacare and could slash dental care just as these programs are getting started. Even worse, Poilievre could try to rip up, weaken or simply not enforce the Canada Health Act, allowing provinces to engage in even greater privatization and corporate profiteering.

Pierre Poilievre may pose as a champion for the working class, but we are worried he will in fact pander to price-gouging corporations

The Conservative Party's policy council is choc full of lobbyists from the pharmaceutical, oil and real estate industries, and his fundraising events are well attended by corporate lobbyists. His top advisor, Jenni Byrne, is a lobbyist for Loblaws. Canada's 1% understand that his bashing the rich is a "shtick." Beneath the angry, anti-elite exterior lies a pro-business politician running on a platform of shrinking government.

Instead of uniting working class people, Poilievre distracts and divides us, by scapegoating migrants, attacking trans kids' rights, and demonizing people experiencing homelessness.

Poilievre doesn't give a damn about the climate crisis and just like Trump only want to "drill, baby, drill."

Poilievre doesn't just want to axe the carbon tax. He wants to gut environmental assessments, scrap the CO2 emissions caps, and run roughshod over indigenous land title. Building pipelines and subsidizing oil companies schemes like carbon

capture will only make the climate crisis worse. We can't afford to have a Prime Minister who answers to the beck and call of Big Oil.

Pierre Poilievre will take a DOGE-style chainsaw to our public services, if elected.

Pierre Poilievre has said he will cut nearly $100 billion dollars from the federal budget, which would mean pharmacare, dental care and $10/day child care could all be on the chopping block. So could health and education spending and old age pensions, given how deep the cuts are that Poilievre wants. We need only look south, where American seniors are losing social security benefits and veterans' health care is being shredded, to see how that works out.

Pierre Poilievre will turn Canada towards more militarism and war.

Poilievre is an unthinking defender of Israel and its genocidal campaign in Gaza. As Prime Minister, he would lock us into a "Fortress North America" led by Donald Trump while alienating allies and heightening tensions with countries like China. Like Trump, Poilievre has suggested he will criminalize dissent on Palestine and slash foreign aid, while spending billions on U.S.-made fighter jets.

Annex 3: "A Tangible Plan to Defeat Pierre Poilievre" by Protecting Canada

This document explores polling done by Protecting Canada, a group led by Liberal and NDP political consultants, which outlines some of the most effective messaging when addressing voters that are on the fence or leaning towards voting for Pierre Poilievre's Conservatives. While it does not align perfectly with the Council of Canadians – the role of the billionaire class and the corporate agenda is not adequately highlighted – it has some useful ideas for phrasing that will resonate with people.

With the election writ expected to drop within days, we are writing with a certain urgency. The upcoming campaign will be unlike any we've witnessed before: a federal election held under the looming storm clouds of Trump's return to the White House and the emerging threats to our sovereignty, economy, and values. In this pivotal moment, Protecting Canada's work has never been more essential. Pierre Poilievre represents an existential risk to Canadian values we believe in.

Protecting Canada arose from a coalition of workers, advocates, and allies determined to stand against a right-wing Conservative surge that had grown unchecked in the last few years. We've been deploying a strategic defense of Canadian values. And it's working.

Over the course of the last year, we've been researching a message-tested, data-driven playbook, but once the election is called, we will stand down. It will be up to others to continue this fight.

This memo isn't just research – it's a roadmap. We've identified precisely what moves voters away from Poilievre and toward defending Canadian values. We've tested the messages. We've deployed the ads. We've measured the impact.

We've written this memo to make public the tools to defeat Poilievre and protect the Canada we know and love.

If you believe in universal healthcare, control of our natural resources, and a Canada that stands strong against American pressure – this is your call to action. The following pages outline how to stop Poilievre from surrendering our country to Trump's America.

The battle lines are drawn. The evidence is clear. The time to act is now.

The research cited in this memo was conducted by Relay Strategies for Protecting Canada between March 13-15, 2025, in a national online survey of n=2228 Canadians fielded in English and French. The margin of error for a random sample of this size is +/-2%.

The Race Is Now Competitive

Our latest polling reveals a dramatic shift in the political landscape:

- The Conservatives's lead has been completely erased and are now in a statistical tie nationally (39% CPC vs. 37% LPC), with the NDP at 12% and Bloc Québécois at 6%
- Gender divide deepening: Men favor Conservatives (45% vs. 34%), while women now support Liberals (40% vs. 33%) with stronger NDP backing among younger women
- Conservative base eroding: Voters "Certain" to vote Conservative dropped 6% since spring 2024, with their overall vote pool shrinking by 8%

The Poilievre-Trump Connection Is Sticking

The Conservative leader's approach has been divisive and negative for too long, reminding voters of everything we hate about American politics, add to that well-known MAGA personalities, like Elon Musk, and even Trump himself, have endorsed Poilievre. Protecting Canada has been hammering away on the Poilievre-Trump connection with our ads "51st-state" and "Erase." Our messaging on Poilievre's alignment with Trump and American-style politics is resonating powerfully.

The evidence is clear, our campaign works:

- By a decisive two-to-one margin (58% vs. 27%), Canadians now believe Poilievre and Trump share values and vision
- More than half of Canadians recall seeing ads about Poilievre being like Trump
- Those exposed to our messaging are significantly more likely to believe Poilievre would surrender to Trump on critical issues:
  - Giving the US greater access to our natural resources (44% vs. 33%)
  - Allowing American companies to privatize parts of our healthcare (40% vs. 28%)

Poilievre's favorability has eroded significantly, with the highest "very unfavorable" rating (32%) of any Canadian leader. Most Canadians now view him as a "typical politician" (66%), and there has been documented erosion on every single attribute we track.

Canadian Values: The Core of Our Strategy

When asked what aspects of Canadian values they most want to protect, voters prioritize five key elements that stand in stark contrast to Poilievre's vision:

1. Universal public healthcare (58%)
2. Control of our natural resources (50%)
3. Economic independence from the United States (48%)

4. A fair economy where everyone can get ahead (47%)

5. Not being American (31%)

These issues have been featured in Protecting Canada ads since last fall, through the inauguration of Donald Trump, and up until today. These values must remain at the center of our messaging as we contrast the Canada we want to protect versus American-style alternative Poilievre cherishes.

Message Testing: The Most Effective Anti-Poilievre Frames

Our research has identified the three most powerful messaging components:

1. Poilievre's lack of real-world experience

2. Poilievre's flawed character

3. The threat to Canadian pride and sovereignty

Highest Impact Messages

After testing across dozens of segments of the population, one message stands out as having the broadest appeal:

THE EXPERIENCE GAP (76% find credible, 58% convincing)

"Donald Trump is a huge threat to Canada. In this time of crisis, we need someone with real world experience. Pierre Poilievre has never had a job outside of politics. And even in politics, he has no track record of making our lives better. He's never even worked with Canadian politicians to get things done. How will he negotiate with Trump? He's not qualified to solve today's problems."

This message performs strongly across ALL demographic groups and regions.

The second most effective message builds on Poilievre's association with the American-Right:

THE MAGA CONNECTION (72% find credible, 54% convincing)

"The Republicans surrounding Trump, like Elon Musk, are now the most powerful conservatives in the world. And they're very excited about Poilievre being Prime Minister. We can't trust Poilievre to stand up for Canada when he wants to be like them."

Particularly effective with women across all age groups and men 18-34 and 65+.

Messages: Strong Performers

THE CUTS AGENDA (72% find credible, 54% convincing)

“Throughout his 20-year political career, Pierre Poilievre has had one vision for Canada: American-style government that cuts people loose. But our country was built on the idea that every Canadian should have a dignified standard of living. That’s why we have the Canadian Pension Plan, public healthcare, and affordable child-care. Poilievre would slash these, making life more expensive for hard working Canadians.”

Resonates strongly with women 18-34 and men 65+.

THE SACRIFICE FRAME (72% find credible, 54% convincing)

“All negotiations are a give and take. In negotiations with Trump, Canada is going to have to make some sacrifices. If Poilievre is in power, we know he’ll give up the things he cares about least - like public healthcare. He can’t be trusted to fight for Canada.”

Most effective with women 35-64.

THE CAREER POLITICIAN (74% find credible, 54% convincing)

“Pierre Poilievre has been a politician for over 20 years. In that time, he’s gotten good at exactly one thing: talking. He’s slick, loud, and is a good campaigner. But he doesn’t listen, work well with others, or take advice. That’s not leadership. He doesn’t have what it takes to lead team Canada in the fight against Trump.”

Particularly effective with men 18-34 and 65+, and women 65+.

Strategic Imperatives: The Path Forward

With the federal election imminent, we must intensify our efforts along five key strategic vectors:

- Amplify the Trump Connection: Continue highlighting Poilievre’s alignment with Trump and American-style politics. This is working.

- Frame the Election as a Choice About Canadian Values: Focus on protecting what makes us Canadian - especially our public healthcare, natural resources, and economic independence.

- Hammer Poilievre’s Experience Gap: The message about Poilievre’s lack of real-world experience is our single most effective frame and works across all demographic groups. He has no real qualifications to deal with real threats, like Trump.

- Cuts that will Cost Canadians: Don’t abandon cost-of-living, instead tie it to Poilievre’s American-style cuts agenda that will cost you and leave you with less money in

your pocket. He got his, but he'll cut your pension – or make sure you never get one – and cut child-care, leaving you less economically secure.

- Target Demographics:
  - All Canadians concerned about the crisis of Trump and the future of Canada
  - Seniors; turn them out to vote
  - Women 18+; persuade / remind them how Poilievre will cut them loose
  - Men 35+; engage mature men who neither hate nor love politics
  - Don't engage men who fall within the Andrew Tate-Jordan Peterson-Elon Musk Venn diagram (this is a project for another day), let Maxime Bernier peel them off as Poilievre stumbles between inauthentically standing up to Trump and his desire for sounding MAGA

Conclusion: The Urgency of This Moment

The upcoming federal election represents a historic crossroads for Canada. Pierre Poilievre offers an American-style vision that threatens the very fabric of Canadian values. Our research confirms that Canadians reject this vision when presented with the clear choice.

The campaign to defeat Poilievre is working. By continuing to highlight his inexperience, his character flaws, and the threat he poses to Canadian identity in the face of Trump's America, we can ensure voters make the choice to protect the Canada we know and value.

With disciplined messaging and strategic focus, we will prevail. Protecting Canada means following a tested roadmap that works to defeat Pierre Poilievre. This is that roadmap.

This is how we protect Canada.