



RESPONSE TO PETITION

Prepare in English and French marking 'Original Text' or 'Translation'

PETITION NO.: **421-04139**

BY: **MS. BENSON (SASKATOON WEST)**

DATE: **JUNE 5, 2019**

PRINT NAME OF SIGNATORY: **MR. TERRY DUGUID**

Response by the Minister of International Development and Minister for Women and Gender Equality

SIGNATURE

Minister or Parliamentary Secretary

SUBJECT

Women's rights

ORIGINAL TEXT

REPLY

The Government of Canada would like to thank the petitioners for expressing their concerns. The Government is deeply committed to advancing gender equality, which includes upholding women's rights through the support of initiatives that will have a lasting impact for all women. This commitment has been demonstrated through program investments by the Department for Women and Gender Equality (the Department; formerly Status of Women Canada), which have increased to an unprecedented level - from \$95 million from 2013-14 to 2017-18 to over \$434 million from 2018-19 to 2023-24. Building on the \$19 million in annual ongoing funding through the Women's Program, new investments include: \$100 million over five years to ensure a strong sustainable women's movement; over \$13 million over two years to establish a Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Commemoration Fund; \$50 million over five years for the Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Program; and, a Budget 2019 proposed investment of \$160 million over five years for the Women's Program. To address the unique needs and persisting disparities among LGBTQ2 Canadians, Budget 2019 also proposes \$20 million over two years for capacity-building and community-level work of LGBTQ2 organizations. These investments contribute to strengthening women's and equality-seeking organizations across the country and make a real difference in the lives of women, girls and LGBTQ2 individuals in Canada.

WOMEN'S PROGRAM

Through the Women's Program, the Department for Women and Gender Equality invests in projects across Canada that address systemic barriers to gender equality by working to end violence against women and girls; improve women's and girl's economic security and prosperity; and encourage women and girls in leadership and decision-making roles. The objective of the Women's Program is to achieve the full participation of women in the economic, social and democratic life of Canada.

Every year, the Department provides funding through the Women's Program to some 300 projects at the local, regional and national levels. Examples of current projects include:

A project working to increase the representation of women in skilled trades in Nova Scotia through the development and implementation of a provincial Gender Equity Plan that is more inclusive and supportive to women obtaining apprenticeship certification. A formal network will also be established to inform policies and practices in the apprenticeship system, and advance gender equality in the sector.

A collaborative project between six organizations in Quebec to provide municipalities with the knowledge, tools, and support to implement structural and policy changes to foster women's political participation. Approximately 15 regional county municipalities are engaged and working with internal committees in the development and implementation of sustainable action plans and equality policies.

A project to improve the tracking and reporting of sexual assaults by authorities through the adaptation of the "Philadelphia model" in Ontario. Through the project, a Canadian-specific case-review model will be implemented to increase police accountability, potentially reduce the number of cases misclassified as "unfounded," and increase reporting rates and trust in the judicial system for sexual assault survivors.

Since 2016, the Women's Program has undergone a number of enhancements to refine and refocus its support to projects and initiatives that respond to identified gaps and ongoing and emerging issues in gender equality in Canada. In 2016, the eligibility of advocacy activities was restored within funded projects to better advance equality issues. In 2017-18, the Department implemented changes to the way it supports organizations, including enhancements to the Women's Program to strengthen its support and flexibility to funded organizations. These changes will make it easier for organizations to access resources, through for example, longer-term, higher value funding opportunities and capacity funding for women's organizations. The ongoing expansion of the Department's regional presence will also continue to enhance its ability to liaise with and support local stakeholders and organizations.

Ensuring that the women's movement is sustainable and can continue serving, and advocating on behalf of, women and girls across Canada is essential. With the \$100 million investment announced in Budget 2018, the Department launched the Capacity-building Call for Proposals this past October to increase organizational capacity and help organizations work collectively to address gender equality issues. On March 8, the Minister for Women and Gender Equality announced funding for over 250 organizations under this Call including:

The Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic, which will receive \$250,000 to create new, creative and innovative fundraising opportunities to help them continue to be a force for women's rights, as well as to allow the specialized legal clinic to improve its services and outreach to isolated women who may be vulnerable or at risk of violence due to poverty, disability, geographic location, language barriers, precarious immigration, and work status.

DisAbleD Women's Network Canada (DAWN), which will receive \$830,959 to help them advance reform, research, education, and advocacy for women and girls with disabilities and or who are deaf, as well as to help the organization work more effectively with its networks and partners by transferring knowledge about intersecting issues.

The Capacity Building funding responds to feedback received from women's organizations on the numerous challenges they are facing in accessing funding to support the important work they do, and in addressing longer term organizational needs required to fulfil their mandates. A key element of this funding was increased flexibility so organizations could apply for funding to address their specific needs.

Building on these recent investments, Budget 2019 proposes an additional historic investment for the Women's Program: \$160 million over five years, starting in 2019–20, to enable further community action to tackle systemic barriers impeding women's progress, while recognizing and addressing the diverse experiences of gender and inequality across the country. This funding will allow women's and other equality-seeking organizations to continue to further their vital and inspiring work on behalf of all women and girls and to advance gender equality.

Through the Department for Women and Gender Equality, the Government of Canada is entering into three innovative funding agreements with organizations that will match up to \$30 million of federal funding into gender equality efforts. The new matching partnerships with Community Foundations of Canada, Canadian Women's Foundation and Grand Challenges Canada, will result in up to \$60M in funding for women's organizations in Canada and will accelerate gender equality from coast to coast to coast.

In response to the National Inquiry's Interim Report, the Department for Women and Gender Equality established a Commemoration Fund. The Commemoration Fund supports Indigenous organizations and Indigenous governments to work with communities to develop and implement commemoration initiatives to honour the lives and legacies of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and LGBTQ2 people; and to increase public awareness and understanding. On June 24, 2019, the Minister for Women and Gender Equality announced that the Government of Canada is investing over \$13 million in over 100 commemoration initiatives from coast to coast to coast.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV) PROGRAM

The Government of Canada recognizes that addressing GBV requires a multifaceted approach. As such, in June 2017, the Minister for Women and Gender Equality launched *It's Time: Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence* (the Strategy), which was informed by a nationwide engagement process. The Strategy aligns the GBV efforts of federal departments and agencies and builds on existing federal initiatives and programs while laying the foundation for greater action on GBV. The Strategy's initiatives are organized across three pillars: preventing GBV, supporting survivors and their families; and promoting responsive legal and justice systems, and are coordinated by the GBV Knowledge Centre.

The #MeToo and *Time's Up* movements, as well as the global Women's Marches, have brought issues of sexism, misogyny and GBV to the forefront. The Department intends to build on the momentum and has doubled its efforts to end GBV. Taking action under the second pillar of the Strategy, the Department's GBV Program aims to support organizations working in the GBV sector in developing and implementing promising practices to address gaps in supports for Indigenous women and their communities, and other underserved groups of survivors in Canada. These include but are not limited to: children and youth; racialized women; LGBTQ2 communities and gender-non-binary people; non-

status/refugee/immigrant women; seniors; women living in an official language minority community; women living in northern, rural and remote communities; and women living with a disability.

In December 2018, the Minister announced more than \$50 million in funding for nearly 60 organizations to support survivors of GBV and their families in communities across Canada. Organizations will receive up to \$1M for up to five years to implement their projects. Examples include:

Y des femmes de Montréal (YWCA Montreal) is receiving funding for their project entitled “*The Graduation Approach and Gender-Based Violence.*” The project will adapt and test the *Graduation Approach* support model to improve the services available to newly arrived immigrant women who are survivors of gender-based violence, regardless of their legal status. Project activities will help these women and their families cope with their loss, improve their economic security and develop the ability to be independent within the community.

Ka Ni Kanichihk, Inc. will undertake a project entitled *Heart Medicine Lodge: A Promising Practice in Supporting Indigenous Women Survivors of Sexualized Violence.* The project will test an existing successful healing program to see how it can be used to support Indigenous women survivors of sexual violence in rural, northern and First Nation communities in Manitoba.

CONCLUSION

Canada has a long history of advancing gender equality. From the early suffragettes who fought for women to receive the right to vote to the activists of the #MeToo movement, feminist action has played—and continues to play—a pivotal role in shaping our history and our future.

Bill C-86, the legislation that officially created the Department for Women and Gender Equality, became law on December 13th, 2018. The passage of the legislation formalizes the Government’s commitment and the Department’s role to continue advancing gender equality in Canada. Recognizing that addressing persistent gender inequalities cannot be achieved by the Department alone and requires the active and sustained engagement of all, the Department will continue to collaborate with a wide range of organizations, key stakeholders in all levels of government as well as the private and voluntary sectors to coordinate efforts and work towards common objectives.

Through enhancements and investments to the Women’s Program and the GBV Program, the Department for Women and Gender Equality has evolved to better advance equality issues and will continue to support women’s and other equality-seeking organizations in the important work they do.