



**OCT 15 2018**

Karen Vecchio, M.P.  
Chair, Standing Committee on the Status of Women  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON  
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Dear Ms. Vecchio,

Pursuant to Standing Order 109 of the House of Commons, we are pleased to respond, on behalf of the Government of Canada, to the recommendations made by the Standing Committee on the Status of Women in its report entitled *Women's Economic Security: Securing the Future of Canada's Economy*, tabled in the House of Commons on June 14, 2018.

Our Government would like to thank the members of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women for undertaking this valuable study examining the challenges associated with the economic security, and full and equal participation of women in the Canadian economy. The Government also thanks the numerous witnesses who participated in this comprehensive study, either as individual participants or as representatives of their organizations, as well as the organizations who submitted written briefs. We have given consideration to the eighty-six recommendations developed by the Committee and presented in its Report that touch upon a wide array of issues and challenges faced by women. As these are multi-faceted issues that require a comprehensive response, the Government will use this report to help inform future government policy and programs as we strive to ensure the full participation of women in the Canadian economy.

The Government is committed to advancing the economic security and equality of women and gender diverse people in all areas of Canadian society. Progress on gender equality in Canada will drive economic growth, while boosting the income of Canadian families. More women in leadership positions can help grow the economy, create jobs, strengthen communities and contribute to innovation and change in the workplace that will benefit everyone. Our Government recognizes that policies and programs should consider the intersectional identities and unique experiences of all Canadians and has introduced a number of initiatives that respond to these diverse needs. These include measures that will help women gain access to new opportunities and build skills, improve their work-life balance and support more equitable distribution of caregiving responsibilities, and provide for their health and well-being and that of their loved ones. We also value the importance of collecting comparable data to allow the examination of gender difference as well as recognize that all partners, including public sector, private sector, labour and civil society stakeholders, have a role to play in addressing the systemic and social barriers that prevent women from fully participating to the workforce. On the

international scene, our Government selected the advancement of gender equality and women's empowerment as the cross-cutting theme of Canada's 2018 G7 Presidency, integrating it throughout all G7 activities and events. The Government also established the Gender Equality Advisory Council for Canada's G7 Presidency to advise the G7 Presidency and propose recommendations to advance gender equality and women's empowerment.

Building on Canada's first ever Gender Statement in Budget 2017, Budget 2018 introduced a new Gender Results Framework (GRF) - a whole-of-government tool to monitor progress towards gender equality through an intersectional lens - and also committed to adopting a comprehensive and permanent approach to gender budgeting. The GRF articulates Canada's key goals for gender equality under six pillars: education and skills development, economic participation and prosperity, leadership and democratic participation, poverty, health and well-being, gender-based violence and access to justice, and gender equality around the world. These pillars provide a frame for presenting the actions the Government has undertaken to advance women's economic security since they are inclusive, covering a wide range of issues that can impact women and their economic situation. Recommendations related to cross-cutting initiatives as well as those on GBA+ (a policy tool that applies to all six pillars) have been addressed in a separate section.

The following addresses the report's recommendations under each of the six pillars of the GRF.

### *Education and Skills Development*

#### *Women's Access to Education and Diversified Career Pathways*

This first GRF pillar focuses on the importance of fostering equal and diversified learning and skills development opportunities, which is an essential aspect of preparing Canadians for the jobs of the future and addressing challenges such as the changing nature of work and the impact of new technologies. The Government supports students, including women, by making post-secondary education more affordable via its financial assistance programs. The Canada Student Loans Program provides post-secondary education students, the majority of whom are women, with financial assistance in the form of grants, loans and repayment assistance based on financial need. In the 2016-2017 academic year, women represented the majority of loan recipients (291,000 or 59%), and of students from low- and middle income families who received Canada Student Grants (CSG) (200,000 or 58%). Of the approximately 35,000 borrowers who received the CSG for Students with Dependents, 79% were women. The Government of Canada also encourages the use of Registered Education Savings Plans (RESP) to save for a child's post-secondary education (PSE), which includes full- or part-time studies at a trade school, CEGEP or college, university, or in an apprenticeship program. To further support savings for the PSE of a child, the Government offers two education savings incentives linked to RESPs; namely, the

Canada Education Savings Grant and the Canada Learning Bond (CLB). A GBA+ analysis concluded that the proportion of boys and girls within the population benefiting from the incentives is similar to the overall Canadian population (51% and 49% respectively, based on census data).

All Canadians should have the opportunity to make educational and employment choices based on their interests and aptitudes, without being limited by gender-related expectations or biases. The Government is committed to support youth employment and facilitate the transition to the world of work via Canada Summer Jobs, an initiative designed to create summer employment opportunities for students by offering wage subsidies to employers. One of the 2018 priorities of the Canada Summer Jobs program is to support organizations that offer jobs in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and information and communications and technology, particularly for women, which is in line with the Committee's recommendation that the Government, *when setting priorities for Canada Summer Job allocations, include as one priority the promotion of jobs for young women in traditionally male-dominated fields*. A renewed Youth Employment Strategy will also be announced over the course of the next year, providing young people, particularly those facing barriers to employment, with opportunities to gain the skills, work experience and abilities they need to make a successful transition into the labour market.

As the Committee heard, while there is a scarcity of qualified workers in numerous STEM and skilled trades fields, women remain underrepresented in these sectors. Witnesses also indicated that employment in these fields could not only yield economic opportunities for women, but also be advantageous for the sectors' sustainability and the economy in Canada. In keeping with the Committee's recommendation, the Government recognizes the importance of addressing the underrepresentation of women in these fields historically dominated by men via targeted initiatives that provide education and immersive experiences for women in the skilled trades and STEM sectors. In Budget 2018, the Government announced two new measures directly aimed at increasing women's representation in male-dominated trades. The *Apprenticeship Incentive Grant for Women*, starting in 2018-19, will provide women in Red Seal trades with a new grant of \$3,000 per year for up to two years for completion of each of the first two years of training. The second initiative, *Women in Construction Fund*, is launching in 2018-19 and will build on existing models that have proven to be effective in attracting women to the trades. These models provide supports such as mentoring, coaching and tailored supports that help women to progress through their training and find and retain jobs in the trades.

These two measures also build on other initiatives that provide incentives for women to join the trades and STEM occupations, namely the *Student Work Placements* initiative which supports the creation of more work placements for students enrolled in STEM and business programs, and incentivizes women's representation in these fields by offering higher wage subsidies for women interns, a new pre-apprenticeship program which will provide wrap-around supports to people,

including women and other underrepresented groups, who are considering a career in the skilled trades, and the new *Union Training and Innovation Program* which supports union-based apprenticeship training and innovative approaches to address challenges that limit apprenticeship outcomes, including those particular to women. Moreover, a notable outcome of the 2018 G7 Employment and Innovation Ministerial meeting was the announcement by the Government of the creation of up to 500 new student work placements in the field of Artificial Intelligence (AI) over three years, which will promote gender equity in emerging and increasingly important fields like AI by offering employers enhanced wage subsidies of up to 70% of wages (up to a maximum for \$7,000) for student work placements created for women and other underrepresented groups. Finally, the Government is improving data collection to support analysis of factors related to representation of women in STEM fields of study. For example, by using a new longitudinal data platform, the Government will look at educational pathways of women who enter STEM fields. The study will inform the development of programs aimed at attracting more young women to STEM fields.

Ensuring access to federal research funding opportunities for members of underrepresented groups, including women is also a key priority for the Government. Through Budget 2018, the Government announced a historic investment to support the work of researchers at post-secondary institutions and research hospitals with clear objectives and conditions, so that Canada's next generation of researchers is larger, more diverse and better supported. As such, the granting agencies are required to develop plans to achieve greater diversity among research funding recipients, including improved support for women, other underrepresented groups and early-career researchers. New funding proposed for the Canada Research Chairs program is also to be invested with a view to creating new opportunities for early-career researchers while generally increasing the diversity of nominees, particularly to increase the number of women nominated for these prestigious positions. Moreover, a priority of the Canada Research Coordinating Committee is to strengthen equity and diversity in research, beginning with an assessment of the barriers facing under-represented groups, including the structural, institutional and attitudinal barriers that impact the ability of researchers who are members of under-represented groups to fully access and benefit from agency programs and policies. Canadian youth—with an increasing focus on girls and Indigenous youth—are also encouraged to pursue interests and careers in STEM through organizations supported by the Government's Promoscience program.

### ***Economic Participation and Prosperity***

This second GRF pillar focusses on advancing women's economic participation, by increasing access to labour market opportunities and higher quality jobs for women, reducing the gender wage gap as well as supporting a more equal sharing of caregiving responsibilities. As the Committee noted, a persistent gender wage gap endures in Canada. While women's labour

market participation has increased by 24 percentage points from 1976 to 2017 (for women aged 15 to 64), a gender gap in participation and earnings remains. Upon entering the labour market, women and men have approximately equal labour market participation. However, as individuals begin to build families and have children, a gender gap emerges. Women with children, and particularly those with young children, are less likely to participate in the labour market, and more likely than their male counterparts to take on caregiving responsibilities for family members and unpaid labour in the home. In 2015, it was estimated that Canadian mothers provided nearly two-thirds (65%) of the total hours spent helping and caring for children. In addition, there is a greater proportion of women in lower-paid fields, sectors and occupations, and an underrepresentation of women in high-paying jobs and leadership positions. In 2017, for the population aged 15 and above in Canada women earned 87 cents for every dollar earned by men on an average hourly basis. The gender wage gap is multifaceted and has deep structural and societal roots and is often seen as an indicator of the broader state of gender equality in Canada reflecting our norms and values regarding gender roles.

While working to better understand the complexity behind the gender wage gap, the Government is taking steps to demonstrate leadership to address the gender wage gap through a range of measures, such as proactive pay equity legislation -to be introduced this fall - to ensure that women in federally regulated sectors receive, on average, equal pay for work of equal value, as well as pay transparency to provide Canadians with easily accessible information on pay practices of employers in the federally regulated private sector.

Recognizing that barriers to women's labour market participation can be complex and slow to move, the Government will also host a major symposium on women and the workplace in the spring of 2019. This symposium will bring together leaders in the private and public sectors to discuss and share best practices. The objective of the symposium would be to encourage and provide tools for Canadian employers to address issues faced by women in the workplace, from wage gaps to harassment.

### *Child Care*

With increased support for early learning and child care, more Canadian parents have the opportunity to pursue new opportunities to work and learn, and build a better future for themselves and their children. Notably, access to affordable childcare can be a key factor in encouraging women, who often stay home to care for children, to return to the workforce and improve their economic outlook - a notion echoed by Committee witnesses - as working shorter hours or taking protracted breaks from the labour market can potentially mean skills deterioration and fewer opportunities for career advancement over a lifetime. To better support Canadian families, Budgets 2016 and 2017 announced investments of \$7.5 billion over 11 years, starting in 2017-2018, to support and create more high-quality, affordable child care across the country. Furthermore, on June 12, 2017, the Government announced a historic agreement with provincial and territorial governments on a Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care

Framework. The Multilateral Framework will be seeking to increase the quality, accessibility, affordability, flexibility, and inclusivity of early learning and child care (ELCC), in particular for families that need child care the most. In keeping with the guiding principles of the Multilateral Framework, provinces and territories are expected to use investments allocated by the Government to address their priorities that have an impact on families more in need, such as lower-income families, Indigenous families, lone-parent families, families in underserved communities, those working non-standard hours, and/or families with children with varying abilities. The Framework, which includes a set of eight indicators, commits Governments to report annually on progress made which will contribute to understanding the ELCC landscape in Canada and support progress made on implementation of the Multilateral Framework. Since the release of the Framework, bilateral agreements with all provinces and territories have been reached representing \$1.2 billion over three years for early learning and child care programs. In addition, the Government is co-developing a distinct Indigenous Framework on Early Learning and Child Care with Indigenous partners to reflect the unique cultures and needs of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children across Canada.

As part of Government of Canada's initiatives on ELCC, \$95 million over 10 years will serve to close data gaps in order to better understand what child care looks like in Canada, and support strong reporting on progress made. This work will be done with stakeholders, experts, partners and provincial/ territorial/ Indigenous governments. In addition, \$100 million over 10 years is dedicated for ELCC innovation, which will support new and innovative practices across the country and help to develop more effective services to improve life outcomes for children and their families, including families more in need, most of which are led by women. Under the innovation funding, priority may be given to projects targeting Indigenous families, families from official language minority communities, lower income families, newcomer families and families with children with varying abilities.

### *Federal Labour Standards*

The Government has also made changes to the *Canada Labour Code* to benefit hard-working Canadians. The Code was amended to prohibit unpaid internships in the federally regulated private sector that are not part of a formal educational program and ensure that unpaid interns whose internship is part of a formal educational program are entitled to labour standard protections.

The *Canada Labour Code* has also been amended to give employees in the federally-regulated private sector the right to request flexible work arrangements from their employer, such as flexible start and finish times and the ability to work from home, to create new unpaid leaves for family responsibilities, to participate in traditional Indigenous practices and to seek care if they are victims of family violence or the parent/guardian of a minor child who is the victim of family violence and to make bereavement leave more flexible.

All these changes are expected to benefit women who, in comparison with men, traditionally bear a disproportionate share of caregiving responsibilities. In addition, women are not only over-represented among interns in general, but also among unpaid interns, with over 70% of unpaid, or underpaid, interns in Canada being women.

### *Family-Related Benefits and Leaves*

The Government understands that gender equality benefits all Canadians and can have a pivotal role in building a strong economy. To support greater gender equality for all workers, the Employment Insurance (EI) program applies a GBA+ lens to all the EI programs, initiatives and proposals considered. Program officials monitor the access requirements for all workers, including those who are in precarious work, seasonal work and low-wage workers. The changes to EI caregiver, maternity and parental benefits and corresponding job-protected leaves in Budgets 2017 and 2018 were informed and accompanied by detailed GBA+ analyses. In Budget 2017, we proposed amendments to the Canada Labour Code to introduce new unpaid leaves for federally regulated employees, including a family responsibility leave. This new leave will give employees the right to take up to three unpaid days off to meet family responsibilities related to the health or care of a family member and the education of a family member under the age of 18 without fear of losing their job.

As announced in the 2018 federal budget, to support greater gender equality in the home and in the workplace, the Government provided \$1.2 billion over five years, starting in 2018–19, and \$344.7 million per year thereafter, to introduce a new EI Parental Sharing Benefit. The Benefit will provide additional weeks of “use it or lose it” EI parental benefits, when both parents share parental leave. This incentive is expected to be available starting June 2019 and would be available to eligible birth and adoptive parents, in opposite-sex or same-sex relationships. The introduction of this new benefit aligns with the Committee’s recommendation – supported by numerous witnesses - that the Government *immediately establish, in the federal jurisdiction, dedicated parental leave for the second parent in the style of “use it or lose it” in order to encourage the sharing between parents of care responsibilities and leave from the workplace.* It will also advance the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5 (Gender Equality) by encouraging greater equality when it comes to child care and the distribution of unpaid work within the family, while allowing flexibility for earlier returns to work. Amendments will be made to the *Canada Labour Code* to provide employees in federally-regulated workplaces with corresponding job protected leaves. Furthermore, more flexible EI Parental Benefits were also introduced in Budget 2017 to allow parents to choose to receive parental benefits over twelve months as currently, or over eighteen months at a lower rate. Providing more flexibility can help working parents navigate the challenges associated with a growing family.

## *Pay and Employment Equity*

As mentioned previously, the Government is committed to move forward to address pay equity issues. In our response to the report of the Special Committee on Pay Equity entitled *It's Time to Act*, the Government committed to introducing proactive pay equity legislation for the federal jurisdiction and to carefully consider the Committee's report as well as the findings of the 2004 Pay Equity Task Force. The Government also indicated that it would draw upon provincial lessons learned and conduct targeted stakeholder consultations on design issues. Consultations were held with employers, employees and advocacy groups on the design elements of a proactive pay equity system in April 2017. In Budget 2018, we reaffirmed our commitment to table proactive pay equity legislation through budget implementation legislation this fall. While drawing on models in Ontario and Quebec, this legislation will ensure that on average, women and men in federally regulated sectors receive the same pay for work of equal value. It will take into consideration the complexity of the federal jurisdiction, applying to employers with 10 or more employees while establishing a streamlined pay equity process for employers with fewer than 100 employees. Budget 2018 also indicated that the legislation will set out specific timelines for implementation and compulsory maintenance reviews, provide for independent oversight and robust enforcement, and ensure that both wages and other benefits are evaluated in a gender-neutral way.

In addition, pay equity requirements will be extended, as a non-legislative measure, to participants in the Federal Contractors Program who supply the Government of Canada with \$1 million or more worth of goods and services. The Government has also tabled the pay equity issue on the agenda of the September 2018 meeting of Canada's Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers responsible for labour and will encourage all jurisdictions to introduce or expand the coverage of their existing proactive pay equity legislation.

While progress has been made, there is still work to be done with regards to employment equity. The changes brought to the Federal Contractors Program (FCP) in 2013 were designed and implemented as a means to improve program delivery and reduce administrative burden on contractors doing business with our Government while maintaining the objective of improving employment outcomes for members of the four designated groups. We are currently awaiting the results of an ongoing program evaluation that includes a review of both the FCP and the Legislated Employment Equity Program. Any recommendations that will be included in the evaluation report will be addressed, as appropriate, and we will continue to use the information obtained on these programs through the Departmental program evaluation cycle (every 5 years) with a view to assessing and identifying opportunities to improve impact and delivery.



## *Indigenous Women*

The Government recognizes that certain groups of women, such as Indigenous women, immigrant and refugee women, and women living with disabilities, may face additional challenges on the path to economic prosperity and security. The Government is committed to a renewed relationship with Indigenous Peoples, one that is framed by principles of reconciliation, including recognition of rights, respect, co-operation, and partnership. We are investing in Indigenous Peoples, including Indigenous women, to remove obstacles impeding their success and supporting their full participation in the economy. Indeed, as part of the Budget 2018 announcements, we will invest \$2 billion over five years, and \$408.2 million per year ongoing, to support the creation of a new Indigenous Skills and Employment Training Program. Services supported by this program, such as child care, as well as the forthcoming Indigenous Framework on Early Learning and Child Care will help support Indigenous women's equal access to skills development and training opportunities, and ability to contribute more fully to the economic success of their communities. These new Programs - as well as the initiatives highlighted below - address the Committee's recommendation that the Government *provide funding for employment programs and services geared specifically to Indigenous women*. Indeed, many existing initiatives are also geared towards fostering employment opportunities for Indigenous women. The Strategic Partnerships Initiatives has also funded various projects that support the employment and entrepreneurship needs of Indigenous women. One of the priorities of the National Indigenous Economic Development Board's 2016-2019 Strategic Plan (a Governor in Council appointed board mandated to provide strategic policy advice to the federal Government on issues related to Indigenous economic development) is to support Indigenous women and entrepreneurship, through the availability of financial literacy resources, culturally appropriate literacy tools and training. Additionally, the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC), received funds from the Government, in 2015-2016, to support an Aboriginal Women's Business Entrepreneurship Network boot camp and virtual network event. We have also supported NWAC by providing funding to help support initiatives focused on financial and economic literacy for women. Finally, the Government is also working with the National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association, a Canada-wide network of Aboriginal Financial Institutions dedicated to stimulating economic growth for First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples by promoting and underwriting Aboriginal business development using federal Government contributions.

The Government has favored approaches that include consultations and engagement with Indigenous groups to support evidence-based programming and optimal service delivery. For instance, we currently conduct outreach with Northern, on-reserve and urban Indigenous communities, ensuring that all Indigenous populations benefit and have access to service delivery, and use available data to identify Indigenous communities most in need of services. Employment and Social Development Canada offers full service community outreach with services tailored based on community priorities and addressing barriers to program uptake. Through this outreach, Indigenous Peoples, including women and families, have increased access

to social benefits such as the Canada Child Benefit, enhancing their economic security. The Government also conducted a national engagement process that included in-person regional roundtables, engagement activities by national representative organizations, an online survey, parliamentary town hall and other activities to help develop policy options that led to Urban Programming for Indigenous Peoples. The data and feedback gathered through this engagement process helped us apply an evidenced-based approach to develop the new programming - with a view to ensuring its relevance and effectiveness in addressing key issues faced by Indigenous Peoples, including women. In addition, we are working with Indigenous organizations and partners to determine the next steps for the Research and Innovation stream of Urban Programming for Indigenous Peoples. This work is expected to help develop a more comprehensive evidence base relating to urban Indigenous Peoples and will help to ensure high-quality programming for all Indigenous Peoples in urban centres. Finally, our Government has consulted with, and heard from, Indigenous partners on the importance of a distinctions-based approach that recognizes the unique needs of First Nations, Inuit and the Métis Nation; to that end, the new Indigenous Skills and Employment Training Program will dedicate specific funding streams to each group, including one stream for urban/non-affiliated Indigenous Peoples, with the aim of supporting them in developing employment skills and pursuing training for high-quality jobs.

#### *Immigrant and Refugee Women*

Through the Foreign Credential Recognition Program (FCRP), the Government of Canada supports the workplace integration of skilled newcomers, including women, by reducing barriers to foreign credential recognition to restart their professional careers in Canada.

The program invests approximately \$21 million annually to support provinces and territories, regulatory bodies and other stakeholders to improve credential recognition systems – focusing on streamlining regulatory processes and harmonization of occupational requirements. Moreover, in last year's budget (2017), the Government announced direct employment supports, including micro-loans, to cover FCR related expenses as well as supports in navigating recognition processes and alternative careers; and a two-year pilot to help them gain Canadian work experience through workplace integration training, short term work placements and mentoring with industry professionals. On average, approximately half of participants in these projects are women.

Through the Settlement Program, the Government supports the timely delivery of services and supports - including language training - that respond to the needs of newcomers, including immigrant and refugee women. In 2018-19, the Government will invest approximately \$762 million (outside of Québec) to support the settlement needs of newcomers, including immigrant and refugee women. The largest proportion of the federal settlement funding envelope - approximately 36% - will be spent on language training. Historically, the majority of language

training participants have been women. Programming takes into consideration that some newcomers, including women, may face multiple barriers such as low literacy or official language capacity, low educational attainment, exposure to trauma, disability and racism. Language courses are offered in tandem with support services that facilitate newcomers' participation in language training, such as care for newcomer children, transportation assistance, and where appropriate, referrals to linguistically appropriate crisis counselling and interpretation services. Federally funded settlement language programming is complemented by provincial and territorial programs and investments in language training in some jurisdictions. Government officials continue to work closely with provincial and territorial counterparts to ensure a strategic and coordinated national approach to the delivery of settlement language training, to find areas of alignment in programming, and identify partnerships.

Additionally, a three-year pilot was announced as part of Budget 2018 to assist newcomer women, who are also members of visible minority to find and keep good jobs, through various combinations of employment interventions and case management, with \$31.8M over three years starting in 2018–19. The pilot will aim to address the multiple barriers to labour market entry and career advancement, and will be informed by a comparison of federal, provincial/territorial and international programming, identification of best practices, focus groups with visible minority newcomer women clients, consultations with settlement partners and experts across Canada, and workshops with relevant stakeholders. The Government is also taking action in a number of areas to improve wait times for federally-funded language training that may impact eligible newcomers, including women. For example, following a review of its planning and approval processes, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada updated departmental operational documentation, such as its Grants and Contribution Manual Chapter on planning, to support timely and effective evidence-based decision-making. The Government is also improving waitlist management tools used by service provider organizations delivering government-funded language programming.

### *Women Living with Disabilities*

People with disabilities, including women, need to overcome additional barriers to find and keep good jobs, due to accessibility challenges and systemic biases that exclude them from labour market opportunities available to women and men without disabilities. In 2011, less than half (47%) of people with disabilities between the ages of 15 and 64 reported that they were employed; the figure for people without disabilities was 74%. Among those living with disabilities, women are less likely to have a post-secondary education, resulting in poorer employment outcomes. People with disabilities may also experience discrimination that can create barriers to employment. In addition, women with disabilities also have lower average personal incomes compared to women without disabilities and men (with or without disabilities), suggesting they face particular barriers to economic security. For instance, they are more likely than women without disabilities and men (with or without disabilities) to be lone parents.

Women with disabilities are also more likely to work part-time, and twice as likely to experience violent victimization, compared to the general population.

The Government is strongly committed to a more accessible, inclusive, and barrier-free Canada. To that end, the Government has taken numerous steps to support this objective of long-term culture change, including the appointment of a Minister dedicated to disability and accessibility issues, whose main priority is the introduction of accessibility legislation. Bill C-81, *Accessible Canada Act*, is one of the most significant advances in the Government of Canada's disability rights legislation in over 30 years and will benefit Canadians with disabilities through the progressive realization of a Canada without barriers. Working within federal jurisdiction, the proposed Act will proactively identify, remove, and prevent barriers to accessibility in priority areas such as the built environment, employment, service delivery, procurement, transportation, as well as information and communication technologies. The Government is providing \$290 million over six years to further the objectives of the proposed legislation.

The Government of Canada has also pursued initiatives at the international level that support women with disabilities. The United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which Canada ratified in March 11 2010, calls on States Parties to ensure the full development, advancement and empowerment of women with disabilities to ensure their enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the international forum through which implementation of the Convention is monitored, has issued several recommendations to Canada related to women with disabilities, including addressing intersecting forms of discrimination in public policy, removing barriers and developing inclusive practices to support women with disabilities, and provide funding to disability organizations representing women with disabilities to strengthen their advocacy roles.

The Government offers financial support to not-for-profit organizations that provide services to persons living with disabilities via the Disability Component of the Social Development Partnerships Program (SDPP-D). It is an \$11 million per year grants and contributions program that supports not-for-profit disability organizations through operating and project funding intended to improve the participation and inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of Canadian society. The SDPP-D has helped to improve the lives of women by providing funding to projects undertaken by the DisAbled Women's Network Canada and by the Native Women's Association of Canada.

In addition, there are two main avenues that target employment supports for persons with disabilities. The Workforce Development Agreements (WDA) is Canada's single largest source of employment support for persons with disabilities, while the Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities (OF) serves persons with disabilities who are removed from the labour market, but seeking entry into it. Programming under the WDAs are designed and delivered by provinces

and territories using federal funds. The OF is delivered by the Government, in partnership with organizations in the community, and assists persons with all types of disabilities to prepare for, obtain and maintain employment.

To improve accessibility and safety in workplaces across Canada, Budget 2017 announced an additional \$77 million over ten years, starting in 2018-19, to expand the activities of the Enabling Accessibility Fund (EAF), which will bring the total annual EAF budget to \$22.7 million per year and enable the program to support more small and mid-sized projects in Canadian communities and workplaces. The EAF has a positive impact on women's economic security as it increases the social and economic participation of persons with disabilities, independent of gender, by improving physical accessibility and safety in communities and workplaces.

### ***Leadership and Democratic Participation***

#### ***Women Entrepreneurship***

Supporting the growth of world-class, women-owned businesses and the advancement of women in senior positions are priorities of the Government. As the Committee heard, women who own small- and medium-sized businesses may face particular barriers and challenges that can impede their success. With Budget 2018, the Government announced Canada's first *Women Entrepreneurship Strategy*, a nearly \$2 billion, nationally-coordinated suite of initiatives designed to address barriers hindering the full participation of women in entrepreneurship and better support women entrepreneurs in growing their businesses. To implement initiatives under the Strategy, a whole-of-government approach, including collaboration with the Regional Development Agencies, other government departments and crown corporations, will be promoted. The Strategy will help to achieve the Government's goal of doubling the number of majority women-owned small and medium sized enterprises to approximately 340,000 by 2025, increase the participation of diverse women (including, but not limited to, Indigenous women, women in rural and remote communities and minority women) in growth sectors of the economy, and support the growth of jobs for the middle class. This Strategy will unite supports for women under four pillars, namely Helping Women-Owned Businesses Grow (to support business skills, mentorship, networking, and procurement opportunities), Increasing Access to Capital (to provide access to growth and export financing, and venture capital), Improving Access to Federal Business Innovation Programming (to improve participation of underrepresented groups in the innovation economy) and Enhancing data and knowledge (to improve data, knowledge and best practices).

As part of this Strategy, Budget 2018 included an investment of \$105 million over five years to provide nationally coordinated, regionally tailored support for women entrepreneurs to help them

grow and export, as well as to support regional innovation ecosystems. This investment will build capacity in the women entrepreneurial ecosystem, help women businesses access network and mentoring opportunities and increase the participation of diverse women in entrepreneurship. This investment under the *Women Entrepreneurship Strategy* as well as some of the initiatives geared towards First Nation, Métis and Inuit women outlined below address the Committee's recommendation that the Government *fund and promote initiatives that deliver networking and mentorship opportunities to female entrepreneurs.*

Work has already begun on implementing some of the initiatives under the Strategy. For instance, the launch of an \$8.6 million competitive process to create an independent, third party-led Women Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub aiming to accelerate the accumulation and dissemination of data, knowledge, and best practices regarding women entrepreneurs, including diverse women, was announced in July 2018. Furthermore, the Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC) is organizing a series of bootcamps across Canada (such as the BDC Women in Tech bootcamp held in Montréal in July 2018) for promising women entrepreneurs focused on enhancing business skills and literacy.

In addition, to help connect businesses owned by women with international market opportunities, Budget 2018 has announced an investment of \$10 million over five years to expand the Trade Commissioner Service's Business Women in International Trade program. Moreover, Budget 2018 also provides an investment of \$250 million over three years, through Export Development Canada, for financing and insurance solutions for women-owned or women-led businesses that are exporting or looking to start exporting.

The Government also supports existing initiatives that provide opportunities for women entrepreneurs. One such example is the *Indigenous Economic Opportunities Network* which provides a platform for organizations, including those that support Indigenous women in entrepreneurship and labour to connect with several federal Departments at once. The *Inuit Women in Business Network*, which was created to support and assist all Inuit businesswomen at any stage of business development by finding mentors, providing resources, and creating a support network, also received support from the Government via the Indigenous Entrepreneurship Program (in 2016-2017) to expand their operations. Through the Indigenous Entrepreneurship Program, the Government has also supported initiatives such as the *Indigenous Women in Community Leadership Enhanced Mentorship Program*, an award-winning program offered to First Nation, Métis and Inuit women who are committed to supporting development and social change in their organizations, communities and Nations, and the *Proteus Institute Canada – Idea Connector* which recently launched the *National Indigenous Women Entrepreneurs Ecosystem* to support Indigenous women interested in launching their business by providing a space for business ideas to grow and connect the women with coaches, mentors and like-minded entrepreneurs to help support their business venture.

To work towards eliminating the barriers facing women-owned small- and medium-sized enterprises when bidding on federally issued procurement projects, the Government's Innovative Solutions Canada (ISC), a hybrid innovation procurement program, has designed the application process to consider the capacity of most small businesses to respond to the Government challenges (small business can receive funding through a grant or contract to perform research and development that leads to a new technology, product or service that responds to a Government challenge, which may then lead to procurement by the federal Government of the new technology, product or service). Additionally, ISC has made it a priority to target under-represented groups, which include women-owned businesses, in its outreach activities. As a lack of awareness of opportunities within the federal Government is a potential barrier, ISC is also working towards increasing awareness of available opportunities amongst small businesses in Canada.

### *Women in Leadership*

The Government has also passed Bill C-25, an Act to amend the *Canada Business Corporations Act* (Act), which received Royal Assent on May 1, 2018. This bill aims to bring greater diversity to corporate boards and senior management ranks, by requiring publicly-traded companies incorporated under the Act to disclose diversity information (i.e. related to the makeup of their boards of directors and senior management and to their policies on diversity) to their shareholders annually. Where no policies are in place, the companies will have to explain why. While the four designated groups as defined in the *Employment Equity Act* (i.e. women, visible minorities, Indigenous Peoples and persons with disabilities) are mandatory categories, companies subject to the new rules are welcome to consider other forms of diversity as well. The information disclosed to shareholders will also be provided to the Director of Corporations Canada. As information held by this agency is subject to the Government's open data policy, it will be publicly available for analysis and monitoring. The final version of the bill included a stipulation that review of the diversity provisions by a Parliamentary committee take place five years after they have come into force. Finally, the Government recognizes the benefits of a more balanced distribution of men and women at all levels of decision-making and in all spheres of activities, including on panels at events and conferences, both nationally and internationally. As part of Budget 2018, the Government announced it would create an annual award for Canadian corporations showing leadership in promoting women, including minority women, to senior management positions and board of directors.

## *Gender-Based Violence and Access to Justice*

### *Gender-Based Violence*

As the Committee heard, Gender-Based Violence (GBV) can have negative repercussions on women's economic security and income. The Government is committed to preventing and addressing GBV in all its forms and has a suite of programs and initiatives to prevent GBV and support survivors of violence. In Budget 2017, the Government announced \$100.9 million over five years and \$20.7 million ongoing to establish a strategy to prevent and address GBV. The Government launched "*It's Time: Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence*" (the Strategy) in 2017. The Strategy was informed in part by the Committee's extensive study on GBV, "*Taking Action to End Violence Against Young Women and Girls in Canada*", conducted in 2016-2017. The Strategy became the first to put in place a federal action plan to end GBV. It includes three pillars of action: prevention, support for survivors and their families, and promoting responsive legal and justice systems. The Strategy takes a whole-of-government approach to prevent and address GBV that builds on federal initiatives underway, includes new funding (for example, to fill gaps in knowledge) and coordinate all federal actions related to GBV through a new Knowledge Centre on GBV. The Government's GBV Program, which takes action under Pillar 2 of the Strategy, intends to support organizations working in the GBV sector in developing and implementing promising practices to address gaps in supports for Indigenous and underserved groups of survivors in Canada. Funding is provided to eligible organizations in support of time-specific projects at the local, regional and national levels that address gaps in supports for specific groups of survivors, such as those who are more at risk of GBV and/or who are facing barriers to accessing services, including Indigenous women and their communities and other underserved populations. Budget 2018 announced an additional \$86 million over five years and \$20 million ongoing to enhance and expand the Strategy, including doubling the GBV Program's funding and providing funding to work with partners to develop a framework to address GBV in post-secondary institutions to support women and vulnerable populations continue their education. The Strategy and the related GBV Program as well as the Family Violence Prevention Program (outlined below) address the Committee's recommendation to *invest in programs to address violence against women, in which federal spending is delivered to service providers.*

The Government also provides funding, via the Family Violence Prevention Program (FVPP), for the operations of shelters across Canada that offer services for women and children living on reserve as well as funding for community-driven prevention projects on and off-reserve that prioritize work in a range of areas such as trauma informed care, awareness for youth, and the engagement of men and boys. The FVPP supports the National Aboriginal Circle Against Family Violence to act as a national coordinator by supporting shelters and their staff through training forums, prevention activities, capacity development, research and collaboration with key partners.



The Government recognizes that harassment and GBV continue to be serious issues, with potentially long-standing and far-reaching negative impacts on both individuals and society. To help victims of violence, we intend to provide five days of paid leave to employees in the federally regulated private sector who are victims of family violence or the parent/guardian of a minor child who is the victim of family violence. This amendment to the *Canada Labour Code*, announced in Budget 2018, builds on job-protected leave for survivors of family violence which was introduced in follow-up to Budget 2017, and aligns with the Committee's recommendation that legislation to modify the *Canada Labour Code* to *implement paid leave for victims of intimate partner violence* be introduced. In addition, the Government tabled Bill C-65 to create a more robust and integrated regime protecting employees from harassment and violence in federal workplaces, including the federally regulated private sector, the federal public service and Parliamentary workplaces. It was introduced in the House of Commons on November 7, 2017 and in June 2018 was sent back to the House of Commons for consideration with amendments from the Senate. This new, single regime will address the spectrum of behaviours connected to harassment and violence, ranging from teasing and bullying to sexual harassment and physical violence. In Budget 2018, the Government committed to providing \$34.9 million over five years, starting in 2018–19, with \$7.4 million per year ongoing, to support Bill C-65. This funding will be used to develop training programs for labour inspectors, create an awareness campaign, provide educational materials and tools to workplace parties, hire additional labour investigators, put in place an outreach hub accessible through a 1-800 number and support regulatory development and enforcement activities.

The Government agrees that public education and awareness campaigns can also help to influence positive social norms and help to challenge values, attitudes and behaviours that contribute to discrimination, sexism and GBV experienced by women in the workforce. To this end, the Government has proposed to implement both legislative (such as Bill C-65) and knowledge building strategies to tackle this issue. Budget 2018 proposed to establish a Centre of Diversity, Inclusion, and Wellness within the public service that will have, as part of its mandate, to better support public servants in dealing with sexual harassment in the workplace within the public service. Budget 2018 also proposed an investment of \$25 million over five years for a pan-Canadian outreach program to better inform workers, particularly the most vulnerable, about their rights and how to access help if they are sexually harassed in the workplace.

The Government acknowledges that all partners and stakeholders have a role to play in reducing GBV. The Government has engaged with provincial and territorial Ministers on issues related to GBV and had agreed to work closely and find complementarity between Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence and respective provincial/territorial strategies. The 2015 scan of Provincial-Territorial Action Plans and Strategies - Violence against women and girls is being updated to include federal strategies on addressing GBV.

## *Access to Legal Aid*

Access to legal aid promotes justice for economically disadvantaged persons and helps ensure the Canadian justice system remains fair and efficient. The federal Government recognizes the importance of civil legal aid programs in assisting vulnerable women such as survivors of violence, Indigenous women and women living with disabilities. The Government provides support for provincially-delivered services such as civil legal aid through the Canada Social Transfer (CST). The CST is a block funding transfer to the provinces and territories in support of post-secondary education, social assistance and social services, early childhood development and early learning and childcare; it is designed to provide provinces and territories with flexibility to invest their funds according to the needs and priorities of their residents. The Government is committed to maintaining the current structure of the CST under which provinces and territories are free to spend the funds according to their own priorities.

However, in recognition of the need to address the legal concerns of victims of workplace sexual harassment, in Budget 2018, the Government pledged \$25.4 million over five years to boosting legal aid funding across the country with a focus on supporting victims of workplace sexual harassment. Furthermore, in response to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights report on Access to Justice (Part 2), we are committed to considering issues relating to the funding of legal aid, in collaboration- with our provincial and territorial partners.

## *Poverty Reduction, Health and Well-Being*

### *Poverty Reduction*

We believe that every Canadian should have an equal and fair chance at success and are committed to growing and strengthening the middle class. Indeed, one of the Government's overarching goals is to increase economic and social security for all Canadians, especially those who are the most vulnerable. These include lone parents, the vast majority of whom are women, and their children, as nearly a third of single parent women live in poverty. Women are also more likely to both assume caregiving responsibilities and put more hours into their care giving activities than men, which becomes much more stressful if they are also struggling to make ends meet. Moreover, poverty is shown to make women and their dependents more vulnerable to situations, such as abusive relationships and GBV. The Government released Canada's first Poverty Reduction Strategy on August 21, 2018. The Strategy establishes Canada's first Official Poverty Line, provides a definition of poverty, sets ambitious poverty reduction targets, and establishes an Advisory Council to report annually on the progress made towards meeting the targets. It also addresses the Committee's first recommendation, namely that the Government develops *an official definition of poverty, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative measures, to be used across all federal government departments and projects*. As part of the

Strategy, the Government also proposes to introduce the first Poverty Reduction Act in Parliament. This Act would entrench the targets, Canada's Official Poverty Line, and the Advisory Council into legislation. The Government has also developed Opportunity for All, Canada's first Poverty Reduction Strategy, using a GBA+ lens in order to take into consideration the variation in experiences and barriers that different groups face related to poverty. Some of these groups include women, persons with disabilities, newcomers to Canada, single parents, unattached individuals, Indigenous Peoples, trans-gendered and non-binary individuals, and individuals from Black and other racialized communities. Understanding the unique risk factors, the impact of intersecting experiences, and the needs of diverse groups will help the Government to tailor interventions under the Strategy to more effectively address poverty in Canada. Recognizing the importance of poverty data in evidence-based decision-making by all levels of government, the federal Government has invested \$12.1 million over five years, and \$1.5 million per year ongoing, to address key gaps in poverty measurement in Canada. This includes ensuring that poverty data is inclusive of all Canadians, data on various dimensions of poverty are captured, and the data is robust and timely. Furthermore, the Government has taken an approach to the development of the Poverty Reduction Strategy that is consistent with human rights by engaging people across Canada including those with lived experience of poverty and marginalized groups. A call for a human rights-based approach to poverty reduction featuring legislation that entrenches economic, social and cultural rights is something the Government heard from several stakeholders. At the same time, other stakeholders highlighted that the adoption of concrete initiatives and policies can be just as effective. Both perspectives are being taken into consideration.

### *Housing and Infrastructure*

The *Investing in Canada: Canada's Long-Term Infrastructure Plan*, announced in Budgets 2016 and 2017, is the Government's comprehensive, long-term plan for building a prosperous and inclusive country through historic infrastructure investments. Over the 12 years of the Plan, starting in 2016, the Government will invest over \$180 billion in infrastructure - more than doubling previous federal infrastructure funding. The Plan was developed based on feedback from provincial, territorial, municipal and Indigenous partners as well as national and regional stakeholders. It has five investment streams: public transit, green infrastructure, social infrastructure, rural and northern infrastructure and trade and transportation infrastructure and acknowledges that strong relationships across the federal Government and among all its partners are essential to delivering results.

Under the Plan, the Government is investing \$25.3 billion over 12 years in social infrastructure. The Plan allocates dedicated funding for housing, shelters, and early learning and child care infrastructure. These investments will lead to new opportunities and improved social inclusion for many Canadians, especially women, Indigenous Peoples and low-income populations. They also align with the Committee's recommendation that the Government *immediately and on an*

*ongoing basis, provide funding for social infrastructure – facilities and services that assist individuals and families to meet their social needs – in order to provide benefits to women who work in and rely on these sectors.*

Moreover, a safe, affordable home is a launch-pad for better socio-economic outcomes, and that is why the Government's is committed to helping more Canadians access housing that meets their needs and that they can afford through the National Housing Strategy. The Strategy is a 10-year, \$40-billion plan, with a primary focus on meeting the needs of vulnerable populations. The Strategy aims to support these populations through a number of housing programs that work in distinct but complementary ways. As indicated in the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's 2018-2022 Summary of the Corporate Plan, the National Housing Strategy will aim for 33% of all investments to support projects that specifically target the unique needs of women and girls. Similarly, measures to tackle homelessness – via Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy - are considering the distinct barriers faced by different groups of women, such as women fleeing violence.

Through key initiatives under the National Housing Strategy, the federal Government is taking a human rights-based approach to housing, which will support the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing as set out in the United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. In the spring of 2018, we conducted public consultations on the key elements of a human rights-based approach to housing. The important and diverse feedback that we have received from Canadians will help to shape elements of the human rights-based approach to housing now and in the future.

In addition to funding provided to shelters through the existing Investment in Affordable Housing and Shelter Enhancement Program On-Reserve, Budget 2016 made significant investments to repair and expand the number of shelters and transition houses for survivors of domestic violence and ensure that no one fleeing domestic violence is left without a place to go. We provided greater funding to renovate, construct and better support shelters serving survivors of family violence in First Nation communities. Five communities have been identified for the construction of new shelters, and planning and construction activities have begun. All projects are anticipated to be completed by March 31, 2019, with two scheduled to become operational in fall 2018.

As part of the *Investing in Canada Plan*, the Government is also signing new bilateral agreements with all provinces and territories that will see more than \$33 billion in federal investment towards significant infrastructure projects across the country under four priority areas, including public transit. With a focus on achieving outcomes that serve Canadians, federally funded public transit projects are being strongly encouraged to improve the modal share of public transit and active transportation, the proximity of transit services, and the quality and safety of existing and future transit systems. Since 2009, the Government has provided

funding for a number of projects that improve safety and security in public transit systems. These projects have included the installation of security cameras on transit fleets and upgrades to existing safety features at transit facilities.

At this time, expanding the eligibility requirements for the *Public Transit Infrastructure Fund* to include not-for-profit and non-governmental community transit organizations, where municipally funded transportation services are not available, is not feasible, given that all funding under this program was committed to projects as of March 31, 2018. However, looking forward, the Government will take into account the issue of expanding eligibility requirements when developing new programming for public transit funding.

#### *Funding to Women's Organizations and Front-Line Community Groups*

The Committee was told of the importance of access to support services for women and funding for community organizations working to help women better their economic security. Every year, the Government provides \$19 million in funding to some 300 projects through the Women's Program to address the challenging issues faced by women and girls in the areas of violence, economic security and prosperity and democratic participation. The Women's Program is the only federal grants and contributions program solely dedicated to promoting and advancing equality between women and men in Canada. Funded projects are collaborative in nature, involving non-governmental organizations in partnership with public institutions, other levels of government and the private sector to create opportunities for systemic change in communities across Canada. Status of Women Canada issues targeted calls for proposals for projects to respond to emerging or pressing issues. In fall 2017, Status of Women Canada launched two calls for proposals for projects to increase the economic security of women in Canada. Through the first call, organizations applied for funding to implement projects designed to address the root causes (e.g. pay inequity, accessibility of childcare, gender wage gap) that limit the economic security of women in Canada. Through the second call, Indigenous organizations applied for funding to implement projects that identify opportunities for Indigenous women's economic success and take action to implement the solutions. Total investments through these two calls represent approximately \$15 million for 47 projects.

Moreover, Budget 2018 announced an additional \$100 million over five years to support women's organizations to ensure a strong sustainable women's movement. A key element of this funding will be flexibility for organizations to apply for funding to address their specific capacity needs and to enhance the unique contribution they make to strengthening the women's movement. These initiatives will enhance the organizational capacity of women's organizations and support their longer-term viability.

## *Federal Programs and Benefits for Canadians*

The Government is committed to helping all members of our society have a fair chance at succeeding and at joining the middle class. The Working Income Tax Benefit (WITB) is a refundable tax credit that supplements the earnings of low-income workers. By letting low-income workers take home more money while they work, the benefit encourages more people to join and remain in the workforce. In Budget 2018, the Government announced that the WITB would be replaced with a more generous and more accessible **Canada Workers Benefit (CWB)** as of 2019. Maximum benefits under the CWB will increase by up to \$170 in 2019 and the income level at which the benefit is phased out completely will also be raised. The maximum benefit provided through the CWB disability supplement will also be increased by an additional \$160 to offer greater support to Canadians with disabilities who face financial barriers to entering the workforce. Budget 2018 also proposed amendments that will allow the Canada Revenue Agency to automatically determine whether tax filers are eligible for the benefit even if they do not claim it. An estimated 300,000 additional low-income workers will receive the new CWB for the 2019 tax year as a result of these changes. It is estimated that the enhancement and improved take up will help lift approximately 70,000 Canadians out of poverty.

Introducing the CWB and improving access to the benefit will support low-income workers and, in particular, will help support single mothers—a group with relatively low employment rates and an elevated risk of living in poverty. Budget 2018 has also committed to improving the delivery of the CWB to provide better support to low-income Canadians throughout the year, rather than through an annual refund after filing their taxes.

The Government has taken significant actions to strengthen income support programs to help Canadians meet basic needs and prevent them from falling into poverty. For instance, the Government has introduced the Canada Child Benefit (CCB) which is simpler, more generous and better targeted than the old system of child benefits. On average, families benefitting from the CCB receive about \$6,800 annually in CCB payments. The CCB has helped to lift more than half a million people—including nearly 300,000 children—out of poverty in Canada. Nearly 65 percent of families who receive the maximum CCB amounts are single-parent families, and of those, more than 90 percent are led by single mothers. To keep pace with the rising cost of living for Canadian families, CCB was indexed in July 2018, two years ahead of planned increase. The Government has also increased Guaranteed Income Supplement payments by up to \$947 per year for the lowest-income single recipients, which is helping nearly 900,000 low-income seniors, of which 70% are women. In addition, the previously mentioned Canada Workers Benefit also encourages more low-income Canadians to join and remain in the workforce by putting more money in the pockets of lower-income workers transitioning from social safety nets to the workforce.

As agreed to in principle by federal and provincial Ministers of Finance, once formal consent by provinces is obtained, the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) will protect CPP enhancement benefits for parents who take time off work to care for young children and for persons with disabilities. The new Child-Rearing drop-in is projected to provide credits for 125,000 people, most of whom are women, each year, which will increase the enhancement component of their later benefits. The new Disability drop-in is projected to benefit more than 400,000 individuals with disabilities over the next 20 years. These changes recognize the value of unpaid work and are in addition to protection already provided in the existing – or base – CPP. The base CPP will continue to remove low-earnings months that would otherwise lower the average earnings upon which a benefit is based, whereas the enhancement will drop in credits into low-earnings months, raising the average.

The Government recognizes the critical role that many Canadians play in supporting individuals who are dependent on them by reason of mental or physical infirmity, often while balancing work and other personal responsibilities. For this reason, Budget 2017 simplified the existing caregiver credit system by replacing the Caregiver Credit, Infirm Dependent Credit and Family Caregiver Tax Credit with a single credit: the Canada Caregiver Credit. This credit provides better support to those who need it the most, those providing care to dependent relatives with infirmities (including persons with disabilities). For families, it is estimated that this change represents additional tax relief of \$310 million over the 2016-17 to 2021-22 period. It is estimated that about 520,000 caregivers claimed the Canada Caregiver Credit for the 2017 tax year. Finally, the previously mentioned *Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities* assists persons with disabilities in joining and remaining in the workforce. It supports persons with disabilities in overcoming barriers to participation in the Canadian labour market, and it supports employers to hire persons with disabilities.

### *Indigenous Women*

Many of the Government's initiatives and programs are designed to further our understanding of, as well as improve, the socio-economic conditions of Indigenous Peoples, notably with regards to access to quality health services, educational opportunities and Indigenous women's economic participation and economic security. The creation of the previously mentioned Indigenous Skill and Employment Training Program – which will support services such as child care - will promote equal access to skills development and training opportunities for Indigenous women, so that they are able to contribute more fully to the economic success of their communities. Urban Programming for Indigenous Peoples also provides core funding for Indigenous organizations, including Friendship Centres, to deliver programs and services to urban Indigenous Peoples. In addition, the Programs and Services funding stream of Urban Programming for Indigenous Peoples offers funding for up to five years to deliver programs and services to six key groups and areas, including women, vulnerable populations (such as persons with disabilities and seniors), youth, transition services, outreach programs, and community wellness. The projects under the

Programs and Services stream that received funding in 2017-18 and that focus on urban Indigenous women aim to improve women's participation in the economy as well as to support women in their transition to urban areas, including services to empower urban Indigenous women to acquire the building blocks needed to become self-sufficient and financially independent.

The Government is committed to the development of distinctions-based Indigenous housing strategies that are founded in principles of self-determination, reconciliation, respect, and co-operation. This is what Indigenous leaders told us was most important to them during the National Housing Strategy consultations.

The Government of Canada works with a number of partners and stakeholders to promote and ease access to education savings incentives. A notable example of this work is the Canada Learning Bond (CLB) Champions Network. This network is made up of federal and provincial departments and agencies, non-governmental organizations, community service providers, and organizations that offer Registered Education Savings Plans (RESP). The network is focused on promoting the benefits of early savings in RESPs, as well as federal and provincial education savings incentives. The Government is also working to help increase take-up of the CLB in Indigenous communities. As part of these efforts, the CLB brochure will be translated into six different Indigenous languages.

Furthermore, Budget 2017 announced that the Government of Canada would undertake a comprehensive and collaborative review with Indigenous partners of all current federal programs that support Indigenous students who wish to pursue post-secondary education. The Government has undertaken a partner and stakeholder-led review to ensure that federal programs meet the needs of individual students.

The Government is committed to systemic change in how it provides health services to Indigenous Peoples, and to developing models that bring control back to Indigenous communities. The Government is working with provincial and territorial governments, and regional and national Indigenous organizations, including those serving Indigenous women and girls, to provide effective, sustainable and culturally appropriate health programs and services to improve the health of First Nations and Inuit. These services are considered a key element of increasing well-being, economic and otherwise, among Indigenous Peoples. Canada invests \$2.7 billion annually to support First Nations and Inuit health, including over \$341 million annually to support First Nations and Inuit mental wellness. Budget 2018 announced significant new investments of \$1.5 billion over five years to improve health outcomes of First Nations and Inuit and keep communities healthy. This includes \$498 million to sustain access to critical medical care and services in remote and isolated First Nations communities, \$200 million for culturally appropriate addictions treatment and prevention services in First Nations communities with high needs, and \$490 million to preserve medically necessary health benefits and services through the



Non-Insured Benefits Program. In addition to these investments, funding was also provided through Budget 2018 to increase health supports for survivors of Indian residential schools and their families; support for the elimination of tuberculosis in Inuit Nunangat and a permanent Inuit health survey to build capacity in Inuit communities to develop and collect survey information; support to the Métis Nation in gathering health data and developing a health strategy; and the renewal and enhancement of the Federal Tobacco Control Strategy, which includes targeted actions for Indigenous communities.

Furthermore, the Pan-Canadian Health Inequalities Reporting Initiative supports the development of evidence on health inequalities among Canadian populations, including First Nations, Inuit, and Métis women and men. Through the initiative, over 70 indicators covering health outcomes and key determinants of health are measured, monitored, and reported on. Two key products of the initiative, namely the interactive Health Inequalities Data Tool and a narrative report on the health inequalities in Canada, provide data and evidence to study and monitor mental health and related services, educational attainment and economic security among Indigenous populations, including women. These resources can inform actions to improve the socio-economic conditions and wellbeing of Indigenous women.

Culturally appropriate, inclusive, and affordable early learning and child care (ELCC) empowers Indigenous children with a strong sense of identity and establishes a foundation for their health, wellness and future success. Since caregiving is often provided by women, availability of affordable ELCC can support women's participation to the workforce, increase their economic independence and wellbeing, and mitigate the effects of poverty. The Government also funds and administers programs to support maternal and child health, including the Aboriginal Head Start in Urban and Northern Communities Program. The program delivers ELCC services in urban and northern communities to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children. The equivalent Aboriginal Head Start on Reserve Program, administered by Indigenous Services Canada, delivers ELCC for on-reserve communities. Finally, as mentioned previously, the Government is co-developing an Indigenous Framework on ELCC with Indigenous partners to reflect the unique cultures and needs of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children across Canada.

### ***Gender Equality around the World***

The Government of Canada is committed to the advancement of gender equality and women's empowerment around the world, and sees the elimination of poverty and the building of a more peaceful, inclusive and prosperous world, rooted in the United Nations Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, as means to achieve this goal. As such, the Government adopted a Feminist International Assistance Policy in 2017, identified the advancement of gender equality and women's empowerment as a cross-cutting theme of its 2018 G7 Presidency, and is

embracing a feminist approach in all its international policies and programming, including diplomacy, security, development and trade.

Relatedly, a key objective of Canada's Progressive Trade Agenda, which seeks to ensure that the benefits and opportunities of trade and investment are more widely shared, is to advance gender equality and women's economic empowerment. While gender equality and the avoidance of discrimination based on gender has long been pursued by Canada, notably via language on the elimination of employment discrimination in our Labour Cooperation Agreements and Labour chapters in free trade agreements (FTAs), more recently we have sought to mainstream gender considerations across our FTAs. As committed by the Government in Budget 2018, Canada will seek to include gender related provisions in trade agreements. The Government, therefore, is pursuing a two-pronged approach to gender provisions in its FTAs, seeking to include a standalone chapter on Trade and Gender in addition to other gender provisions across the entire FTA. To date, Canada has successfully concluded dedicated Trade and Gender chapters in the modernized Canada-Chile Free Trade Agreement and Canada-Israel Free Trade Agreement. Outside of a dedicated chapter, Canada is also seeking to include gender provisions throughout our FTAs, including in our chapters on labour, services, investment, and government procurement. Canada plans to continue to pursue this two-pronged approach in all ongoing and future FTA negotiations, including NAFTA, Pacific Alliance and Mercosur, which aligns with the Committee's recommendation to *implement gender equity provisions in future international trade agreements*. Canada is also advancing progressive trade initiatives, including those related to trade and gender, through enhanced bilateral and multilateral engagement and participation in international economic forums, such as the World Trade Organization, G7/20, Organisation for Economic Co-operation Development, and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation.

### ***Cross-Cutting Initiatives***

#### ***Gender-Based Analysis Plus***

As the Government is committed to advancing gender equality and promoting women's full participation in the economic, social and democratic life of Canada, we are applying GBA+ to inform policies, programs, initiatives, and practices to help to achieve this goal. The Government supports not only fostering the comprehensive use of GBA+ to all facets of policy development and decision-making, but also strengthening the quality of GBA+ in terms of data and impacts considered across a range of intersectional lenses. The fall 2015 Auditor General report and the June 2016 reports from FEWO and the Standing Committee on Public Accounts each emphasized the need for mandatory requirements for GBA+. In response, the Government's 2016-2020 GBA+ Action Plan includes several measures to make GBA+ mandatory before proposals are sent to Cabinet or the Treasury Board. In particular, in summer 2016, we introduced changes to ensure GBA+ was included as part of the development of Memoranda to

Cabinet and Treasury Board submissions. In addition, as part of Budget 2018, the Government committed to adopting a comprehensive and permanent approach to gender budgeting, including ensuring that GBA+ is applied comprehensively and consistently to budget development and decision-making, such that government resources in support of fiscal, social, economic, and other policies are allocated more equitably and efficiently. This commitment addresses the Committee's recommendation that the Government *conduct gender-responsive budgeting to ensure that the needs of diverse groups of women, men and gender-diverse people are reflected in the government's fiscal, social and economic policies.*

To ensure that GBA+ is applied to key accountability mechanisms, the Government has also provided guidance to departments and agencies as to where and how GBA+ should be incorporated into their Departmental Results Framework, Departmental Plans and Departmental Results Reports, as well as to evaluations. Additionally, work is underway to integrate GBA+ in the way the Government consults with Canadians and stakeholders on the potential impacts of its policies. Guidelines have been developed for departments and agencies to ensure that consultations capture the experiences of diverse groups of women, men and gender-diverse individuals, in order that outcomes of policies, programs and initiatives meet the needs of all Canadians. GBA+ can also help to understand the challenges faced by women living in rural and remote communities, such as lack of access to education and workforce opportunity. Many of these issues are also further compounded by social, class, race discrimination and violence. In order to address these unique challenges, the Government has enhanced its ability to liaise with local stakeholders and organizations.

Strengthening GBA+ involves more than making sure that it is completed, but as importantly, that it reflects high quality, thorough analysis. That means ensuring analysts have the training and tools they need to properly conduct GBA+, and fostering a culture across Government that instinctively applies GBA+ to all that we do.

To conduct robust GBA+, access to gender-disaggregated data and intersecting factors is essential. The Government recognizes this is a key challenge, and efforts are underway to improve access and to make more data available. Budget 2018 proposes to invest \$6.7 million over five years, starting in 2018–19, for Statistics Canada to create a new Centre for Gender, Diversity and Inclusion Statistics. The Centre will act as GBA+ data hub to support future, evidence-based policy development and decision-making, and will work to address gaps in the availability of disaggregated data on gender, race and other intersecting identities. Furthermore, through the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Forum of Ministers Responsible for Status of Women, the Government is working to share knowledge and information with an aim to promote and advance equality for women and girls, and among different groups of women, as well as to undertake collaborative initiatives on issues related to the enhancement of women and girl's equality. In this regard, the Government is working with provincial/territorial Ministers through various forums on GBV and gender inequality.

The Government understands that gender equality benefits all Canadians and can have a pivotal role in building a strong economy. For example, as mentioned previously, to support greater gender equality for all workers, the EI program applies a GBA+ lens to all the EI programs, initiatives and proposals that are considered. The changes to EI caregiver, maternity and parental benefits in Budgets 2017 and 2018 were informed and accompanied by detailed GBA+ analyses. The Government is also taking GBA+ into consideration when supporting new infrastructure projects, so as to help support a diverse and equitable future for Canada. For instance, the Smart Cities Challenge encourages municipalities and local governments to include GBA+ considerations in their proposals, particularly in the areas of resident engagement and project design, through three main ways: 1) evaluating communities on their efforts to include diverse views, represent a cross-section of the community, and remove systemic barriers; 2) providing communities with a comprehensive toolkit, webinars, and other resources on diversity and inclusion in the context of smart cities; and 3) requiring winning communities to present their plans to support the diversification of recruitment, training, and procurement practices in their infrastructure projects. Secondly, in each of Infrastructure Canada's Integrated Bilateral Agreements, the provincial or territorial government must agree to report on community employment benefits provided to at least three federal target groups (i.e. women, apprentices, Indigenous Peoples, persons with disabilities, veterans, youth, recent immigrants, or SMEs and social enterprises). The agreements also incorporate a performance indicator that will collect data and allow the Government to report on the number of projects that take gender into consideration during the design and/or construction phases of projects. Under the Community, Culture and Recreation stream of the Integrated Bilateral Agreements, projects must have an immediate outcome aligning with improved access to and/or quality of cultural, recreational and/or community infrastructure for Canadians, including Indigenous Peoples and vulnerable populations. Thirdly, under the Government's Venture Capital Catalyst Initiative (VCCI), all proposals will be required to address the improvement of gender balance among Canadian venture capital fund managers and companies, which will be included as part of the assessment process of each candidate. Strategies could include items like: the gender balance of the investment team, targeted investment strategies, specialized training, mentoring or networking, or support of industry or educational programs.

In terms of the federal Government's research programs, the Government has paid particular attention to ensuring that such major programs as the Canada Research Chairs (CRC) and Canada Excellence Research Chairs (CERC) provide equitable access for women and members of the other under-represented groups. The current CERC competition, anticipated to conclude during 2019, was launched with new application requirements requiring universities to submit detailed equity plans with their applications, and the CRC program launched the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Action Plan in May 2017 with new requirements for institutions to develop institutional EDI action plans and to institute new equity and diversity public accountability requirements. In addition, 60% of the 24 Canada 150 Research Chairs awarded in

2017 to attract top-tier international researchers to Canada are women, owing to a particular focus on equity and diversity under this one-time initiative that was implemented to celebrate Canada's birth as a nation. The Canada Research Coordinating Committee launched in October 2017 will also work to strengthen equity and diversity in research.

### *Engagement*

Progress on gender equality requires a broad socio-cultural shift. The Government recognizes that men and boys contribute to, and benefit from, challenging and changing the biased, discriminatory or outdated ideas about gender that result in inequality. To this end, in Budget 2018, the Government dedicated \$1.8 million over two years to develop an engagement strategy for men and boys that promotes equality and pilots innovative, targeted approaches to addressing inequality. By engaging men and boys with these ideas, we can support women's and girls' equality with men, and improve outcomes for men and boys, as well as society as a whole.

The Government is also engaging youth on what gender equality means to them and how the Government can support youth-led dialogue on gender equality and GBV. As part of the previously mentioned *It's Time: Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence*, the Government has allocated \$5.5 million over 5 years (2017-2022) and \$1.3 million per year ongoing to launch awareness initiatives to engage youth in a national conversation on GBV. This could include identifying and amplifying youth-led initiatives and encouraging youth to become champions for gender equality in their own networks. In addition, Budget 2018 announced funding of \$7.2 million over five years for leading a national conversation on gender equality with young Canadians. This funding will be used to co-develop with Canadian youth an approach to engage youth in a dialogue on the meaning of gender equality and necessary action to support an inclusive society. It will involve two streams: a national youth co-created approach to conversations with diverse groups of youth across Canada, and an Indigenous-led approach co-created between Indigenous youth and Indigenous organizations.

The Government also aims to build awareness, to encourage action and social change, and to promote and commemorate gender equality through initiatives such *16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence*, the *International Day of the Girl*, *Persons Day* and *International Women's Day*. These initiatives focus on raising awareness and encourage engagement in conversations and action to further gender equality.

We are proud that Canada will be celebrating the first Gender Equality Week from September 23-29, 2018. It is an opportunity to celebrate the progress Canada has made in advancing gender equality, while reinforcing the need to continue to make progress to ensure that people of all genders have the same opportunities and can achieve their full potential. This commemorative date is the result of the passage of Bill C-309, the *Gender Equality Week Act*, designating the

fourth week in September in every year as Gender Equality Week, which received Royal Assent on June 21, 2018.

*Federally-Funded Projects and Initiatives: Outcomes*

With the 2016 Policy on Results, Treasury Board submissions include Results Appendices that are signed and committed to by the Deputy Heads, and which require departments to identify the desired immediate, intermediate, and ultimate outcomes of the proposed initiatives and the indicators which will be used to measure success. Departments are also asked to explain how performance information will be overseen to ensure that the intended results are being achieved, supported by key milestones.

Federal departments are asked to provide actual results data for those indicators and, to date, the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (TBS) has collected indicators from Treasury Board submissions that were submitted between September 2016 and October 2017, and intends to collect all indicators included in Results Appendices on an ongoing basis. Actual results data on these indicators will be collected annually and, once sufficient data is available, TBS intends to use these indicators to assess the quality and success of federally funded projects. Implementation of the Policy on Results is also complemented by the continued development of GC InfoBase, which is an interactive, government-wide data-visualization tool.

*Federally-Funded Projects and Initiatives: Opportunities Created by Public Infrastructure Projects*

To promote access by a broader array of Canadians to the employment and procurement opportunities created by infrastructure opportunities, the Government announced the Community Employment Benefits initiative in June 2018. Major projects funded under the *Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program* are to provide opportunities for at least three of the following groups targeted: apprentices, Indigenous Peoples, women, persons with disabilities, veterans, youth, recent immigrants, and small-sized, medium-sized and social enterprises. The Community Employment Benefits initiative aligns the growing demand for skilled labour created by infrastructure investments, with the groups of people who may have challenges accessing employment in the trades, including women. The initiative's reporting requirement will encourage project proponents to provide training and employment opportunities for targeted groups, as well as diversify their suppliers for procurement.

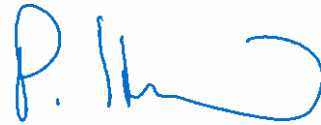
As outlined in these pages, the Government has made a priority of supporting women's economic security and their full participation in the economy, by continuing to support, or enhancing programs that impact women or target women specifically, and by launching new initiatives in recent years. The wide range of supports and initiatives pursued by the Government in this respect attests to the complex and multi-faceted barriers faced by women, whether direct,

or engrained in culture and societal norms. Building on this, the Government also recognizes that transgender, non-binary and two-spirited people in Canada face barriers, and that efforts to advance gender equality in Canada include responding to the needs of gender diverse communities. Through measures outlined above, and with a view to continuing to build on current knowledge and work on women's economic security, the Government will continue to work toward women's full participation in the economy and society. The Government also remains committed to the continued use of GBA+ and gender budgeting as tools that will contribute to strengthen and improve the responsiveness of Government policies and programs to those in need and further advance women's economic security.

Yours sincerely,



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