



Written Submission for Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of the 2020 Budget

Canadian Women's Foundation

Recommendations:

1. That the government invest \$100M nationally on gender equality
2. That the government respond to Calls for Justice from the Report on the Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG)
3. That the government adopt a plan to achieve affordable childcare
4. That the government build on its approach to gender equality

About Us

The Canadian Women's Foundation is a national leader in the movement for gender equality in Canada. Through funding, research, advocacy, and knowledge sharing, the Foundation works to achieve systemic change that includes all women. By supporting community programs, the Foundation empowers women and girls to move themselves out of violence, out of poverty, and into confidence and leadership.

Launched in 1991 to address a critical need for philanthropy focused on women, the Canadian Women's Foundation is one of the largest women's foundations in the world. With the support of donors, the Foundation has raised more than \$90M and funded over 1,900 programs across the country. These programs focus on addressing the root causes of the most critical issues helping women and girls who face the greatest barriers.

Reaching gender equality is not only a fundamental part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), but also a certain way to increase economic prosperity and full participation from all members of society. In 2019, according to the UN there is "insufficient progress on structural issues at the root of gender inequality, such as legal discrimination, unfair social norms and attitudes, decision-making on sexual and reproductive issues and low levels of political participation". Public policy requires a robust, intersectional, gender-based analysis that considers differential impacts across communities and ensures:

- Sufficient funding to support a strong, diverse, active and sustainable women's movement to reach gender equality. National coordination to ensure that women can expect the same protections and supports no matter where they are in the country, understanding that in a country as diverse as Canada, a "one size fits all" approach is not possible.
- A comprehensive and decolonizing response to the Calls for Justice in the Report on the Inquiry into MMIWG.
- Equal access for families to affordable, licensed childcare.
- Full participation of women in the workforce in workplaces free of sexual violence and harassment, with pay equity and full labour and human rights protections.
- Government focuses on applying an intersectional framework, carrying out Gender-based Analysis Plus of federal policies, programs and regulations, so that gender equality is a fundamental focus of government work.

To ensure that the government's approach to improving Canada's competitiveness is gender-responsive and inclusive, we recommend the following:

1. Invest \$100M in a diverse women's movement.

The current environment compels greater urgency towards meeting SDG 5: this is the moment to build on the progress we've made, or risk losing the ground we've gained - while ensuring that all women are represented. A well-funded women's sector has been shown to be most effective in ensuring that legacy gains in gender equity are maintained and strengthened.

Women's organizations need to be able to depend on funds that build capacity and extend their reach so as to develop long-term solutions, including culture changes that promote public understanding of gender inequity with an intersectional lens.

- a. **Continue to expand capacity-building funds to women’s organizations through the Department for Women and Gender Equality and parallel ministries and departments with responsibility for policy areas key to women’s and gender equality including Justice, ESDC, PHAC: \$65M**

The women's sector is encouraged by the government's international commitment to supporting women's organizations globally through the Feminist International Assistance Policy. We recommend a similar level of commitment of funding to women's organizations in Canada and the creation of a matching fund for national feminist philanthropy with an appropriate annual maximum.

- b. **Build Canadian Women’s Foundation’s capacity to fund, convene and lead on gender equity: \$10M**

As the only national women’s fund in Canada, the Foundation has a unique position within and distinct responsibility to the women’s movement in the country. The Foundation understands where the needs are the greatest regionally and nationally. We are well known and highly regarded for our expertise as a funder, capacity builder, strengthener, convener and knowledge mobilizer. The Foundation is well positioned to support the government’s leadership on the movement towards gender equality and all the SDGs.

- a. **Support broad consultations with national, regional and local women’s organizations on development of a National Action Plan to Achieve Gender Equality: \$1.5M**

Building on work already funded by WAGE¹, women from organizations across the country have proposed conducting broad national consultations to produce a National Action Plan on Gender Equality. This would be a wide consultation process in all provinces and territories, with full integration of national women’s organizations and include:

- establishment of a national steering committee
- identification of provincial, territorial and/or regional lead organizations
- broad women’s movement engagement, and especially Indigenous women, Black women and women of colour, young women and women with Disabilities.

This 15-month process will provide a roadmap to building and strengthening the women’s movement in Canada by connecting gender equality-seeking organizations.

- b. **Provide funding for civil society participation in Beijing +25 and associated international level meetings on CEDAW, including periodic reviews of SDGs and UN treaties: \$500,000**

We welcome the government’s commitment in its first Voluntary National Review to a collaborative process for the development of a national strategy for the 2030 Agenda. Given the government’s focus on ensuring that the strategy is gender responsive, we recommend allocating funds to support women’s organizations to contribute to the strategy’s development and to playing a central role in implementation and monitoring.

¹ Through the Gender Equality Network Canada project, convened and facilitated by the Canadian Women’s Foundation.

2020 marks the historic 25th anniversary of the launch of the Beijing Platform for Action and civil society in Canada is organizing a review of progress towards the goals of the Platform. This is an important point at which to measure and mark Canada's progress in ending systemic barriers for women in all parts of society and the government has a role to play in ensuring full participation from all women.

The vision of Agenda 2030 will only be realized with strong programming at the community level. We recommend increased funding to community organizations across the country that are contributing to the realization of the SDGs through programs and services that are gender-responsive and intersectional.

- c. Respond to the UN Special Rapporteur's report on VAW with an investment of funding to initiate development of a comprehensive National Action Plan to End Violence Against Women: \$5M**

The Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, Dubravka Šimonović, released her report to the Human Rights Council regarding her visit to Canada. She summarized several areas of concern where Canada is not meeting recommendations of multiple UN declarations Canada has committed to respect. The concerns raised in this report should be addressed by the federal government.

- d. Ensure access to legal aid in all parts of the country to allow multiple ways to gain legal information and legal advice when experiencing any form of GBV, including sexual assault: \$18M**

Access to legal aid is inadequate for many women in Canada, and expenditures have fallen over the years. The Canadian Bar Association asserts that the lack of access to civil legal aid disproportionately affects women and Indigenous people, as well as other disadvantaged groups. Without access to legal advice and support, women who have experienced any form of violence are likely to be re-victimized in the legal proceedings and systems through which they have to work to get recourse. There is also uneven access, as each province and territory has different minimum requirements. Many criteria serve to narrow eligibility considerably and therefore severely limit access to justice. The criteria for legal aid need to be standardized, and this can be achieved through the federal provincial territorial structures.

- 2. Respond to the Calls for Justice from the Report on the Inquiry into MMIWG, including a National Action Plan to address violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA people.**

Many services are desperately needed for women in Indigenous communities, from schools to housing to clean water to suicide prevention. The Inquiry shows the extent to which many services are not working for women, their families, or communities and reveals the systemic racism and sexism that they experience.

The first step is recognizing and directly addressing harms of colonization that have led to the murders and disappearances of so many Indigenous women and girls. We support the Calls to Justice from the Report and understand the need to implement the systemic changes outlined in these calls. There must be sufficient funding to undertake all parts of the Calls for Justice,

and with the full participation of families, communities, organizations and all parts of government.

3. Build and fund a universal childcare program in collaboration with the provinces and territories

Access to affordable childcare is vital to Canada's competitiveness. Lack of affordable childcare restricts women's workforce participation, and women in Canada have surpassed men in education. Childcare is a gender equity and income security issue for families of all income levels.

Families face a dual problem of excessively high childcare fees and a significant shortage of licensed childcare spaces. Approximately 44% of non-school-aged children live in "childcare deserts" – communities with an inadequate supply of licensed childcare spaces.

The Foundation welcomes the government's Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework and the signing of bilateral early learning and childcare agreements with all 13 provinces and territories. Though we are encouraged by the additional investments and long-term commitments this has generated in some provinces, we remain concerned that this is insufficient to generate the childcare needed to meet the needs of families and of our economy.

We recommend that the government continue building toward universal access to inclusive, affordable, quality childcare through a long-term phased approach which would increase federal investments in Early Learning and Child Care to \$1B in 2020 and continue with an annual increase of \$1B for ten years.

This would bring Canada to the internationally-recommended spending benchmark, and achieve national access to affordable, high-quality, child care, supporting children, families and Canadian prosperity.

4. Continue to build on a government approach to building gender equality that includes:
 - a. **Build women's economic prosperity, by ensuring that the Pay Equity Commissioner is sufficiently funded to implement the necessary legislation and undertake needed investigative and regulatory work in line with the Pay Equity Act.**

We recommend the government invests \$80M annually for a Pay Equity Commission and hire 50 dedicated pay equity enforcement officers as well as an increase in legislation and supports to close the gender pay gap. It is surprising that the Pay Equity Act did not address pay transparency as another mechanism to ensure that pay equity is reached. It has been recognized that ensuring pay transparency, in conjunction with proactive pay equity legislation, is a key element of closing the gender pay gap. While the federal government joins Ontario and Quebec in having specific pay equity legislation, regulations and measures, Canada is still far from closing the gender pay gap for women, and especially for Indigenous women, for Black women and women of colour and women with disabilities. This is a fundamental human right for all women.

- e. Implement a robust intersectional gender-based analysis beginning at the policy phase and the Gender Results Framework across whole of government.**

The Foundation looks forward to full implementation of intersectional gender analysis across the federal government. With women surpassing men in educational attainment, women's access to the workforce and the recognition of gender impacts of federal budgets are key to Canada's prosperity. FINA Committee and the Finance Department need to be engaging experts in GBA+. One policy example: if anti-radicalization funding in Public Safety included radicalization of violence against women, events such as the Toronto van attack (incel-identified perpetrator) might have been prevented. Gendered racism, such as attacks on Muslim women, is on the rise and must also be addressed.