

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

Submitted by: **CFUW**

JULY 27, 2023

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Pass and Implement Bill C-226 to address environmental justice and racism.

Recommendation 2: Publish and implement Canada's Feminist Foreign Policy.

Recommendation 3: Declare Gender-Based Violence an epidemic across Canada.

Recommendation 4: Increase efforts on spending funding and implementing promises on the 231 calls for justice for MMIWG2S+.

Recommendation 5: Work with provinces to make "age-friendly communities" the standard across Canada.

Recommendation 6: Increase federal support for opportunities for women to work in the skilled trades and non-traditional work.

INTRODUCTION

CFUW congratulates the federal government for its significant achievements on the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Childcare system and Bill C-35: *Canada Early Learning and Child Care Act*. As well, in affirming the right to a healthy, sustainable, and clean environment in Bill S-5: *Strengthening Environmental Protection for a Healthier Canada Act*. We are avidly following the outcome of proposed changes to laws around publication bans for sexual assault victims, and hope that Bill S-12: *An Act to amend the Criminal Code, the Sex Offender Information Registration Act and the International Transfer of Offenders Act* will pass and result in more support for victims.

CFUW is grateful to have been included in multiple federal consultations this year on topics such as Bill S-12, Bill C-21: *An Act to amend certain Acts and to make certain consequential amendments (firearms)*, Canada's feminist foreign policy, and the opportunity to submit briefs on early learning and childcare and women and girls in sport. Civil society's voice is integral to holding the government accountable for its promises and allowing space for community involvement in the democratic process. Below, we issue recommendations that aim to improve the lives of women, the most marginalized, and ultimately, advocate for a better world for all.

Recommendation 1: Implement a National Strategy on Environmental Racism and Environmental Justice

With the passing of Bill S-5, Canada has recognized that every individual in Canada has the right to a healthy environment under the amended Canada Environmental Protection Act (CEPA, 1999). We argue that this right is not experienced equally by all Canadians. We must look at the "structural determinants of health", which are the "social, economic, political, and environmental conditions that contribute to illness and disease."¹ Racialized, historically marginalized, and Indigenous communities are more likely to experience poor "material conditions of health [that] are rooted in systems outside an individual's control."²

At time of writing, *Bill C-226: National Strategy Respecting Environmental Racism and Environmental Justice Act*, sits in the Senate after passing in the House of Commons. A national strategy to address environmental racism would collect much-needed data and include affected communities in environmental policymaking. Bill S-5 requires action "to expand certain regulation-making, information-gathering, and pollution prevention", and a national strategy would be an effective response.³ The funding of a national strategy should include at least **\$100 million** annually, as part of climate initiatives to advance equity and adaptation to climate change.

¹ Waldron, I. 2022. Environmental Racism and Climate Change: Determinants of Health in Mi'kmaw and African Nova Scotian Communities. Canadian Climate Institute. Retrieved from: <https://climateinstitute.ca/publications/environmental-racism-and-climate-change/>

² *Ibid.*

³ [Bill S-5](#). An Act to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999, to make related amendments to the Food and Drugs Act and to repeal the Perfluorooctane Sulfonate Virtual Elimination Act. 44th Parliament, 1st session. November 22, 2021, to present. Government of Canada.

Recommendation 2: Publish and Implement Canada's Feminist Foreign Policy

Promises of a Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) have long been promised by 2023. In a moment of rising violence against women in politics and increased violence associated with conflict and displacement - publishing and implementing the FFP would send a message to the world on the importance of including women in peace processes. As Canada sits as co-chair of the Sustainable Development Advocates Group and vies for a seat on the UN Human Rights Council, it has a pivotal role to push the feminist agenda forward, to advocate for a development and foreign policy agenda that **leaves no one behind**.⁴

Data has long-proven that women's participation in the peace-building process increases the likelihood of prolonged peace 15 years later by 35%.⁵ We advocate for more funding, better coordination with ministers, military, interested CSOs, and international partners; as well as better monitoring and evaluation on the effects of women's participation in peacebuilding. It is imperative that the FFP is published, and promotes women's active, ongoing, and meaningful involvement at every level of peacebuilding. We call for **sustainable funding** for the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda as part of Canada's foreign policy.

Recommendation 3: Declare Gender-Based Violence an Epidemic.

On June 20th, 2023, the City of Toronto joined 30 other municipalities in Ontario in declaring an epidemic of gender-based violence (GBV) and intimate partner-violence (IPV).⁶ This declaration comes as a recommendation from the coroner's inquest into the 2015 triple femicide in Renfrew County, Ontario, and the Nova Scotia Mass Casualty Commission report.^{7 8}

On average, 45% of women in Canada have experienced physical or sexual assault since the age of 15, a number that has since increased during the COVID-19 pandemic.⁹ From 2019 to 2021, rates of femicide in Canada increased by 26%.¹⁰ According to the Department of Justice, "IPV costs Canadians \$7.4 billion annually in social services, healthcare, judicial services, and lost productivity."¹¹

By declaring an epidemic of GBV and IPV, governments can work together to better respond to this staggering issue with evidence-based prevention strategies. This declaration would motivate community safety planning, investments in programs and services for survivors *and* perpetrators of GBV and IPV, and importantly, offer safe and affordable housing to those attempting to flee dangerous situations. A **\$1 billion** federal investment, combined with municipal, provincial, and territorial investments, could make significant impact in the lives of GBV survivors.

⁴ Canadian Council for Policy Alternatives, 2022. Alternative Federal Budget 2022. Retrieved from [CCPA](#).

⁵ Government of Canada, 2023. [Women, peace and security](#).

⁶ Toronto City Council. 2023 July 19. [CC8.2 Declaring Gender-Based Violence and Intimate Partner Violence an Epidemic in the City of Toronto](#).

⁷ Luke's Place. 2022. [86 Recommendations for change from the Renfrew County Inquest](#).

⁸ Nova Scotia Mass Casualty Commission. March 2023. [Turning the Tide Together: Executive Summary and Recommendations](#).

⁹ Women and Gender Equality Canada. 2021. [Fact sheet: Intimate Partner Violence](#).

¹⁰ Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability. 2021. [CFOJA Reports](#).

¹¹ Canadian Women's Foundation. 2023. [The Facts about Gender-Based Violence](#).

Recommendation 4: Increase efforts to spend allocated funding and implement promises on the MMIWG2S+ 231 Calls for Justice.

Despite funding allocations and commitments, and four years since the 231 Calls for Justice were released as part of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls+, only *two* calls have been completed.¹² This genocide spans decades, and despite commitments to truth and reconciliation - First Nations, Métis, and Inuit women+ are still *seven times* more likely than non-Indigenous women to be murdered.

Indigenous women, governments, and the commissioners of the national inquiry have told us what needs to be done. One recommendation is a decolonized approach - which would promote *self-determination and self-governance* through *stable, long term funding*.¹³ Indigenous women, and the organizations which represent them, are ready and willing to work with the provincial, territorial and federal governments to swiftly implement self-selected and impactful actions to meet the needs of Indigenous women+.

The National Family and Survivors Circle (NFSC), have noted that particular areas of inaction are “accountability mechanisms and better tracking of data”.¹⁴ The NFSC also recommended an “oversight body in the form of a national Indigenous human rights ombudsperson and a national Indigenous human rights tribunal.”¹⁵ In the 2021 Budget, **\$2.2 billion** over five years was promised, specifically to address the MMIWG2S+ genocide.¹⁶ **At this time, we are asking, instead of an increase in funding, for the funding to be actually spent, and actions implemented.**

Recommendation 5: Work with provinces, territories, and municipalities to make “age-friendly communities” the standard across Canada.

Canada’s population is aging quickly. By 2050, the senior population is expected to double.¹⁷ With an older population, comes unique opportunities and challenges. Rates of disability amongst the elderly, particularly for women, are the highest of any other group. Seniors also offer experience, culture, and intergenerational connection. With access to quality health care and affordable and appropriate housing, seniors can live the later years of their lives as engaged and valued citizens.

An “age-friendly community” is one in which “the policies, services and structures related to the physical and social environment are designed to help seniors ‘age actively.’”¹⁸ These communities include well-lit and maintained sidewalks, automatic doors and elevators, and the inclusion of seniors in community activities. “Age-friendly communities” were first introduced in 2006 by the World Health Organization, and have been gaining traction over the years. The Public Health Agency of Canada has developed the Pan-Canadian Age-Friendly Community Milestones, such as: establishing an advisory

¹² CBC News. 2023 June 5. [A report card on the MMIWG inquiry’s calls for justice.](#)

¹³ Native Women’s Association of Canada. 2022. [MMIWG2S National Action Plan Annual Scorecard.](#)

¹⁴ Ka’nehsí:io Deer. 2022 June 3. [‘A national shame,’ say advocates about lack of progress on MMIWG action plan.](#) Retrieved from [CBC News.](#)

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Native Women’s Association of Canada. 2022. [MMIWG2S National Action Plan Annual Scorecard.](#)

¹⁷ Public Health Agency of Canada. 2016. [Age-Friendly Communities in Canada: Community Implementation Guide.](#)

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

committee, a public plan of action, and committing to measurement and reporting on progress. The next budget should invest at least **\$500 million** to engage and work with governments to create communities which are safe and healthy for all.

Recommendation 6: Increase federal support and efforts to increase opportunities for women to work in the skilled trades and non-traditional work.

Currently, women only make up about 5% of skilled trades workers in Canada.¹⁹ With a shortage of skilled trade workers, as well as the continued wage and opportunity gaps for women (especially historically marginalized women) – women working in the skilled trades represent a unique solution to several of Canada’s employment challenges.

Women today are the most educated of any group yet remain within highly gendered and undervalued sectors of the economy – such as care work and precarious work.²⁰ Women also face significant barriers to stable employment in male-dominated sectors which can lack flexibility, accommodations, mentorship, and a culture of inclusivity.²¹ However, the skilled trades and male-dominated sectors offer significant opportunity for workers. The annual income of a skilled trades worker is \$68,750, comparable to incomes of graduates of master’s programs, with often less education debt-burden, more opportunities for apprenticeship, and quicker entry to the labour force.²²

More women entering the trades is essential for both meeting our labour shortages and lifting more women out of poverty and into a stable economic future. In 2023, it is a critical moment to invest in women as workers in Canada’s growing green economy and clean energy sectors. We would advocate for the current **\$10 million** annually for these initiatives to continue as core program funding.

ABOUT CFUW

[CFUW](#) is a self-funded, non-partisan organization of over 6,600 women and 94 clubs across Canada that works to improve the status of women by promoting human rights, public education, social justice, and peace in Canada and abroad. CFUW is a member of the National Council of Women of Canada. CFUW also holds special consultative status with the United Nations ECOSOC and is a member of the Canadian Commission for UNESCO network. CFUW is the largest of the 61 affiliates of Graduate Women International and is a member of the International Alliance of Women.

¹⁹ Gemmill, A. 2022 October 5. Organizations working to encourage more women, girls into skilled trades. Retrieved from [CBC News](#).

²⁰ Canadian Council for Policy Alternatives. 2020. [Recovery through Equality: Developing an Inclusive Action Plan for Women in the Economy](#).

²¹ Canada’s Building Trades Unions (CBTU). n.d. Building Together: Women. Retrieved from [CBTU Website](#).

²² Employment and Social Development Canada. 2022. [Government of Canada Investments into Skilled Trades](#).