



RESPONSE TO PETITION

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

PETITION No.: **421-01648**

BY: **Ms. MATHYSSEN (LONDON-FANSHAWE)**

DATE: **SEPTEMBER 20, 2017**

PRINT NAME OF SIGNATORY: **MR. BILL BLAIR**

Response by the Minister of Health

SIGNATURE

Minister or Parliamentary Secretary

SUBJECT

Health Care Services

ORIGINAL TEXT

REPLY

The Government of Canada supports the right to the highest attainable standard of physical health, including sexual and reproductive health, as agreed to in binding instruments including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. More particularly, Canada ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, which commits State parties to ensure the right of women to access health care and services, including those related to family planning.

Effective family planning that is firmly grounded in scientific evidence is a critical dimension of health, including sexual and reproductive health. The Government of Canada supports a range of public health and community-based programming which promotes sexual and reproductive health by focusing on areas such as prenatal care, maternal and infant health, and improving access to quality health professionals and services. Through the Federal Health Transfer, the Government of Canada provides funding to the provinces and territories to ensure that Canadians have access to comprehensive health care and services, education and information aimed at promoting good sexual and reproductive health, such as family planning programs and services, clinics and programs for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV, and health services throughout pregnancy, including pre- and post-natal care.

The Government of Canada, through the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), works in collaboration with provinces and territories to monitor the rate of occurrence of new sexually-transmitted infections in Canada. The Government of Canada, also through PHAC and in collaboration with leading Canadian experts, developed a set of key sexual health indicators which could be used to inform policy and program decisions relating to sexual and reproductive health. These indicators have contributed to a better understanding of the sexual health of Canadians by informing surveys at the local, provincial, territorial and national levels, such as the *Canadian Community Health Survey*.

The *Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health Education* support health and educational professionals in providing comprehensive sexual health education to individuals in order to support them in making informed decisions regarding their sexual and reproductive health. These guidelines are being updated by the Sex Information and Education Council of Canada (SIECCAN) through a funding agreement with PHAC. These revised guidelines are expected to be published and disseminated in 2018.

Through the *Federal Initiative to Address HIV/AIDS in Canada*, the Government of Canada provides funding to strengthen community capacity to provide sexual health services, including education, for the prevention of negative sexual health outcomes (e.g., HIV, STIs). It also provides community-based programming and services which promote sexual and reproductive health among First Nations and Inuit women through, for example, the Maternal Child Health Program, First Nations and Inuit Component of the Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program and the Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Program.

Through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the Government of Canada is supporting research on reproductive health. From 2011-12 and 2015-16, CIHR invested more than \$266 million in reproductive health research.

One of the ways CIHR is supporting research on family planning and contraception is through the work of Dr. Wendy Norman at the University of British Columbia. As a CIHR-PHAC Applied Public Health Chair, Dr. Norman is researching ways to reduce inequities among Canadians in the ability to plan and space pregnancies, particularly for vulnerable populations, and increase access to family planning knowledge and services. As part of this work, Dr. Norman leads the Contraception Access Research Team (www.cart-grac.ca), a national, interdisciplinary, cross-sectoral collaboration which performs research to support health services and policies that ensure equitable access to high-quality family planning knowledge, methods and services for women and families across Canada. CIHR is providing \$647,258 to Dr. Norman over 5 years, starting in 2014-15, to undertake this important work.

The Government of Canada recognizes the importance of ensuring that all Canadians, irrespective of age, race, ethnicity, abilities, gender identity, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic background, have access to healthcare services that are relevant and sensitive to their needs as crucial to improving overall health and quality of life.