



---

# **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women**

---

**Interim Report in follow-up to Canada's review before the  
United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination  
against Women**



## **Introduction**

1. On October 25, 2016, Canada appeared before the United Nations (UN) Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) for the review of its Eighth and Ninth Reports on the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*.
2. In its November 18, 2016 Concluding Observations, the Committee asked Canada to provide, within two years, written information on the steps taken to implement the recommendations contained in paragraphs 21 (a), (b), (d) (Gender equality) and 27 (a) (CEDAW Inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls).

### ***Paragraph 21 (a), (b) and (d) – National machinery for the advancement of women and gender mainstreaming***

#### **Federal, provincial and territorial coordination**

3. Federal, provincial and territorial (FPT) governments share common objectives and a strong commitment to work together to address shared challenges and advance gender equality. Given the nature of Canadian federalism and the respective responsibilities of each provincial and territorial government, FPT governments continue to plan, organize and manage their respective gender equality policies and programs.
4. FPT Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women meet annually to share information, exchange best practices and explore issues that affect women and girls across Canada. They also discuss options for mutually-beneficial collaboration to support improved social and economic prosperity for women and girls and to prevent and address violence and abuse against women and girls.
5. At the Ministerial meeting in October 2018, Ministers agreed to: a common set of gender equality indicators to measure progress; address human trafficking as an immediate issue and priority area of concern; participate in more co-funding opportunities; develop a common approach to the gender pay gap; and work together to better support women to enter leadership positions. They also agreed to continue to engage with National Indigenous Leaders and Representatives with a focus on addressing the safety and security of Indigenous women and girls.<sup>1</sup>

#### **The Department for Women and Gender Equality**

6. On December 13, 2018, the Office of the Coordinator for the Status of Women was formally replaced by a full Department named the Department for Women and Gender Equality.
7. This new Department has a mandate to advance equality, including social, economic and political equality, with respect to sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity or expression. It

---

<sup>1</sup> As the swearing-in of a new Council of Ministers following a general election took place at the same time as this meeting, Québec was represented at the administrative level and participated only as an active observer.

also has a mandate to promote the use of Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+) to improve the inclusiveness of decision making processes.

8. Building on over 40 years of work by Status of Women Canada, the Department for Women and Gender Equality's priorities and responsibilities include:
  - Providing expert advice and strategic support to federal departments and agencies in the development of policies, programs and legislation related to gender equality;
  - Leading the implementation of GBA+ across the federal government, including in support of gender based budgeting;
  - Leading *It's Time: Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence*;
  - Sharing research and policy expertise with the organizations and other levels of governments that have the levers to address gender equality issues; and
  - Providing grants and contributions to projects across Canada that are designed to bring systemic change in the underlying factors that perpetuate gender inequality.
9. As the mandate for the new Department was only recently approved, work is still being completed to determine what additional priorities the new Department will be responsible for within this broader mandate.
10. Since 2016, the Government of Canada has increased investments to address the barriers women face to equality and support the conditions for their empowerment.<sup>2</sup> The increased investment is mainly to support the Department's growth and increased capacity to establish the permanent corporate structures necessary to effectively deliver on the Government of Canada's priorities with respect to advancing gender equality and addressing gender-based violence.

### **Gender Equality – A Key Priority**

11. Advancing gender equality and the empowerment of all Canadians regardless of gender or sexual orientation is a central priority for the Government of Canada as reflected in its commitment to adopt a comprehensive and permanent approach to gender budgeting and in multiple coordinated initiatives across various federal departments.
12. Gender budgeting is an important federal whole-of-government tool to help understand how decisions affect different people differently, with a view to allocating government resources more equitably and efficiently. The *Canadian Gender Budgeting Act* (2018) requires the tabling of a report in Parliament on the impacts of all new federal budget measures in terms of gender and diversity.

---

<sup>2</sup> Further information can be found in the 2018-19 Departmental Plan: <https://swc-cfc.gc.ca/trans/account-resp/pr/dp-pm/1819/dp-pm-en.html>.

13. This legislation builds on progress made towards strengthening the quality and application of GBA+ across the federal government. For example:
- GBA+ is now integral to the budget process and is mandatory for all proposals sent to Cabinet.
  - Investments have been made to strengthen data collections and create a new Centre for Gender, Diversity and Inclusion Statistics, that will maintain a public facing data hub. The Centre will work to address gaps in the availability of disaggregated data on gender, ethnocultural characteristics and other intersecting identities, to enrich the understanding of social, economic, financial and environmental issues.
14. The Government of Canada also introduced a new Gender Results Framework that will define what the government is trying to achieve on gender equality. It includes six gender equality goals: education and skill development; economic participation and prosperity; leadership and democratic participation; gender-based violence; poverty, health and well-being; and peace, security, access to justice around the world.
15. The Framework will be integrated into departmental planning and reporting to assist in whole-of-government efforts to measure and track gender equality in Canada and to help define what is needed to achieve greater equality and to determine how progress will be measured going forward.
16. In addition, the Government of Canada coordinates work across multiple federal departments to address persistent inequalities, including intersecting forms of discrimination, in its efforts to end gender-based violence, address the gender wage gap, promote women in leadership, and increase women's economic security.<sup>3</sup>

### **Provincial and territorial measures advancing gender equality**

17. All provincial and territorial governments have plans, strategies, legislation, policies and programs that support and promote gender equality. Examples of such measures include:
- Québec's Strategy for Gender Equality Toward 2021 pays particular attention to the inequalities that persist between women and men and aims to achieve de facto equality in all spheres of society. Its main objectives are:
    - Reduce persistent and troubling inequalities;
    - Take action considering all women, and especially women in vulnerable situations; and,
    - Rally women and men so they can work together to make equality a reality in all communities and regions.

---

<sup>3</sup> Additional actions can be found here: [https://www.fin.gc.ca/n18/data/18-008\\_1-eng.asp](https://www.fin.gc.ca/n18/data/18-008_1-eng.asp).

- Alberta’s Ministry of Status of Women is focusing on advancing gender equality through four key areas: GBA+; data and analytics; engagement and community capacity; and, exploring gender responsive budgeting. The 2018-2021 Status of Women Business Plan has identified key outcomes, related strategies and performance measures to advance gender equality. These planned outcomes are:
  - Strengthened capacity of the government to advance legislation, policies and programs that promote gender equality; and,
  - Improved position and conditions for women in relation to economic security, gender-based violence, leadership and democratic participation.
- Newfoundland and Labrador’s Women’s Policy Office (WPO) works to develop and expedite government policies and programs to enhance the social and economic status of women. The 2017-2020 WPO Business Plan identifies two overarching goals, with objectives and related indicators, to advance the status of women:
  - Strengthening the capacity of departments and agencies to understand and apply GBA to policies, programs, services, legislation and budgets in order to ensure equitable outcomes for women and girls; and,
  - Undertaking initiatives to address violence against populations most at risk.
- Northwest Territories’ policy on the Equality of Men and Women makes the commitment that the government will actively support and encourage the participation of women on an equal basis with men in all aspects of society.
- The Government of British Columbia appointed a Parliamentary Secretary for Gender Equity in 2018 whose mandate includes:
  - Ensuring the government’s commitment to gender equality is reflected in budgets, policies and programs;
  - Liaising with feminist and women’s organizations, and other organizations concerned with gender equality and the advancement of women;
  - Coordinating cross-ministerial action on gender issues, including but not limited to gendered violence, advancing gender equality and women’s economic empowerment; and,
  - Promoting gender equity and leadership at senior levels in both the private and public sector.

***Paragraph 27 (a) – Missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls***

18. The following are examples of federal, provincial and territorial measures undertaken to prevent and address violence against Indigenous women and girls that address issues raised in the CEDAW Inquiry recommendations.

## **National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls**

19. In 2016, Canada launched an independent National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. The National Inquiry was constituted by all FPT governments and was directed to make recommendations for concrete action to remove systemic causes of violence and increase the safety of Indigenous women and girls in Canada, and ways to honour and commemorate the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.
20. In June 2018, the Government of Canada granted the Commission of Inquiry an extension of six months, until April 30, 2019, to submit its final report. The Commission also has another two months, until June 30, 2019, to wind down its work.
21. The Government of Canada will work with provincial and territorial governments to determine the most effective ways to take action on the Commission's final recommendations through an FPT working group.

### ***National Inquiry interim report and recommendations***

22. In November 2017, the National Inquiry released an interim report identifying changes that could be implemented to improve the functioning of the Inquiry and better address the needs of survivors and family members going forward.<sup>4</sup> The Government of Canada is taking action in response to some of these recommendations:
  - It is increasing health support by complementing the health supports provided by the Inquiry<sup>5</sup> with expanding funding for services to survivors, family members and those affected by the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls regardless of their participation in Inquiry activities; and by extending to June 30, 2020 the timeframe during which health support services will be available.
  - It is providing additional funding to extend, to March 31, 2020, the timeline for Family Information Liaison Units and trauma informed, culturally grounded community-based services designed and delivered by Indigenous community organizations to support families beyond the life of the Inquiry.
  - It is providing funding to organizations with expertise in law enforcement and policing to lead a review of police policies and practices with regards to their relations with the Indigenous peoples they serve.
  - It is providing funding over five years to support the Royal Canadian Mounted Police's (RCMP) new National Investigative Standards and Practices Unit. Members of this unit provide national oversight to major RCMP investigations. A significant proportion of this oversight will focus on missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls investigations.

---

<sup>4</sup> The report can be found at: <http://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/publication/interim-report/>

<sup>5</sup> The National Inquiry provides access to health supports to participants in the National Inquiry activities for up to three months.

- It is establishing a commemoration fund to honour the lives and legacies of Indigenous women, girls and LGBTQ2S individuals. The commemoration fund will support Indigenous communities in developing and implementing commemorative events.

## **Victim services, health and safety**

### *Coordinated victim services*

23. With funding and support from the Government of Canada, all provincial and territorial governments have established Family Information Liaison Units (FILU) that are a “one-stop information service” for all families of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls to help overcome the barriers that families experience when seeking up to date information about their missing or murdered loved ones. FILU navigators work directly with family members to address the outstanding questions they have about the loss of their loved ones and coordinate information gathering from government agencies and services, including the criminal justice system (police, prosecutions, corrections); social services; child protection; health services; and other FILU across the country.
24. FILUs also ensure that family members have access to all other available community services, and make connections between family members and cultural advisors, Elders, or counselling services and programs, depending on the family’s wishes. Many FILUs across Canada are delivered in partnership with Indigenous community organizations and all provide a trauma-informed, culturally-grounded model of service delivery.
25. The Government of Nova Scotia’s Mi’kmaw Legal Support Network Victim Support Service provides a specialized mode of service delivery that is customized to address the unique needs of Indigenous victims of crime. The goal is to maintain culturally supportive victim services that encourage and support the participation of Indigenous victims in the criminal justice process by providing enhanced in-person support services to Indigenous victims of crime in their communities.

### *Health and safety supports*

26. The Government of Canada is providing funding to Indigenous community-based organizations, non-governmental community-based organizations, and victim services across Canada to support the design and delivery of culturally-responsive, trauma-informed services for families of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.
27. The Government of Canada is also investing to support enhanced access to mental health counselling in shelters and provide better coordinated, trauma-informed and culturally appropriate services for Indigenous women and children who are survivors of violence living on reserves and in Inuit communities.
28. Under the Indigenous Healing and Wellness Strategy, the Government of Ontario supports a continuum of culturally-appropriate, Indigenous-led programs that include shelters and healing centres, community wellness workers and healing lodges that help support healing from and prevention of violence in both on- and off-reserve communities.



29. Through its Aboriginal Community Safety Planning Initiative, the Government of Canada provides support to Indigenous communities to develop customized community safety plans that draw on community strengths to address the unique circumstances and priorities of the community, which includes the safety of Indigenous women and girls.

### **FPT anti-violence measures**

30. FPT governments have established numerous anti-violence plans, strategies, legislation, programs and policies, which work on all fronts, simultaneously aiming to protect women and girls against violence, including Indigenous women and girls, and providing meaningful support and assistance for victims of violence, including their families.

31. The following are examples of new initiatives that were undertaken since Canada's appearance before the CEDAW in November 2016:

- The Government of Canada's *It's Time: Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence* builds on existing federal initiatives, aligns with provincial and territorial efforts and is based on three pillars: prevention; support for survivors and their families; and the promotion of responsive legal and justice systems. The Strategy includes investments tailored to Indigenous women and girls, including: engaging with Indigenous groups to undertake research initiatives and share results, and support for enhanced cultural and gender sensitive training for federal law enforcement officers.
- The Government of Québec's Action Plan for the Social and Cultural Development of the First Nations and Inuit 2017-2022 pays special attention to enhancing services to Indigenous peoples, promoting Indigenous languages and cultures, building capacity and citizen participation, and research and consultation. In order to respond more specifically to the reality of Indigenous women and girls, the aspect of violence against Indigenous women has been incorporated into the Plan and it includes many measures to help those seeking protection against violence – outreach program, funding for Indigenous police, funding for local organizations, etc.
- The Government of Ontario recognizes that Indigenous-led approaches are critical to effectively combat the trafficking of Indigenous women and girls in Ontario, and have supported Indigenous-led, community-informed, and culturally-specific programs designed for and by Indigenous peoples. For example, the Indigenous Anti-Human Trafficking Liaisons Program provides advice, training, and capacity-building to service providers and supports Indigenous communities in responding to human trafficking and the Anti-Human Trafficking Indigenous-Led Initiatives Fund provides support to projects working to improve Indigenous survivors' access to services, help prevent at-risk individuals from being trafficked, meaningfully engage with people with lived experience, and encourage innovation in localized projects and community partnerships.
- The Government of Alberta launched the Commitment to End Sexual Violence, which involves 10 ministries delivering a coordinated response to sexual violence and

taking action in three key areas: supporting survivors; improving the government's response; and shifting to a culture of consent by advancing gender equality. Recognizing that Indigenous women and girls experience violence at disproportionate rates, a number of supports under this Commitment are available to Indigenous women and girls.

- The Government of New Brunswick released the Preventing and Responding to Sexual Violence in New Brunswick: A Framework for Action which outlines necessary actions by government and community partners related to prevention and awareness, professional education and training, intervention and policy, research and evaluation.

### **Data Collection**

32. Since 2014, all police services in Canada are reporting on the Indigenous identity of victims and accused persons for the Homicide Survey. In addition, as a result of collaborative work with the RCMP and police services across Canada, the Indigenous identity information was updated for all female homicide victim records going back to 1980.
33. The Homicide Survey was also recently amended to include information on whether the victims were on record as a missing person at the time the homicide became known to the police. Since 2015, the data have been provided by police every year and an analysis of this information for Aboriginal female victims has been included in each Statistics Canada's Homicide in Canada annual report. In addition, Statistics Canada is expanding its other justice-related work to include information on Indigenous identity. This includes publications from the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, Correctional data bases and other data sources.
34. Statistics Canada's Victimization survey, conducted every five years, collects information on victimization, whether it was reported to the police or not. Statistics Canada is currently exploring sampling strategies to improve the coverage in the data collection for the First Nations population living off-reserve, Métis and Inuit.
35. In addition, in partnership with the Department for Women and Gender Equality, Statistics Canada is developing a new gender-based violence survey that will capture a range of inappropriate sexual behaviours, including those that meet the criminal threshold as well as those that do not but still have a negative impact on the victims. Due to the large sample size, this data collection will be able to produce reliable data covering First Nations living off-reserve and Métis and Inuit populations. This new information will provide insight into the impact of the lifetime prevalence of physical and sexual violence and experiences of inappropriate sexual behaviours in public and private spaces among the Indigenous populations in Canada, among other topics.

### **Indian Act**

36. In December 2017, an *Act to amend the Indian Act* (Bill S-3) addressing sex-based inequities came into force. Through this Act, the Government of Canada will also consult on any

outstanding sex-base inequities as well as broader issues related to Indian registration, band membership and First Nation citizenship.