



RENEWED CALL FOR CANADA TO DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A NATIONAL ACTION PLAN ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN (NAP ON VAW) July 2019

In February 2015, [Women's Shelters Canada](#), along with 20+ collaborators, launched [A Blueprint for Canada's National Action Plan on Violence against Women](#). During the 2015 federal election campaign, we called on all parties to include the development and implementation of a NAP on VAW in their party platform. Fast forward to 2019, Canada remains without a NAP on VAW.

In June 2017, the federal government launched a Gender-Based Violence Strategy that “builds on current federal initiatives, coordinates existing programs and lays the foundation for greater action on GBV.” While the strategy has recognized and begun to address violence against women, it only deals with federal institutions.

Gender-based violence is an equity issue. It is both a cause and consequence of women's inequality. To effectively address the issue, long-term systems change accompanied by a shift in attitudinal norms is needed. Since the release of the Blueprint in 2015, the understanding of violence against women, including how it affects different groups of women, has deepened. The following highlights some of what has come to the fore in the last four years:

- The [final report](#) from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls was officially presented to the Canadian government on June 3, 2019.
 - It calls for transformative legal and social changes to resolve the crisis that has devastated Indigenous communities across the country.
 - The report includes 231 individual Calls for Justice directed at governments, institutions, social service providers, industries, and all Canadians.
 - At the closing ceremony, Chief Commissioner Marion Buller noted that “the hard truth is that we live in a country whose laws and institutions perpetuate violations of fundamental rights, amounting to a genocide against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people.”

Upon receipt of the report, Prime Minister [Trudeau promised](#), “we will conduct a thorough review of this report, and we will develop and implement a National Action Plan to address violence against Indigenous women, girls, and LGBTQ and two-spirit people.”

On June 11, 2019, the commissioners made an appeal to all political leaders: “to accept their truths and move forward to implement our Calls for Justice. We further call on all political leaders to work together to create and implement a National Action Plan with Indigenous peoples at the table to address violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people. With political will, good work can begin immediately. Together, let's make meaningful change to ensure a safe future for Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA people in Canada.”

- In June 2019, the United Nations’ Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, Dubravka Šimonovic, released her final report following her official visit to Canada in April 2018. In this report, she notes “Canada is a federal system with a division of responsibilities between the federal, provincial, and territorial (FPT) governments, including in the area of violence against women. While the federal government has jurisdiction over criminal law, the administration of justice is a provincial and territorial responsibility. However, federalism should not constitute a barrier to human rights implementation.” Among the many recommendations made was that:
 - The Rapporteur highlights that there is an urgent need for a more comprehensive and holistic National Action Plan on violence against women, ensuring that women and girls in all areas of the country have access to comparable levels of services and human rights protection. She, therefore, recommends adopting, in cooperation with independent human rights institutions and CSOs, a National Action Plan on Violence Against Women and Domestic violence, based on human right standards on prevention, services and prosecution of violence against women accepted by Canada, such as the CEDAW Convention and its General Recommendation No. 35 on gender-based violence against women.
 - Adopt a National Action Plan on violence against Indigenous women or elaborate it as a separate part of the recommended National Action Plan on Violence against women and domestic violence. This NAP should provide the same level of protection across the country based on the implementation of international human rights standards as well as the CEDAW Inquiry report recommendations (CEDAW/C/OP.8/CAN/1).

- On May 1, 2019, the Standing Committee on the Status of Women tabled [its report](#) on the systems of shelters and transition houses serving women and children affected by violence. One of the recommendations in the report was that: “the Government of Canada, in collaboration with provinces and territories, continue its efforts to create a national action plan on gender-based violence and consider including access to shelters and transitional houses and to safe and affordable housing in this action plan.”

- The *Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability (CFOJA)* was established in 2017 and released its [first report](#) on January 30th, 2019. From this report, we know that:
 - In 2018, 148 women and girls were killed by violence in Canada. On average, every 2.5 days one woman or girl is killed in this country – a consistent trend for four decades. Where an accused has been identified, 91% are male, consistent with national and international patterns.
 - Indigenous women and girls were overrepresented as victims, comprising about five percent of the population in Canada, but 36% of those women and girls who were killed by violence. Approximately 34% of women and girls were killed in rural areas, whereas only about 16% of the population in Canada lives in rural areas.

- The *Me Too* and *Times Up* movements have exposed the extent of sexual assault and harassment in society and given a collective voice to survivors. The impact of these movements has reverberated through multiple layers of society. It has also resulted in a significant increase in demand for services. While there have been increases in funding for sexual assault centres in

some provinces, in others there have been reductions. Any increase has not been proportional to the increase in demand for services.

- A Statistics Canada study on [Violent Victimization of Women with Disabilities](#), released in March 2018, revealed that:
 - Women with a disability were nearly twice as likely as women without a disability to have been sexually assaulted in the past 12 months.
 - About one-quarter of women with a cognitive disability (24%) or a mental health-related disability (26%) were sexually abused by an adult before they were 15 years of age.
 - More than one in five (23%) women with a disability experienced emotional, financial, physical, or sexual violence or abuse committed by a current or former partner in the past five years, a similar proportion as men with a disability (22%). For both women and men, this was roughly two times higher when compared to those without a disability.
 - Among victims of spousal violence with a disability, women were more likely than men to have experienced the most serious forms of spousal violence (39% versus 16%), to be physically injured due to violence (46% versus 29%), to fear for their life (38% versus 14%), and to contact or use formal support services following the violence (71% versus 29%).
- In October of 2018, Bill C-65, an act to amend the Canada Labour Code, received royal assent. It amended the *Canada Labour Code* to strengthen the existing framework for the prevention of harassment and violence, including sexual harassment and sexual violence in the workplace.
- In 2016, Manitoba became the first province to ensure job-protected leave for domestic violence survivors, providing them with greater social support and increased job security. Alberta and Saskatchewan, as well as the federal government, now provide a set number of days of unpaid leave for DV survivors. Ontario, Manitoba, Quebec, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, and PEI provide a set number of days for paid leave.
- A number of provinces and territories made changes to their legislation pertaining to the *Residential Tenancy Act*, allowing tenants experiencing domestic violence to end their tenancies early with a notice period of approximately one month if they provide their landlord with proper documentation (Alberta, British Columbia, and Ontario in 2016, Saskatchewan in 2017, and Newfoundland and Labrador in 2018). Manitoba, Nova Scotia, and the Northwest Territories had legislation prior to the 2015 federal election.

RENEWED CALL

In the lead up to the federal election in October 2019, the organizations that collaboratively developed the Blueprint have been joined by additional partners (list below) in calling for all federal parties to incorporate a NAP on VAW into their platform and to refer to the Blueprint as a starting point.

A NAP on VAW in Canada will help ensure:

- Consistency across and within jurisdictions in policies and legislation that address VAW
- A shared understanding of the root causes of VAW
- Consistent approaches to prevention of and responses to VAW

- Collective pursuit of the most appropriate solutions
- High-level commitment to a multi-pronged, coordinated, pan-Canadian approach
- Coordinated, clear, and effective services and systems for survivors of VAW that respect and respond to diversity
- National standards with equality of access for women

A NAP on VAW in Canada must include:

- New commitments and clear targets
- Effective prevention mechanisms
- Universal coverage of response mechanisms for survivors
- Review of all justice mechanisms including policing, prosecution, and offender management practices
- Efforts to strengthen social policies that affect women’s vulnerability to violence
- Support for reliable data collection allowing for better tracking and evaluation, and better evaluation of data specific to Indigenous women
- Adequate human and financial resources to support these measures

The process for developing Canada’s NAP must include:

- Consultation with all stakeholders, including frontline workers and survivors
- The direct and meaningful participation of non-governmental stakeholders and a formal mechanism for their ongoing participation in the planning and implementation of the NAP
- High-level leadership and accountability from governments at all jurisdictional levels
- Clearly-defined, time-bound goals measured against detailed baseline data
- Adequate human and financial resources to support these processes

This Renewed Call was developed by Women's Shelters Canada and endorsed by the following contributors to the Blueprint:

- Action Ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes
- Alberta Sexual Assault Association
- Amnesty International Canada
- Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives
- Canadian Council for Muslim Women
- Canadian Labour Congress
- Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women
- Canadian Women’s Foundation
- DisAbled Women’s Network of Canada
- Ending Violence Association of BC
- Ending Violence Association of Canada
- Fédération des maisons d’hébergement pour femmes
- Feminist Alliance for International Action / FAFIA
- National Association of Women and the Law
- Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses
- Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada
- Regroupement des maisons pour femmes victimes de violence conjugale United Food and Commercial Workers of Canada
- Women’s Legal Education and Action Fund
- YWCA Canada

**Attention
Organizations:
Sign on to the
Renewed Call
here!**