



WOMEN'S  
SHELTERS  
CANADA | HÉBERGEMENT  
FEMMES  
CANADA

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April 1, 2025

RE: Letter Concerning Party Platform on VAW / GBV during Federal Election 2025

To the leaders of all federal political parties,

I am reaching out to you on behalf of [Women's Shelters Canada \(WSC\)](http://www.womensshelters.ca), a non-profit organization that works with violence against women (VAW) shelters across the country. Shelters support women and children fleeing violence. We support shelters.

Shelters work tirelessly to ensure that women and children do not become statistics on femicide lists, but their work has been [greatly affected by the pandemic](#), [the housing crisis](#), and economic instability and uncertainty. As you know, VAW is at epidemic proportions in Canada and around the world and has only increased since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. This was explicitly highlighted in the Mass Casualty Commission, with this horrific event being only one of too many examples of the systemic failure to protect women from gender-based violence (GBV). The Canadian Femicide Observatory reported that in 2024, 187 women and girls were killed, the vast majority by men, including current and former intimate partners. Indigenous women continue to be seven times more likely to be killed than non-Indigenous women. On any given day, there are over 4,000 women and gender-diverse people and 3,000 children who have found safety in one of Canada's shelters. While the rates and severity of GBV are currently high, we deeply fear that US imposed tariffs and a trade war will contribute to greater levels of violence. As we have seen with the pandemic, and other disasters globally, when there is instability, rates of violence spike, with women, children and gender-diverse populations being most at risk.

WSC has greatly appreciated the support of previous federal governments, particularly the Department of Women and Gender Equality (formerly Status of Women Canada), for the funding to launch our organization in 2013, in providing emergency COVID-19 funds for VAW shelters across the country, and for capacity building funds to gender justice organizations. The creation of the Registered Disability Savings Plan in 2008 was an important support for those with disabilities, a population with higher risk of experiencing violence. The Women and Children Shelter and Transitional Housing Initiative was an invaluable source of funding for shelter repairs, renovations, and new builds. We also applaud the steps taken to implement the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence (NAP) and begin flowing funds to all provinces and territories.

To ensure that this critical work continues, Canada needs a dedicated Minister of Women and Gender Equality. A strong economy demands that we invest in feminist policies, like healthcare,

SHELTERS AND TRANSITION HOUSES UNITED TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

MAISONS D'HÉBERGEMENT UNIES POUR METTRE FIN À LA VIOLENCE FAITE AUX FEMMES



pharmacare, childcare, the NAP and so much more. Gender equality is not an afterthought; it is the backbone of a strong economy and resilient society. Gender equality demands dedicated leadership, accountability, and sustained attention—none of which can be adequately achieved when it is treated as an afterthought within a larger, unrelated ministry.

There needs to be [strong accountability and transparency mechanisms](#) built into the NAP, which includes ongoing, meaningful consultation with anti-violence and gender justice organizations. We call for the fulfillment of the [Nova Scotia Mass Casualty Commission's recommendation 17: A National Accountability Framework](#).

The Commission recommends that: (a) The federal government establish by statute an independent and impartial gender-based violence commissioner with adequate, stable funding, and effective powers, including the responsibility to make an annual report to Parliament. (b) The federal government develop the mandate for the gender-based violence commissioner in consultation with provincial and territorial governments, women survivors including women from marginalized and precarious communities, and the gender-based violence advocacy and support sector.

It is imperative that this important work continues, regardless of which political party wins this election. Ending violence against women is a non-partisan issue. As such, we are reaching out to the federal parties to seek their response to the questions below. The responses received will be posted on our website and shared with VAW shelters across the country.

If elected to hold government:

1. Will your party maintain in cabinet a dedicated Minister of Women and Gender Equality Canada?
2. Will your party implement a comprehensive and measurable transparency and accountability framework through an independent oversight body to track progress on the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence?
3. Will your party commit to increased long-term funding for women's rights and gender justice organizations, including grassroots advocates, to carry out their critical work?
4. Will your party commit to naming femicide under the Canadian Criminal Code?
5. How will your party ensure that more safe, accessible, and affordable housing is available for women fleeing violence?

We thank you in advance and look forward to receiving your response.

Anuradha Dugal  
Executive Director