



# **Building a Canada that Works for All Women**

**Pre-Budget Submission**

**Federal Budget 2016**

**YWCA Canada**

**February 5, 2016**



## **Building a Canada that Works for All Women**

For almost 150 years, YWCA Canada has worked to improve the lives of women and girls through programs, projects and policy advocacy. Our advocacy responds directly to the life experiences of the tens of thousands of women and girls who use our programs and services every year. As Canada's single largest provider of shelter for women and children fleeing violence, we work to end the inter-connected issues of violence against women and women's homelessness, and to achieve economic equality for women and access to affordable, quality child care.

With Member Associations in nine provinces and two territories - from Victoria to Iqaluit to St. John's - YWCA Canada is committed to building a country that works for *all* women and girls. Reconciliation with First Nation, Métis, and Inuit peoples, expanding young women's leadership, and equitable inclusion for newcomer, refugee, and immigrant women are key to that commitment, as is implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action.

The federal government has issued clear directives for action in the Ministerial Mandate Letters, and we look forward to a 2016 Federal Budget that will support realization of the mandate on crucial issues for women and girls. Women comprise the majority of Canada's population, and essentially an equal portion of the workforce. Ensuring a prosperous future requires building a Canada that works for all women, based on women's lived realities, such as:

- high workforce participation rates for women across all ages, including mothers with young children
- women comprising the majority of university graduates
- women continuing to provide the majority of child care.

Women are central to the nation's prosperity, productivity and economic growth. An economic policy that fails to recognize this will fail to provide Canada with sustainable long-term economic growth.

### **WOMEN'S EQUALITY**

#### **Gender-Based Analysis: Fall 2015 Report of the Auditor General**

Gender-based analysis is essential across government departments and at the earliest stages of budget development. It should be incorporated in the development of Budget 2016 from the outset, as a fundamental step in the budget process. Gender-based analysis is particularly important in Budget 2016 with regard to plans to allocate funds for social infrastructure, including affordable housing, and early learning and child care. Without a gender-based analysis,

allocation of these crucial funds will be open to gender bias, and unlikely to respond equitably to the needs of women and girls and fully support realization of their economic and social potential.

Comprehensive and effective implementation of gender-based analysis across the federal government is long overdue. As the Fall 2015 Report of the Auditor-General found, “in the 20 years since the government committed to applying gender-based analysis (GBA) to its policy decisions, a GBA framework has been implemented in only some federal departments and agencies.”<sup>1</sup> The federal government has a historic opportunity to correct this, which will require increasing GBA staff at Status of Women Canada to ensure that all government programs, departments and decisions are subject to GBA and implement gender equality.

### **Pay Equity**

YWCA Canada is pleased to see the government support the Opposition Day Motion on Pay Equity on February 3, 2016. Pay Equity is an essential tool in addressing women’s economic inequality. Women working full-time year-round earn 20% less than men in comparable work, feeding women’s poverty and inequality.<sup>2</sup> We look forward to government action “to close the unacceptable gap in pay between men and women which contributes to income inequality and discriminates against women”<sup>3</sup> and to the recognition of Pay Equity as a right. Implementation of the recommendations of the 2004 Pay Equity Task Force Report has been delayed for more than a decade. The many women in the federal public service await restoration of the right to Pay Equity in the public service, eliminated in 2009. We encourage the government to allocate the funds necessary for initiating implementation of Pay Equity for women in Canada in Budget 2016.

### **Senate Gender Parity**

YWCA Canada supports adoption of a new process of selecting nominees to the Senate of Canada that would result in a gender-equal Senate. We encourage the government to achieve gender balance in the Senate in fact and to permanently embed this in the Senate appointment process. UN studies show that with more women in legislature, government priorities shift to social issues that promote gender and economic equality. The 2015 federal election resulted in a House of Commons that is 26 percent women, and Canada ranks 48th in the world in representation of women. A gender-equal senate can work to redress the under-representation of women in our most important institution of government. Federal Budget 2016 should address this.

### **WOMEN & POVERTY**

Poverty costs Canada \$72-\$86 billion per year<sup>4</sup> and heavily impacts children’s day to day lives and potential life outcomes. It increases health care costs, spending on social support services and lost productivity, while limiting personal opportunities. Growing up in poverty compromises dignity, mental health, well-being and life chances. Canada’s economy gains from greater social equality and lower levels of poverty, that is, from the development of a large and stable middle class. Eradicating poverty is integral to economic stewardship, social cohesion and social justice.

## **Implementation of the Canada Child Benefit without Deductions**

The new Canada Child Benefit (CCB) is a key opportunity to increase the incomes of women with children. Due for implementation on July 1, 2016, the CCB has the potential to dramatically raise incomes of mothers on social assistance and mothers in shelters with their children – women and children served by YWCA Canada Member Associations – as long as the provincial and territorial governments *do not deduct* it from social assistance payments or reduce other means-tested benefits. The federal government needs to ensure provincial and territorial agreement on this prior to implementing the benefit.

- ***Reducing Family Homelessness***

Across Canada, the shelter portion of social assistance is insufficient to secure housing, and low-income families are housed inadequately, precariously or not at all. With a CCB of \$6400 per year per child under 6 years, and \$5400 per year per child between 6 and 18, a single mother with one child under 6 will receive \$580 a month, with two, \$1160. That can potentially bridge the housing affordability gap and provide secure housing, if the CCB remains fully in families' hands, without deductions from social assistance.

- ***Lifting Children Out of Poverty***

The promise of the CCB is to lift 300,000 children out of poverty, thereby bringing significant change to the lives of women and children. To succeed in that important goal, women and children living in the legislated poverty of social assistance need to retain the entire benefit without any deduction from social assistance. If the CCB is “clawed back” by provincial and/or territorial governments, it will fail to attain the goal of ending poverty for 300,000 children.

- ***Ensuring “No woman is turned away from shelter”***

Women and children who have survived violence are often unable to leave shelters for abused women because they can't secure affordable housing in the community. If a shelter is at capacity and women can't move out, the shelter is forced to turn away women in need. This happens on a daily basis across Canada. The CCB can ensure that abused women can leave shelter when they're ready, reducing this system bottleneck and allow women escaping violence to access shelter when they need it. Mothers in shelters receiving the full benefit of the CCB can go a long way toward achieving the mandate of the Minister for Status of Women to ensure that “no one fleeing domestic violence is left without a place to turn.”

The CCB can be a game-changer and life-changing. Single mothers, and all families living in poverty with children, need the federal government to ensure that every provincial and territorial government refrains from:

- Deducting the CCB from social assistance payments and other income supports.
- Counting the CCB as income for access to any means-tested benefits.

## **Early Learning & Child Care**

YWCA Canada is encouraged by Minister Duclos' reported statements indicating that federal and provincial and territorial governments should be able to progress quickly on a framework for a national early learning and child care program."<sup>5</sup> Consultations on the National Early Learning and Child Care Framework need to stay on a fast track and result in delivery of "affordable, high-quality, flexible and fully inclusive child care" promised in the Ministerial Mandate letters. YWCA Canada has endorsed the "Shared framework for building an early childhood education and care system for all" and encourages the government to embrace this approach.<sup>6</sup>

- ***Immediate Funding***

Federal Budget 2016 will need funding dedicated to support early learning and child care from the social infrastructure fund. YWCA Canada supports the recommendation of a short term emergency fund of \$500 million for federal transfer payments to provinces, territories and Indigenous communities dedicated to regulated child care while negotiations for long-term funding in the National Early Learning and Childcare Framework are carried out.<sup>7</sup> Effective GBA must be conducted on the social infrastructure funds to ensure women have access to quality, affordable child care for their children.

- ***An Effective Anti-Poverty Tool for Women***

Child care is, as Justice Abella has said, "the ramp to women's equality."<sup>8</sup> It's also a proven anti-poverty tool for single mothers. Quebec's low-cost, broad-based child care confirms broad access to low-cost child care as an effective social policy to address poverty for women raising families on their own, by dramatically increasing their access to employment. In Quebec, between the introduction of child care as a social policy in 1996 and 2008, employment rates for mothers with children under the age of six increased 22%, the number of single mothers on social assistance was reduced by more than half (55%), from 99,000 to 45,000, and their after-tax median income rose by 81%.<sup>9</sup>

- ***Enhancing GDP and Prosperity***

Child Care is also good for the economy. GDP reacts in proportion to the increase in the number of people employed. If employment grows 2%, GDP will grow 2%. With the introduction of low-cost child care programs, Quebec experienced 70,000 additional mothers at work; GDP rose \$5.1 billion or 1.7%.<sup>10</sup> The prosperity of the nation is intimately tied to the labour force participation of our educated, skilled female workforce. Barring a major shift of men into child-rearing, nationwide access to early learning and child care services is increasingly essential to the nation's future economic prosperity. Lack of affordable child care throughout a large part of Canada constitutes the biggest barrier to women's full participation in the workforce, particularly if they are sole parents. Access to affordable early learning and child care will increase women's participation in the work force, reduce dependence on social assistance and increase GDP, in addition to improving the life opportunities of children. The federal government should continue to proceed without delay to expand affordable early learning and child care.

### **First Nations Child and Family Services**

Federal Budget 2016 should earmark sufficient funds to fully close the discriminatory funding gap for First Nations Child and Family Services (FNCFS) determined in the January 26, 2016 ruling of the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal.<sup>11</sup> This funding gap is systemic discrimination that fosters poverty. Funding for children cannot be determined on the basis of race, and First Nations children have lived with this discrimination, along with the impacts of attempted cultural genocide, to their detriment and that of their communities. A new relationship between the Government of Canada and First Nations requires no less than swift implementation of the four immediate orders to Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada regarding the discrimination perpetuated by the FNCFS Program:

1. Cease discriminatory practices regarding the FNCFS Program
2. Reform the FNCFS Program
3. Cease applying the narrow definition of Jordan's Principle
4. Take measures to immediately implement the full meaning and scope of Jordan's Principle.<sup>12</sup>

As First Nations Child and Family Caring Society Executive Director Dr. Cindy Blackstock has noted, "the multiplier effect of discriminatory federal funding regimes for providing services like child welfare, education, health care and basics like water and housing have created deep levels of multigenerational harm for First Nations children."<sup>13</sup> In the long view, not only will this positively impact the women and girls YWCA Canada's Member Associations serve on a daily basis, but a nation has no greater resource than its children.

### **A Poverty Reduction Strategy for Women**

The planned Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy needs a gender lens, and to be grounded in gender-based analysis (GBA) and the realities of women's poverty. Women account for 70% of part-time employees and two-thirds of Canadians working for minimum wage.<sup>14</sup> As noted, the pay gap for women in Canada is a minimum of 20%, and the median income of single mother families is a third lower than the median income for father-led single parent families.<sup>15</sup>

Along with targets and timelines to guide key investments and hold government accountable for progress, the strategy needs to be viewed through a gender lens to ensure that it addresses women's poverty, and that means all women living in poverty, not only women with children. A strategy that only focuses on families will leave out some of the most vulnerable women in the country: homeless young women who have left home to escape sexual abuse and homophobic violence; abused adult women coping with trauma, mental health issues and addictions who have lost their children to the depths of the child welfare system; and senior women struggling to live on an inadequate pension system.<sup>16</sup>

## **VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

### **National Action Plan on Violence Against Women**

Federal Budget 2016 needs to include funds to support development of a National Action Plan on Violence Against Women, in particular, to support participation of the violence against women sector in the development process. Status of Women Canada should receive a minimum of \$5 million earmarked for this purpose - supporting participation of the sector - in Federal Budget 2016. Funding for implementation of the National Action Plan on Violence Against Women should be planned for future years in this mandate. The 75,000-100,000 women and children who leave home for a shelter for abused women each year need a coordinated national action plan, as do homeless teenage girls, the majority of whom leave home to escape sexual abuse. With the prevalence of violence in northern communities, women, children and communities across northern Canada would benefit dramatically from national coordination and supporting investments.

Investments in the shelter system will be required to achieve the promise of “no one turned away.” Federal Budget 2016 should look to restoring the Shelter Enhancement Program at \$10 million per year, to ensure access to shelters for the estimated one in four women in Canada who will experience intimate partner violence in her lifetime.

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

The government announced the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women in December 2015, and the pre-inquiry phase is well underway. YWCA Canada has long supported the call for this inquiry, and looks forward to the government honouring its funding commitment to this inquiry in Federal Budgets 2016 and 2017. YWCA Canada and our Member Associations would be pleased to support the work of Ministers Bennett, Wilson-Raybould and Hajdu on the inquiry, in whatever capacity we can be most useful.

### **HOMELESSNESS OF WOMEN & GIRLS**

The promised development of a National Housing Strategy requires a gender lens, and gender-based analysis (GBA). Male bias has been pervasive in perceptions of who is homeless, yet of 235,000 people estimated to be homeless in Canada, almost half are women and girls. Homelessness is gender differentiated. Violence and poverty are the major drivers of women’s homelessness. Four out of 10 women leaving Canada’s emergency shelters for women fleeing violence do not know where they will live. Women’s homelessness tends not to be visible; women and girls hide their homelessness because the streets aren’t safe for them.<sup>17</sup>

- ***Housing First through a Gender Lens***

Housing First is not a panacea for women. The wholesale shift of Homelessness Partnering Secretariat funding in recent years to the Housing First Model was not accompanied by a gender-based analysis. This is absolutely crucial before any expansion.<sup>18</sup> Transitional housing is essential to services for women made homeless through domestic violence, and does not fit the federal government’s current Housing First Model. Actual “housing first” for women and children suffering violence in their homes would leave them in their home, and remove the perpetrator of violence to secure their safety.

- **Housing Women in Northern Canada**

The housing crisis in all three northern territories profoundly impacts women with children who are trying to escape violence. Housing in the three northern territories has been seriously disadvantaged by the lack of federal social housing funding.<sup>19</sup> Any federal government stimulation of the creation of affordable housing needs to address housing for women and families in the northern territories. Again, GBA is an effective tool for ensuring that a National Housing Strategy addresses this.

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### About YWCA Canada:

YWCA Canada is the country's oldest and largest women's multi-service organization, with 32 Member Associations across the country serving women and girls in nine provinces and two territories. For more information visit [www.ywcacanada.ca](http://www.ywcacanada.ca), find us on Twitter [@YWCA\\_Canada](https://twitter.com/YWCA_Canada) or at [www.facebook.com/ywcacanada](https://www.facebook.com/ywcacanada).



<sup>1</sup> Office of the Auditor General of Canada, Fall 2015 Reports of the Auditor General, *Report 1: Gender-Based Analysis*, Audit at a glance, February 2, 2016. [http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/att\\_e\\_41078.html](http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/att_e_41078.html)

<sup>2</sup> K. McInturff, *Behind the Numbers: All your wage gap questions answered*, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, February 2016. <http://behindthenumbers.ca/2015/02/26/all-your-wage-gap-questions-answered/>

<sup>3</sup> Opposition Day Motion on Pay Equity, February 3, 2016.

<http://www.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?Language=E&Mode=1&Parl=42&Ses=1&DocId=8082478>

<sup>4</sup> N. Laurie, *The Cost of Poverty: An Analysis of the Economic Cost of Poverty in Ontario*, Ontario Association of Food Banks, 2008. <http://www.oafb.ca/assets/pdfs/CostofPoverty.pdf> quoted in Campaign 2000, *National Report Card on Child Poverty*, 2012.

<sup>5</sup> Winnipeg Free Press, *Duclos says feds, provinces on fast-track to set up national child care program*, February 5 2016. <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/canada/duclos-says-feds-provinces-on-fast-track-to-set-up-national-child-care-program-367866641.html>

<sup>6</sup> CCAAC et al, *Shared framework for building an early childhood education and care system for all*, 2016, [https://ccaacacpsge.files.wordpress.com/2016/01/sharedframework\\_jan2016.pdf](https://ccaacacpsge.files.wordpress.com/2016/01/sharedframework_jan2016.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Campaign 2000, *Let's Do This: Let's End Child Poverty for Good*, November 2015.

<http://www.campaign2000.ca/reportCards/2015RepCards/NationalReportCardEn2015.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Judge Rosalie Abella, *Report of the Royal Commission on Equality in Employment*, 1984.

<sup>9</sup> Fortin et al, *The Impact of Low Cost Child Care on Women's Employment and Overall Economy*, University of Sherbrook, 2012.



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<sup>10</sup> Fortin et al, *The Impact of Low Cost Child Care on Women's Employment and Overall Economy*, University of Sherbrooke, 2012.

<sup>11</sup> Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, 2016 CHRT 2, T1340/7008, First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada and Assembly of First Nations v. Canadian Human Rights Commission and Attorney General of Canada (Representing the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Canada,) January 26, 2016.

[http://decisions.chrt-tcdp.gc.ca/chrt-tcdp/decisions/en/item/127700/index.do#\\_Toc441501140](http://decisions.chrt-tcdp.gc.ca/chrt-tcdp/decisions/en/item/127700/index.do#_Toc441501140)

<sup>12</sup> First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, Victory for First Nations Children, January 26, 2016.

<https://fncaringsociety.com/sites/default/files/Information%20Sheet%20re%20CHRT%20Decision.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Dr. Cindy Blackstock, Letter to Prime Minister-designate Trudeau, First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, October 20, 2015.

[http://fncaringsociety.com/sites/default/files/Letter%20to%20Justin%20Trudeau\\_20102015\\_0.pdf](http://fncaringsociety.com/sites/default/files/Letter%20to%20Justin%20Trudeau_20102015_0.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> YWCA Canada, *Report on the Status of Women and Girls in Canada*, September 2008.

<sup>15</sup> Statistics Canada, Small Area Administrative Data: Taxfile Family Series-Table 3B, 2013 as cited in Campaign 2000, *Let's Do This: Let's End Child Poverty for Good*, November 2015.

<sup>16</sup> YWCA Canada, *When There's No Place Like Home: A Snapshot of Women's Homelessness in Canada*, 2012.

<sup>17</sup> YWCA Canada, *When There's No Place Like Home: A Snapshot of Women's Homelessness in Canada*, 2012.

<sup>18</sup> Janet Mosher & Homes for Women, *Housing First, Women Second?* YWCA Canada, 2013.

<sup>19</sup> YWCA Canada, *Life Beyond Shelter: Toward Coordinated Policies for Women's Safety and Violence Prevention*, YWCA Canada, October 2009.