

YWCA Canada's Main Takeaways on the Federal Budget 2023

As we enter the third year since the COVID-19 pandemic was official declared, YWCAs across the country can attest to the complex challenges and barriers faced by women in post-pandemic recovery, which are only growing in response to the rising cost of living, lack of affordable housing and the burnout of many women, especially those working in the care and community services sector. Moreover, in communities across Canada, we are witnessing growing violence and hate against of Black, Indigenous, racialized communities, people with disabilities and 2SLGBTBI+ communities, as well as a devastating rise in gender-based violence and femicides.

In the face of these unprecedented challenges, Budget 2023 does not articulate a vision for addressing these challenges in an intersectional and systemic way. While there are some important measures in this budget to support the gender justice sector in Canada, this budget also signals that the federal government is stepping away from the bold, feminist investments we have seen in previous budgets.

Our first look at the Federal Budget 2023 is as follows:

Welcome Investments in the Women's Program & Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

YWCA Canada celebrates Budget 2023's \$160 million in investments to organizations that serve women and equity deserving groups. A strong feminist sector is essential to achieving gender justice in Canada.

We are also pleased to see the extension of the Sexual and Reproductive Health Fund. Comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and education for all Canadians is an essential component of achieving gender equity and for creating better health outcomes for youth.

A Lack on Action on the Gendered Housing Crisis

We are in a housing crisis that is deeply gendered. Women, gender diverse people and their family are experiencing the [most intense core housing needs](#) across the country. Amid this

crisis, YWCA Canada can only express our disbelief and disappointment that not a single additional dollar in Budget 2023 was dedicated toward building more affordable housing.

The only announcement around affordable housing was that the government intends to support the reallocation of funding from the National Housing Co-Investment Fund repair stream to the new construction stream. YWCA Canada and its member associations, who are ready to put shovels in the ground on new affordable housing construction, welcome this plan, given that all previously allocated funding for new construction under the Co-Investment Fund has been allocated and many non-profit housing providers were not able to secure funding for their projects. However, this speaks to the need to commit additional federal funding to affordable permanent housing, shelter and transitional housing development.

Budget 2023 offered no support for the construction of new shelters or transitional housing. In a context where domestic violence shelters are stretched beyond capacity and turn away nearly 1,000 women and their children every night, there is an urgent need for support for emergency and temporary housing—to expand and repair the existing system and to allocate funds for new builds. We were disappointed to see that the federal government did not renew the oversubscribed [Women and Children Shelter and Transitional Housing Initiative](#).

This budget represents a missed opportunity to provide the federal leadership and financial commitment that needed to end the housing crisis and realize the right to housing for women and gender diverse people. Transforming this right into a reality requires deep investments in building supportive housing and funding not only the construction of four wall and a roof, but also the wraparound services and supports that women and gender diverse people need to stay housed and thrive.

No Investments to Strengthen the Care Economy

Similarly, Budget 2023 represents a missed opportunity to give support and dignity to the workers in the care economy, a sector that is comprised of a majority woman workforce. Care workers and community service workers have been on the frontlines throughout the pandemic, supporting Canadians through some of the most difficult and traumatic circumstances of their lives. Many workers in this sector have had their mental health impacted, and the sector is experiencing issues with high turnover as well as difficulty recruiting and retaining workers.

This Budget provides no support for the [promised implementation](#) of the Canada Mental Health Transfers, nor does it provide support for the development of a national strategy for the recruitment, retention, compensation and professional development early learning and childcare workforce, who are experiencing [heightened levels of stress and burnout](#).

Ending Gender-Based Violence Requires An All-of-Government Approach

Budget 2023 falls short in failing to commit dedicated funding toward the National Action Plan to End Gender Based Violence. YWCA Canada engaged in [extensive stakeholder consultations](#) with survivors on what they need in a National Action Plan. Survivors were clear that a nationally coordinated plan is necessary to ensure that access to support is consistently available across the country.

We were disappointed that not only was there no funding for this Plan, but that, in fact, the National Action Plan to End Gender Based Violence was not mentioned at all. As repeated by YWCA Canada and its members again and again, ending gender-based violence requires spending billions, not millions, on a coordinated national strategy. We call on the federal government to ensure that there was dedicated funding towards the National Action Plan to end gender-based violence for each of the 10 years of this plan.

Gender justice is a systemic issue and cannot be achieved by working in siloes—there must be action and funding at the federal level to ensure that the National Action Plan to End Gender Based Violence be connected to the National Housing Strategy, the 2SLGBTQI+ Action Plan and the forthcoming Action Plan to Combat Hate.