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COMMUNITY ACTION.  
UNE VOIX NATIONALE.  
DES ACTIONS LOCALES.

# **Federal Budget 2024**

**Written Submission to the House of  
Commons Standing Committee on Finance**

## **LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Recommendation 1:** End anti-Indigenous racism and violence against Indigenous women, girls and Two-Spirit people.

**Recommendation 2:** End the gendered housing crisis through:

a) The renewal of the Women and Children's Shelter and Transitional Housing Initiative, with an expansion to include permanent affordable housing for women, gender-diverse people and their families.

b) Adequately funding the operations of women's domestic violence shelters

**Recommendation 3:** End gender-based violence through:

a) The minimum investment of \$600 million per year for the next four years toward the development and implementation of the federal components, actions, and responsibilities of the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence.

b) The creation of an emergency fund for one-time payments to survivors of gender-based violence to allow them to escape unsafe situations on an urgent basis.

c) Engagement in an exploratory discussion about creating an external long-term sustainability fund for women's and gender justice organizations in Canada, convened by a national, domestically focused organization or organizations.

**Recommendation 4:** Invest in carers to strengthen Canada's economy by:

a) Ensuring the forthcoming multilateral child care workforce strategy includes investments to fairly compensate and provide high quality work environments for the child care workforce; and

b) Supporting the community services sector and its workforce through the implementation of the recommendations of the Coalition of National Service Federations

## **Introduction**

For over 150 years, YWCA Canada has worked in communities across Canada to advance gender equity.

YWCA Canada represents member associations across nine provinces and two territories, whose programs and services ensure that women and gender-diverse people experiencing abuse, poverty, and homelessness can access services when and where they need them most. YWCA Canada is the largest operator of emergency shelters for women, the largest provider of employment services and counseling services to women and the second-largest provider of childcare in Canada.

With an organizational vision of empowered women and girls in a safe and equitable society, we share the Government of Canada's goal of building a Canada that works for everyone. As a frontline service provider working in 330 communities across Canada, we know that stability, prosperity and resilience are only possible when people are able to live, work and rest free from threats to their survival. Achieving this goal requires feminist investments to ensure thriving communities, a strong economy and sustainable futures for all who call Canada home.

YWCA Canada welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance's pre-budget consultations in advance of the 2024 federal budget. We would be pleased to further discuss our recommendations and can be contacted directly.

## **Recommendation 1: Truth, Reconciliation & Justice**

There can be no gender justice in Canada without recognizing and redressing the past and ongoing individual, systemic and intergenerational harms caused by colonization.

The decisive action of this government in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic was necessary to save lives. Similar urgency is required in addressing another, much older public health crisis in Canada: anti-Indigenous racism and violence against Indigenous women, girls and Two-Spirit people.

Therefore, YWCA Canada recommends that the government take urgent action to:

- Fully implement the Calls to Action in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report and the Calls for Justice in the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Inquiry Report.

## **Recommendation 2: End the Gendered Housing Crisis**

A safe place to call home is a human right. Yet, for too many women and gender-diverse people, home is either unsafe or non-existent.

One quarter of women-led, single-parent households are in [core housing need](#). Domestic violence shelters are stretched beyond capacity and [turn away nearly 1000 women and their children every night](#) due to lack of space.

Shelters and transitional housing are essential, lifesaving social infrastructure. Across the country, the landscape in which shelters and transitional houses operate is one of increasing desperation: shelters operating over capacity. Months- and years-long waitlists for affordable housing units. Overburdened frontline staff forced to make impossible choices about whose life will be most at risk if they are turned away.

Of all the programs under the National Housing Strategy (NHS), the [Women and Children Shelter and Transitional Housing Initiative](#) was arguably most impactful in addressing this need. This Initiative was a \$250 million investment supporting the construction, renovation and repair of shelter beds and transitional housing units. The Initiative was specifically designed for women's shelters and transitional housing. As such, it significantly advanced the federal government's commitment that 25% of all funds under the NHS be dedicated to projects meeting the needs of women and their children. Crucially, the program allocated funding for both capital [and](#) top-up operational costs.

For this reason, there was enthusiastic uptake of the Women and Children Shelter and Transitional Housing Initiative among women's and gender justice non-profits. Demand far exceeded available funding. Today, there remain dozens of shovel-ready projects across the country. If funded, these projects would go far in ensuring that no person in Canada is turned away when seeking refuge at a domestic violence shelter.

YWCA's, and other non-profit housing are the federal government's partners in achieving the goals of the National Housing Strategy. We are at the forefront of meeting the housing needs of women, gender diverse people and their children, particularly those fleeing situations of violence and those who face the most complex barriers to accessing housing—the very people whose housing needs must be prioritized the government's commitment to the progressive realization of the right to housing.

In addition to our shelters and transitional housing, YWCAs provide permanent, affordable homes to women and gender-diverse people leaving situations of violence, chronic homelessness, or poverty. Shelters, transitional housing and permanent affordable housing exist along a continuum: without permanent, affordable housing to move into, shelters and transitional houses are overburdened as the only available option, even if survivors are ready to move on in their healing journey.

Across the country, YWCAs are ready and able to build and operate more permanent affordable housing but are lacking the funds to do so. To keep the women and gender diverse people we serve housed, we must provide permanent housing at a deep level of affordability and with necessary wraparound services and supports. The calculation is simple: addressing the multifaceted barriers that prevent women and gender diverse people from accessing safe and affordable housing means that YWCAs are not able to repay loans for construction costs or cover operational costs through rents.

For this reason, YWCA Canada recommends:

- The renewal of the Women and Children Shelter and Transitional Housing Initiative, with an expansion to include permanent affordable housing for women, gender-diverse people and their families.
- Adequately funding the operations of women's domestic violence shelters

### **Recommendation 3: End Gender-Based Violence**

*(a) Investment in the development and implementation of the federal components, actions, and responsibilities of the National Action Plan to End Gender-based Violence*

We welcomed introduction of Canada's National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence (NAP) and the recent announcement that the first set of bilateral agreements with the provinces has been signed.

The \$539.3 million over five years set aside in Budget 2022 for provinces and territories to enhance their efforts to prevent gender-based violence is an important first step toward meaningfully addressing gender-based violence. At the same time, gender-based violence is on the rise, [with national sexual assault rates now at the](#)

[highest in Canada since 1996](#). Canada's largest city has [declared gender-based and intimate partner violence an epidemic](#).

Urgent and more significant investment is needed to meaningfully address the scale of this crisis. The NAP will only be successful if it creates systemic change and addresses the root causes of gender-based violence. We know this will require action, oversight and coordination at the federal level in parallel with the work being done by provinces and territories. This includes meaningful investment in [the federal Gender-based Violence Strategy](#) to enable a whole-of-government approach to ending gender-based violence.

*(b) The creation of a one-time emergency payment to survivors*

YWCA Canada engaged in [extensive stakeholder consultations](#) with survivors on what they need in the NAP. Survivors clearly articulated the need for upfront, material government support. YWCA Canada heard from survivors that not having enough money was one of the primary reasons they stayed in abusive situations. In response, the creation of a one-time payment providing support to survivors is among the 100 recommendations identified in the [Roadmap for the National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence](#).

To meet this urgent and unmet need, in July 2022, YWCA Canada in partnership with twelve of our member associations launched the National Emergency Survivor Support Fund (the NESS Fund). This initiative provides women, gender diverse people and their families with [immediate financial support](#) to leave unsafe homes or emergency shelters and begin their healing journeys.

Our experience delivering the NESS Fund has highlighted the need for federal government leadership in delivering this program. In the first year of the NESS Fund, we have seen requests for support far beyond what any single non-profit or charity can provide. We have also received many requests outside our twelve catchment areas. Financial support must be uniformly accessible, rapid and available to all survivors. Furthermore, the provision of this support must be designed with the increased costs and complexities of transportation and accessing services for survivors in rural, remote and Northern communities in mind.

*(c) Engagement in an exploratory discussion about creating an external long-term sustainability fund for women's and gender justice organizations*

The women's and gender justice sector are an essential partner of every level of government in delivering the outcomes of the NAP. Everyday, we provide live-saving services to survivors of gender-based violence. We engage in research, in education and prevention activities, in counselling and support services. Decades of chronic underfunding has resulted in more and more organizations reducing their services or closing their doors, all during a time of unprecedented need.

A thriving women and gender justice sector is not only good for women, girls and gender-diverse people, but for Canada as a whole. Investment in ending gender-based violence is sound economic policy. It is estimated that the combined cost of domestic and sexual violence to Canada's GDP to be [\\$8.4 billion per year](#).

Therefore, YWCA Canada recommends:

- The minimum investment of \$600 million per year for the next four years toward the development and implementation of the federal components, actions, and responsibilities of the National Action Plan to end gender-based violence.
- The creation of an emergency fund for one-time payments to survivors of gender-based violence to allow them to escape unsafe situations on an urgent basis.
- That the federal government engage in an exploratory discussion about creating an external long-term sustainability fund for women's and gender justice organizations in Canada, convened by a national, domestically focused organization or organizations.

#### **Recommendation 4: Strengthen Canada's Economy by Investing in Carers**

Investing in care work supports workers, the communities they serve, and Canada as a whole. The care economy and community services sectors are essential in supporting the overall Canadian economy. Due to the gendered nature of care work, it is underfunded and undervalued. 80% of workers in the charitable sector are women. Moreover, [paid care work tends to be done by Black, racialized and immigrant women](#).

As such, we recommend that the federal government:



- Ensure the forthcoming multilateral child care workforce strategy includes investments to fairly compensate and provide high quality work environments for the child care workforce.

We also endorse the recommendations of the Coalition of National Service Federations Joint Budget Submission to:

- Invest \$400 million into a second adapted round of the Community Services Recovery Fund to support charities to modernize and be responsive to emerging needs within communities.
- Implement Caring for Carers, a two-year \$100 million dollar suite of evidence-based mental health supports for front-line community service workers.
- Fund the creation and implementation of a workforce development strategy in collaboration with the charitable sector.

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