



Women's rights advocates march in the opening rally for the People's Social Forum. The women's caucus at the forum organized a series of events to highlight challenges faced by feminist activists in Canada and around the world. Ottawa, Canada, 2014. Photo: Oxfam

TIME TO TURN FEMINIST WORDS INTO ACTION

Feminist Scorecard 2017: Tracking government action to advance women's rights and gender equality

Led by a feminist Prime Minister who campaigned on a promise of inclusive growth, Canada is well placed to become a global leader in tackling the twin struggles of gender and economic inequality. Oxfam Canada has decided to track the Liberal government's action to deliver on its feminist agenda. Feminist Scorecard 2017 is the first in this series.

The Liberal government took several important steps during its first year in office, but its bold feminist rhetoric has not yet translated into policy and spending decisions that push the needle forward on gender equality. As it enters its second year in office, it is time for the government to turn feminist words into action.



OXFAM

INTRODUCTION

Today just 8 men have the same wealth as the poorest half of humanity.¹ In Canada, 2 billionaires own as much wealth as the poorest 30% of Canadians.² This is a result of rising economic inequality around the world over the last three decades. The failure of governments to tackle this growing crisis is undermining economic progress and, crucially, the fight against poverty. Since the turn of the century, the poorest half of the world's population has received just 1% of the total increase in global wealth while the top 1% has pocketed 50%.³ Growing inequality is bad for us all, yet the consequences for the world's poorest people, and in particular women, are particularly severe.

All over the world, women earn less than men. Sexism affects the jobs women have access to, the money they earn, and the way society values their work. Women experience barriers when attempting to exercise their right to health and education, and often experience backlash when they raise their voices, organize, and seek to access the highest realms of power and decision making. Too often governments make policy and spending decisions without duly considering what the outcomes will mean for women and how they will impact the gender gap in resources and opportunities.

And yet the global inequality crisis is not inevitable. Governments can take action to reverse the trend to create an economy that works for everyone, not just the wealthy elite, and where women and men are treated equally. Inspired by its commitment to transforming the lives of women and girls, Oxfam Canada has decided to track the Liberal government's actions to deliver on its feminist agenda. We will publish an annual Feminist Scorecard to assess the steps this government has taken to make meaningful progress towards achieving women's rights and gender equality, both at home and abroad. Oxfam Canada's Feminist Scorecard 2017 is the first in this series.

SCORECARD 2017

Prime Minister Trudeau sent a powerful signal in 2015 when he appointed the first gender-balanced cabinet in Canadian history and named women to key ministerial portfolios, including Foreign Affairs, Justice and Labour. The decisions to restore funding for women's rights advocacy and to raise the bar on gender-based analysis across the government were also critically important, although their actual impact can only be measured over time. In the first year of its mandate the Liberal government made important policy and spending decisions in several other areas, launching a long-awaited national inquiry on violence against Indigenous women and girls, and announcing major new investments in childcare and women's shelters.

On the whole, however, the Liberal government's bold feminist rhetoric has not yet translated into tangible policy and spending decisions that can really push the needle forward on gender equality. Status of Women remains sorely underfunded and Canada's international aid budget is at a near record-low, even as the government seeks to demonstrate global leadership on women's rights. The area where the government has made the least progress is towards its promise of inclusive growth, having taken no tangible steps to close the gender wage gap or to ensure living wages for the working poor, the majority of whom are women.

In an era of political backlash when hard-won rights are being clawed back, there is no better time for Canada to demonstrate its commitment to advancing women's rights and gender equality. As the Liberal government embarks on the second year of its mandate, it is time to turn feminist words into action.

2017 FEMINIST SCORECARD

WHAT ACTION HAS THIS GOVERNMENT TAKEN TO ADVANCE WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY?

CONFLICT AND CRISIS



In times of crisis women and girls face increased violence and their specific needs are often ignored. The government has demonstrated real leadership in welcoming over 40,000 Syrian refugees to Canada, but hasn't invested in supporting women's efforts to build lasting peace and stability.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

One in 3 women experience violence in their lifetime. The government launched a long-awaited national inquiry on violence against Indigenous women and girls and made significant investments in shelters for victims of violence. What is now needed is a comprehensive national action plan to end violence against women.



REPRESENTATION AND LEADERSHIP



Policies are best informed by the people they affect, yet women are underrepresented in politics and decision making around the world. The government has taken meaningful steps to support women's leadership, including by appointing Canada's first gender-balanced cabinet and deciding to restore funding for women's rights advocacy.

CARE WORK

Women spend long hours cooking, cleaning, and caring for children – but this work is unpaid and undervalued. The government has taken a first step to make child care affordable, but needs to act more quickly to end the chronic underfunding of essential services for First Nations.



TAX



Progressive tax rules can help tackle economic inequality, close the gender gap and raise more revenue for public services. The government is cracking down on tax evasion and has reversed some of the most regressive tax policies of the previous government, but corporate tax rates remain at an all-time low.

GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT

Women around the world disproportionately experience poverty and discrimination, and political backlash threatens hard-won gains. Canada is well positioned to stand up for women's rights globally, but it can't make a real difference with a near record-low aid budget.



CLIMATE CHANGE



Women are the first and worst hit by the impacts of climate change. The government ratified the historic Paris Agreement and increased funds to help developing countries adapt, but hasn't moved to hold Canadian mining, oil and gas companies accountable when operating overseas.

JOBS & PAY EQUITY

Women make up the majority of the world's working poor. Sexism affects the jobs women have access to and the money they earn. After campaigning on a promise of inclusive growth, the government has disappointingly taken very few steps to ensure women's work is fairly paid and equally valued.



METHODOLOGY

There is not one single change that will transform the lives of women living in poverty and struggling to realize their rights. The barriers women face and the opportunities they lack stem from complex and long-entrenched systems of inequality and discrimination. A holistic approach that addresses a myriad of interconnected factors is therefore required to make real progress towards gender equality.

Oxfam Canada's Feminist Scorecard presents an overview of the Liberal government's policy and spending decisions in 8 thematic areas:

1. Investing in women's leadership and gender-based analysis
2. Investing in the care economy
3. Building a progressive tax system
4. Ending violence against women and girls
5. Global leadership on women's rights
6. Responding to humanitarian crises and building lasting peace
7. Tackling climate change and regulating the extractives sector
8. Addressing the unequal economics of women's work

Each of the thematic categories includes an analysis of 3 key indicators according to which progress is assessed. Together these categories and indicators present an overall picture of government action that can have an impact on achieving gender equality and realizing the rights of women living in poverty – in Canada and worldwide.

The 2017 Feminist Scorecard focuses on decisions made by the Liberal government during its first year in office. The Scorecard does not offer a comprehensive analysis of every policy decision this government has made that has an impact on women and gender equality, nor is it a reflection of the 'state of women's rights' in Canada or globally. Rather, it presents an assessment of the actions that have, or have not, been taken by the government in the 8 thematic areas listed above. It is, in the simplest of terms, a snapshot of the volume and quality of action taken by Canada's Liberal government during a specific time period (November 2015 to February 2017) to make progress on women's rights and gender equality.

Scores are reflected on a stoplight range (red, yellow and green) where the Liberal government has either made very little, some, or significant progress in moving the needle forward on gender equality and women's rights. In recognition of the fact that meaningful change requires time and sustained investments, key recommendations for action are outlined at the end of each thematic section.

Oxfam Canada's understanding of feminist approaches to policy making is outlined in several publications, including [An Economy for the 99%](#), [Shortchanged: How to make work paid, equal and valued for women](#) and [Canada's International Assistance Review: The opportunity for Canada to scale up its global leadership on women's rights and gender equality](#).

1 INVESTING IN WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP AND GENDER-BASED ANALYSIS



Many social and cultural barriers stand in the way of women's representation and leadership – whether in Canada, Colombia or Cameroon. Less than 23 percent of all national parliamentarians are women, and only ten women are currently serving as Head of State.⁴ Women make up approximately 17 percent of government ministers but remain concentrated in traditionally gendered sectors such as education and the family.⁵ While not all women in leadership positions will make choices that support women's rights, the current situation means that women's priorities are far less likely to be acted on.⁶ The capture of political decision making by elites, combined with the continued under-representation of women in decision making, results in policies and public spending decisions that are gender-blind or, worse, contribute to reinforcing women's economic inequality and social marginalization.

Women activists and the movements they have built have played a fundamental role in improving the status of women around the world. Most of the major international advancements in favour of women's rights that have occurred over the past decades – such as the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action – could not have been achieved without women collectively raising their voices and turning their struggles into a political force for change.⁷ Despite their tireless work to challenge discriminatory social norms and raise consciousness, women's organizations receive very little support from governments and donors.⁸

In Canada, major federal funding cuts over the past decade severely undermined the capacity of women's organizations to mobilize, offer frontline services to women, and get at the root causes of discrimination and inequality. These cuts had particularly dire consequences for women who are poor and marginalized, and for Aboriginal women who experience discrimination on multiple grounds.

Walking the talk:

The Liberal government has taken several symbolic and substantive measures to support women's representation and collective action, and has committed to ensuring that federal policies and spending are informed by meaningful gender-based analysis.



GOOD PROGRESS

In times of crisis women and girls face increased violence and their specific needs are often ignored. The government has demonstrated real leadership in welcoming over 40,000 Syrian refugees to Canada, but hasn't invested in supporting women's efforts to build lasting peace and stability.

"Because it's 2015."

Prime Minister Trudeau,
November 2015

- **Political representation:** Prime Minister Trudeau fulfilled his campaign promise by appointing the first gender-balanced cabinet in Canadian history, and maintaining parity after the January 2017 Cabinet shuffle. Women were appointed to key portfolios such as Foreign Affairs, Justice and Labour, and all Cabinet members, including the Minister of Status of Women, were given full ministerial status. These appointments signalled a very strong commitment to gender equality and women's leadership, and attracted well-deserved praise in Canada and internationally.
- **Gender-based analysis:** In the fall of 2015, the Auditor General released a report indicating that gender-based analysis (GBA) requirements were mostly unmet by government departments. Prime Minister Trudeau mandated the Minister of Status of Women to ensure that GBA is incorporated into all departmental plans and performance reporting, and to raise the quality of GBA applied to Cabinet proposals from all government departments. A GBA Action Plan 2016-2020 was released highlighting specific activities for improvement, and the government announced that a gender-based analysis will be included in Budget 2017. The actual impact of these measures on policy making and federal spending choices is yet to be seen.
- **Status of Women Canada:** The government's decision to restore funding for organizations that conduct advocacy work – which had been banned under the previous government – was widely welcomed by women's organizations across the country. While the announcement of 5 years of modest increases for Status of Women in Budget 2016 was a positive step towards reversing decades of cuts, the department's budget (which equates to 0.02% of total Canadian federal program spending) is not nearly enough to equip it with the high-level leadership and resources required to conduct GBA in a systematic way across the government and provide much-needed funding to women's organizations.

Looking forward, the government should:

- ✓ Invest \$100 million per year to support Status of Women Canada. This would help it fulfil its important mandate of ensuring that federal policies benefit women and men more equally. It would also allow the department to support women's rights organizations across the country, whose capacity has been undermined by a decade of funding cuts.
- ✓ Implement the CEDAW Committee's 2016 recommendation for Canada to develop a comprehensive national gender equality strategy, policy and action plan that addresses the structural factors causing inequality.
- ✓ Ensure implementation of the GBA Action Plan 2016-2020 and table mandatory GBA legislation in Parliament, in line with the recommendations of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

2 INVESTING IN THE CARE ECONOMY

In rich and poor countries alike, the responsibility for unpaid care work falls disproportionately to women. Conservative estimates put the monetary value of unpaid care work at US\$10 trillion a year, a sizable chunk of the world's roughly US\$75 trillion GDP.⁹ Unpaid care work limits the hours women can dedicate to income-generating activities and leave women with less time to attend school and gain skills that could help them secure jobs. In Canada, women undertake 3.9 hours of unpaid care work every day relative to 2.4 hours undertaken by men.¹⁰

Tax cuts and austerity policies over the past decade have resulted in significant cuts to public services around the world, hurting communities and contributing to populist upheavals. This has had particularly negative implications for women. The public sector generally provides a source of decent jobs for women in both developed and developing countries. Women also tend to rely more heavily on public services and are more likely to have to fill the gap when services are withdrawn – for example caring for young children and elderly relatives. Public investments in the care economy can stimulate employment, contribute to more inclusive growth and help level the playing field for women by narrowing the gender pay gap, therefore improving women's access to decent jobs.¹¹

Walking the talk:

By delivering on its election platform of investing in child and elder care, the Liberal government can provide much needed relief from unpaid care work for Canadian women. First steps have been promising, but increased investments are required, in particular in social infrastructure and essential services for First Nations.

- **Child care:** The government has taken initial steps toward delivering on its promise to ensure affordable, accessible, inclusive and high quality early learning and child care for all Canadians. It committed \$500 million in Budget 2016 to establish a National Early Learning and Child Care Framework in 2017-18, and consultations on the framework are underway. This is part of a broader family support package that includes the new Canada Child Benefit, along with more flexible maternity and parental leave benefits. Despite these investments, Canada continues to



**SOME
PROGRESS**

Women spend long hours cooking, cleaning, and caring for children – but this work is unpaid and undervalued. The government has taken a first step to make child care affordable, but needs to act more quickly to end the chronic underfunding of essential services for First Nations.

"All children in Canada should be able to live the first years of their lives in a healthy environment with a decent standard of living and stimulating conditions."

Minister Duclos,
November 2016

spend roughly 0.25% of GDP on childcare, less than half the OECD average¹² and a quarter of the 1% UN benchmark. The government's own Advisory Council on Economic Growth recently cited the lack of adequate access to child care as a factor that is holding back growth.¹³

- **Services for First Nations:** The Liberal government has committed to renewing Canada's nation-to-nation relationship with Indigenous Peoples and made a historic investment of \$8.3 billion over 5 years in public services such as education, housing, clean water, child and family services, and health. However, much more is needed to address the discriminatory, chronic underfunding of essential services in First Nations communities. Finance Canada has maintained a 2% cap on increases to basic services for First Nations, while increases for the rest of Canadians grow at a rate of 6% a year.¹⁴ In January 2016, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal found that the federal government discriminates against First Nations children on reserves by failing to provide them with the same level of child welfare services and called on the government to cease discriminatory practices. While the federal government has not appealed the decision, it has failed to act quickly and effectively to fully implement the remedies ordered by the Tribunal.
- **Services for seniors:** The Liberal government cancelled plans by the previous Conservative government to increase the age of eligibility for Old Age Security and the Guaranteed Income Supplement benefits, and added a top-up benefit for the most vulnerable single seniors, the majority of whom are women. A shortage of home support and community services for seniors puts financial strains and an added burden on families, further limiting women's paid employment opportunities. The Liberals pledged \$3 billion during the elections to improve access to home care. However, in December 2016 negotiations with the provinces over a long-term health care funding agreement, which would have included funding for home support, failed.

Looking forward, the government should:

- ✓ Sustain and increase federal funding so that quality child care is accessible to all by 2020. This would require a \$600 million investment in 2017, \$1.6 billion in 2018, and \$2.6 billion in 2019. This should be complemented by initiatives to ensure living wages and pay equity for child care workers, and to provide equitable family leave supports and flexible work arrangements.
- ✓ Implement the recommendations of Canada's Auditor General, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal and various United Nations human rights bodies by providing equitable, needs-based funding to First Nations immediately. Lift the 2% cap on increases to basic services for First Nations.

- ✓ Increase access to home support and community care services for seniors and fund initiatives to increase the eldercare workforce.

3 BUILDING A PROGRESSIVE TAX SYSTEM

Earlier this year, Oxfam revealed that 8 men own the same amount of wealth as the bottom half of humanity – 3.6 billion people.¹⁵ Extreme inequality undermines economic growth and the fight against poverty, and is destabilizing societies across the globe. One of the key drivers of the inequality crisis is tax competition and the global race to the bottom on corporate tax rates.¹⁶ Another driver is tax havens, the most extreme form of tax dodging, which costs governments billions of dollars every year, undermining their ability to provide public services to those who most need them, often women. Developing countries are hardest hit by both of these trends

Tax rules have different impacts on women and men. Fiscal policy therefore has an important role to play in tackling gender inequality. A simple redistribution of income and wealth via higher taxes on the very wealthy and increased social spending for the poor is not enough to move the dial on gender equality. Tax policies designed without attention to their different gendered impacts can have a negative effect on economic growth overall and on women's economic security in particular.

Economic inequality in Canada continues to grow. Today, two billionaires own more wealth than the bottom 30% of Canadians combined.¹⁷ Canada's tax system has become significantly less progressive in the past two decades, with cuts to the corporate tax rate, regressive income tax policies and tax evasion on an ever-widening scale. The result has been a measurable withdrawal of public services and support programs upon which many people rely, especially women. It is clearly time for a better redistribution model to ensure that economic growth leads to shared prosperity.



SOME PROGRESS

Progressive tax rules can help tackle economic inequality, close the gender gap and raise more revenue for public services. The government is cracking down on tax evasion and has reversed some of the most regressive tax policies of the previous government, but corporate tax rates remain at an all-time low.

Walking the talk:

The Liberal government has made inclusive growth one of its key priorities. It has taken steps to reverse some of the most regressive fiscal policies of the previous government and committed to including gender-based analysis in budgeting, but much more action is needed to ensure that the benefits of economic growth are more equally distributed.

- **A more progressive tax system:** The Liberal government has taken steps to raise revenue more equitably by reversing some of the most regressive tax policies of the previous Conservative government, including family income splitting, and introducing a higher new top income tax rate. However, corporate tax rates remain at an all-time low, having been almost halved over the past 15 years, and the dividend tax credit system further benefits the rich. Much more is needed to ensure the tax system can help reverse the trend of growing economic inequality and extreme wealth concentration, and to raise more revenue for public services.
- **Tax evasion:** Budget 2016 included an investment of over \$400 million over 4 years for the Canada Revenue Agency to enhance its capacity to crack down on tax evasion and combat tax avoidance, and another \$350 million over five years to improve tax collection. The Liberal government is also acting on certain recommendations of the Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS) Action Plan and is moving towards strengthening cooperation with other countries on tax reporting. While these actions are a step in the right direction, a second generation of global tax reforms is needed to bring all countries on equal footing and ensure developing countries benefit from these measures.
- **Gender budgeting:** Minister Morneau's Fall Economic Statement committed the government to publishing a gender-based analysis of Budget 2017 – a first for Canada. The first round of consultations with civil society on the subject held by Status of Women and Finance was a welcome step in the right direction. More attention is needed to incorporating women's perspectives and needs in pre-budget consultations. Only a hand-full of women's organizations were invited to testify in front of the House of Commons' Finance Committee during pre-budget consultations, and the committee itself only mentioned the word 'women' twice in the 81 recommendations it put forward to the government.

"To ensure that the government continues to deliver real and meaningful change for all Canadians, it will submit Budget 2017, and all future budgets, to more rigorous analysis by completing and publishing a gender-based analysis of budgetary measures."

Minister Morneau,
2016 Fall Economic
Statement

Looking forward, the government should:

- ✓ Raise more revenue to increase public spending. This can be done by reforming the corporate income tax system and gradually increasing the

corporate income tax rate from 15% to 21%. Canada should also close regressive tax loopholes. A review of the tax system is needed to find a better balance between personal income tax, corporate income tax and value-added/sales tax.

- ✓ Reduce the rate for the lowest tax bracket. This would have a particularly positive impact on women who make up 60% of all minimum wage earners in Canada.
- ✓ Support a second generation of global tax reforms which includes all countries on an equal footing and tackles the key problems not adequately addressed by the BEPS Action Plan. Canada should also support developing countries to reform their tax systems in a way that shifts the tax burden from labour and consumption to capital and wealth.
- ✓ Set up an advisory group of gender budgeting experts to accelerate the government's capacity to deliver on solid gender analysis of the budget and advise on gender targets to meet in Budget 2018.

4 ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

Every minute of the day, violence is devastating the lives of millions of women and girls around the world. It is a global crisis that affects one in three women in their lifetime. Violence against women and girls knows no boundaries of geography or culture, but those living in poverty face higher levels of abuse. It is rooted in the inequality between men and women that women and girls face throughout their lives.¹⁸

Although 119 countries have passed laws on domestic violence, sexual harassment and/or marital rape, this does not mean they are always compliant with international standards or implemented.¹⁹ Women reporting violence often face threats, re-victimization and stigmatization. Violence impacts women in all areas of their lives. It structures the choices women make, their level of autonomy, their vulnerability to exploitation, and ultimately their life chances. Gender-based violence has a significant impact on women's economic security and women's economic insecurity can make them more vulnerable to violence.

Rates of domestic and sexual violence remain persistently high in Canada. Nearly a quarter of a million Canadian women report experiencing domestic



**SOME
PROGRESS**

One in 3 women experience violence in their lifetime. The government launched a long-awaited national inquiry on violence against Indigenous women and girls and made significant investments in shelters for victims of violence. What is now needed is a comprehensive national action plan to end violence against women.

violence every year. Aboriginal women are three times more likely to be violently victimized than non-Indigenous women.²⁰ On any given night in Canada, 3,491 women and their 2,724 children sleep in shelters to escape abuse.²¹ Violence against women also comes at a significant cost to the economy. Justice Canada estimates the economic impact of violence against women to be \$12.2 billion annually.²²

Walking the talk:

The Liberal government has taken some steps to address violence against women, but for many women the support is far too little after many years of underfunding. Long-awaited policy action needs to happen at a faster pace. A feminist government must do all it can to end violence against women and girls – it is essential to realizing gender equality.

- **Inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls:** The Liberal government announced its intention to launch a national inquiry on violence against Indigenous women and girls in December 2015. It allocated \$53.86 million over two years, ran consultations on the terms of the inquiry, appointed the commissioners, and announced an additional \$16 million over 4 years to support victims throughout the process. The commission is tasked with probing the systemic causes behind the violence, including social, economic and historical factors, and to examine institutional policies and practices. However, the process has been marred with concerns over transparency and the slow pace. Critics also point out that the terms of reference do not include the issue of policing, and question the quality of investigations to probe police conduct in specific files.
- **National action plan on violence against women:** Much to the disappointment of women's organizations across the country, the Liberal government has not committed to developing a national action plan on violence against women. Instead, the Minister of Status of Women Canada has been tasked with implementing a comprehensive federal strategy and action plan on gender-based violence. This strategy will only apply to federal institutions and therefore lacks the depth and scope of a national action plan, which would have responded to the need for women to have access to comparable levels of services and protection across the country. In the summer of 2016, the minister consulted with experts, advocates and survivors across Canada to develop the strategy and publish a summary of findings. An Advisory Council on the Federal Strategy Against Gender-based Violence was established, and the government has committed to launching the strategy itself in 2017.
- **Shelters for women seeking safety from violence and abuse:** Budget 2016 announced a significant investment in shelters for victims of

“Violence against women is unacceptable in our society and our government is committed to making sure that women facing violence have a safe place to turn.”

Minister Hajdu,
February 2016

violence: \$89.9 million over two years. There are only 39 federally funded shelters serving on-reserve First Nations communities, a number far too low to serve the needs of over 600 First Nation communities.²³ Budget 2016 promised \$10.4 million for the renovation and construction of an unspecified number of new shelters in First Nation communities, and \$33.6 million over five years, as well as \$8.3 million for ongoing support for these shelters.

Looking forward, the government should:

- ✓ Develop and implement a national action plan on violence against women, in partnership with the provinces, that addresses the CEDAW Committee's 2016 recommendation for Canada.
- ✓ Sustain investments in shelters, which suffered funding cuts under the previous government, and work with the provinces to increase investments at the provincial level.
- ✓ Support victims of violence by introducing legislation to give the right to time away from work without fear of losing their job, and lower the threshold for EI qualification for women, tying it to need rather than lifetime earnings.

5 GLOBAL LEADERSHIP ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Hundreds of millions of people have been lifted out of poverty in recent decades, yet one in nine people still go to bed hungry.²⁴ We live in an increasingly unequal world. Left unchecked, growing inequality threatens to pull our societies apart and undermines the fight to end poverty. In this context, providing aid to developing countries is not just an act of charity, but a matter of justice and an investment in a more sustainable future for us all. Time and again, donor countries such as Canada have reaffirmed their collective responsibility for sustainable development and their commitment to reaching the UN aid target of 0.7 % of Gross National Income. However, Canada's support for international assistance has been steadily declining for years and is now at a near all-time low.

Gender inequality, and in particular the systematic discrimination against women and girls, is one of the most widespread and pernicious drivers of poverty and inequality worldwide. Women around the world continue to earn less than men, have less access to resources and education, are



Women around the world disproportionately experience poverty and discrimination, and political backlash threatens hard-won gains. Canada is well positioned to stand up for women's rights globally, but it can't make a real difference with a near record-low aid budget.

underrepresented in decision making, and disproportionately experience poverty. Women who respond to disasters, stand up for human rights and run for office often face threats and violence – yet we know that real progress is achieved when women are empowered and can realize their rights. Canada was historically a leader in the field of gender equality, but in recent years it has devoted ever less of its aid budget to promoting women's rights. Less than 2% of Canadian aid has been allocated to programs that are specifically designed to advance gender equality and women's empowerment over the past five years and a meagre 0.03 % has gone to women's rights organizations working on the frontlines.²⁵

Walking the talk:

Led by a feminist Prime Minister, and with a government committed to restoring Canada's image in the world, Canada has the opportunity to pioneer a feminist approach to international assistance that supports women's leadership, secures rights for women living in poverty and challenges unjust power systems that hold women back. The timing could not be better. Women's rights work is sorely underfunded²⁶ and political backlash threatens hard-won gains the world over. Minister Bibeau has sent strong signals of wanting to move in this direction; bold policy and funding decisions are now required to turn this vision into action.

"Ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, and empowering women and girls is central to achieving gender equality."

Minister Bibeau,
March 2016

- **International aid budget:** Despite a very modest increase in Budget 2016, Canada remains a below-average donor, allocating only 0.28 % of Gross National Income towards tackling global poverty – far less than countries such as the UK, Germany or France.²⁷ The government has yet to announce a plan to achieve the 0.7 % target, a goal reaffirmed last December by the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. If the government remains on its present course, it will have the lowest commitment to international assistance of any Canadian government in the last half-century.²⁸
- **Support for global women's rights:** The Liberal government undertook a major consultation process in 2016 to redefine Canada's international assistance agenda, stating that women and girls would be at the centre of Canada's new approach and that a feminist lens would be applied to all of Canada's international assistance. The government's eagerness to consult and engage with civil society was very well-received by the international development sector, and statements from Minister Bibeau have been encouraging. However, Global Affairs Canada has yet to announce its new international assistance policy and no major new financial commitments have yet been made.
- **Sexual and reproductive health and rights:** Prime Minister Trudeau mandated Minister Bibeau to close existing gaps in Canada's development programs in relation to women's sexual and reproductive

health and rights (SRHR). In response to the US administration's reinstatement of the Global Gag Rule, Minister Bibeau reaffirmed Canada's support for women's right to choose and pledged a \$20 million contribution to the 'She Decides' global initiative that aims to increase financial and political support for sexual health and family planning worldwide. The government's vocal support for SRHR on the global stage is essential in these times of backlash against women's rights, and additional, more ambitious funding announcements have been promised.

Looking forward, the government should:

- ✓ Commit to year-on-year increases to the international assistance envelope over the next three years and develop a 10-year plan to achieve the 0.7% target. If Canada is really "back", it can't remain at the back of the pack when it comes to aid spending.
- ✓ Contribute to closing the funding gap for women's rights globally by ensuring that 20% of all Canadian aid goes to advancing women's rights and gender equality, and by establishing an annual funding envelope to support grassroots women's organizations in developing countries, starting with a \$100 million allocation this year.
- ✓ Scale up funding for comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services for women and youth in developing countries, including for advocacy programs and safe abortion.
- ✓ Truly implement a feminist approach to Canada's international assistance by increasing support for civil society organizations, movement building, policy and advocacy work, and women's leadership, and by ensuring that Global Affairs Canada is "fit for purpose" to deliver on its gender equality commitments.

6 RESPONDING TO HUMANITARIAN CRISES AND BUILDING LASTING PEACE

While the number of conflicts worldwide has fallen over the past 5 years, the death tolls have tripled and the number of refugees and displaced people continues to rise. According to World Bank estimates of September 2016, two billion people live in countries where development outcomes are affected by fragility, conflict, and violence.²⁹ Many more are vulnerable to the effects of climate change. The different impact of crises, conflict and disasters on women, girls, men and boys, and their differing needs, are still too often misunderstood and neglected by states and humanitarian organizations, which tends to compound longstanding gender inequality.

The UN Security Council Resolution 1325, and subsequent resolutions collectively referred to as the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, provide a roadmap for government actions to empower women in efforts to prevent, end and recover from armed conflict and to build sustainable peace. However, action on these commitments has been slow and inconsistent over the past 15 years. Women continue to be under-represented in peace negotiations and peacebuilding processes, and yet these moments represent an opportunity to make a leap forward when it comes to transforming gender relations.

Walking the talk:

The Liberal government has jumped on several opportunities to announce to the world that “Canada is back”. Most impactful has been Canada’s outspoken commitment to refugees and the resettlement of 40,000 Syrian refugees, but the government has lagged behind on the Women, Peace and Security agenda. Women working on the frontline of humanitarian crises and conflicts should not have to wait another year to receive Canada’s support.

- **Standing with refugees:** The Liberal government showed leadership in November 2015 when it committed to resettling 25,000 refugees from Syria. Since then over 40,000 Syrian refugees have arrived in Canada, including close to 15,000 privately sponsored refugees.³⁰ Canada particularly prioritized those facing the greatest risks – women and children – and committed to bringing hundreds of Yazidi refugees to



**SOME
PROGRESS**

In times of crisis women and girls face increased violence and their specific needs are often ignored. The government has demonstrated real leadership in welcoming over 40,000 Syrian refugees to Canada, but hasn’t invested in supporting women’s efforts to build lasting peace and stability.

“Women, peace and security are part of Canada’s foreign policy priorities. The active participation and leadership by women in all aspects of society is critical both at home and abroad.”

Minister Freeland,
February 2017

Canada who have endured horrific abuse by ISIS. Budget 2016 also included \$25 million to support faster processing times for family reunification.

- **Humanitarian assistance:** Canada was the 8th largest contributor to global humanitarian assistance in 2015 contributing close to \$850 million.³¹ But preliminary numbers for 2016 show humanitarian spending reduced to \$684 million, which is less than the spending in the two previous years. Without a clear humanitarian strategy and substantial increases to the aid budget, Canada's humanitarian assistance will become less predictable, at the expense of long-term investments in building resilience. Also, Canada's funding mechanisms to respond to slow-onset crises (like the ever-worsening food crisis in South Sudan) and the global displacement crisis are far too slow.
- **Women, Peace and Security:** The Liberal government announced its comeback to peacekeeping in August 2016, committing 600 troops and \$450 million over three years to its new Peace and Stabilization Operations Program, and several new investments for peacebuilding efforts in Colombia and Syria/Iraq.³² These investments included specific programming for women and girls, but none of the funds were dispersed directly to women's rights organizations. As is envisioned in the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, women cannot simply be seen as beneficiaries or victims. They are crucial agents of change and thus require resources to support their efforts. It has been a year since Canada's first National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security expired and a new plan has not been announced, which has set back Canada's leadership.

Looking forward, the government should:

- ✓ Increase its resettlement numbers to cover the shortfall created by developments in the US and continue to prioritize groups or individuals most vulnerable to harm such as women, children and members of the LGBTI community. This must be complemented with efforts to speed up family reunification and repeal the Safe Third Country Agreement with the US.
- ✓ Develop and implement a humanitarian policy that prioritizes a 'gender in emergencies' approach, upholds the Liberal government's 2016 commitment to the Grand Bargain³³, includes funding mechanisms to respond to slow onset and displacement-related crises, and delivers on the imperative of more localized humanitarian aid.³⁴
- ✓ Launch a new well-designed National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security that includes clear objectives, goals, targets and indicators, and that is adequately resourced. The government should appoint a high-level champion to see the plan to success, and ensure that funding

for women's rights organizations is included in Canada's peacebuilding efforts.

7 TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE AND REGULATING THE EXTRACTIVES SECTOR

Climate change is a looming disaster that is already causing harm and suffering to some of the poorest communities on the planet. The UN has warned that up to 122 million more people globally could be living in extreme poverty by 2030 as a result³⁵. Women tend to be hit first and hardest by the impacts of climate change. Because many poor women in developing countries are highly dependent on local natural resources, climate change negatively impacts their livelihoods and food security, but also the time they must spend collecting water and firewood. Women on the frontlines have been largely left out of global climate change negotiations, and yet they are adapting, often against extraordinary odds

The majority of the world's mining, oil and gas companies are Canadian. Human rights abuses at Canadian extractives industry sites around the world are widespread and well documented. Several Canadian extractive companies are accused of unjust extraction of wealth from the global South, environmental destruction, forced displacement, sexual violence by security personnel, and the criminalization of dissent.³⁶ Victims of such abuse are often women in local communities who have no mechanisms for seeking justice or redress. The extractives industry remains one of Canada's biggest – and too often negative – global footprints.



**SOME
PROGRESS**

Women are the first and worst hit by the impacts of climate change. The government ratified the historic Paris Agreement and increased funds to help developing countries adapt, but hasn't moved to hold Canadian mining, oil and gas companies accountable when operating overseas.

Walking the talk:

The Liberal government has made combating climate change a cornerstone of its mandate, formally adding climate change to the Minister of the Environment's portfolio and entrusting Minister McKenna with working with the provinces to develop a plan to combat climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The recent approval of two major pipelines, however, does call into question the government's claim to be a 'climate leader'. The government has been less forthcoming when it comes to regulating and improving transparency in the Canadian extractives industry, although positive and much anticipated legislative announcements have been promised.

- **Global climate commitments:** Prime Minister Trudeau and Minister McKenna attended the annual Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in Paris (COP21) in the very first months of the Liberal government's mandate, signalling a decisive commitment to take action on climate change. The Canadian delegation helped reach a historic and legally binding agreement to limit global temperature increases to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. The government then signed and ratified the Paris Agreement, helping bring into force the most comprehensive international climate agreement to date.
- **Climate financing for developing countries:** In 2015 the government announced \$2.65 billion over 5 years for climate change adaptation and mitigation in developing countries. These funds are much needed and welcome, but the government's focus is skewed too heavily towards mitigation, while adaptation is the immediate priority for developing countries, and too little is specifically allocated to the world's Least Developed Countries.
- **Accountability for Canadian extractive industry:** There is no mention of regulating Canadian companies in any of the Ministerial mandate letters, and the Liberal government has yet to take meaningful action on this front. Civil society has been urging the government to address the glaring international accountability gap in the extractives industries, and it appears likely that the government will soon announce legislation to create an ombudsperson to handle the grievances of people affected by Canadian oil, gas and mining companies operating abroad, as per the commitment made by the Liberal Party in 2015.

"DYK: The threat of #climatechange is not gender neutral? Women are more vulnerable to the effects of climate change than men."

Minister McKenna,
May 2016

Looking forward, the government should:

- ✓ Ensure that its contributions to global climate financing are new and additional to Canada's official development assistance envelope, and achieve a 50:50 balance between funding going to adaptation and mitigation initiatives. More funds should also be made available to the Least Developed Countries; the government could do so by providing funding for the Adaptation Fund and increasing funding for the Least Developed Countries Fund.
- ✓ Help ensure that global climate finance is accessible to those most vulnerable to climate change, and in particular women. The government should push for greater representation of women on the boards of all multilateral mechanisms for climate financing, including the board of the Green Climate Fund on which Canada sits and on which there are currently only 3 women out of 24 members.
- ✓ Move swiftly to create an Ombudsperson's Office that is effective and impartial. The ombudsperson should be empowered to investigate, make public recommendations to stop abuses, provide remedy to victims and prevent future harm. Canadian courts should be accessible for people whose rights have been violated by Canadian companies, especially marginalized groups such as Indigenous Peoples and women who tend to face greater barriers in accessing justice.

8 ADDRESSING THE UNEQUAL ECONOMICS OF WOMEN'S WORK

Gender inequality affects the jobs women have access to, the money they earn and the way society values their work. Despite higher levels of education and increased access to the workforce, women's efforts to build a better life are hampered by the unequal distribution of unpaid work, the gender barriers to many fields of work, the undervaluing of jobs held predominantly by women, and the often unspoken social norms that offer men higher wages and rates of promotion from the moment they enter the workforce. Around the world women make up the vast majority of the lowest-paid workers, many in jobs that offer minimal security and physical safety.

Our current economic model relies on women's cheap labour to maximize shareholders' profits, which explains why economic growth does not necessarily reduce inequality or even provide hope of escaping poverty. At current levels of progress, the World Economic Forum estimates it will take 115 years to close the global wage gap between men and women.³⁷ In Canada, women earn on average 72 cents to every dollar men earn and represent 60% of minimum wage earners.³⁸ Addressing the unequal economics of women's work is essential to closing the gap in earnings and opportunities between women and men.

Walking the talk:

The Liberal Party campaigned on a promise of inclusive growth, but so far this government has taken very few meaningful steps to build an economy in which women's work is decently paid and equally valued. There is no reason to delay. The government should act now to end the gender pay gap and poverty wages, and hold Canadian corporations to the highest labour standards when operating abroad.

- **Living wages and employment insurance:** Women are often forced into low paid and insecure jobs because they have less of a safety net – in part because of difficulties accessing employment insurance (EI) and the lower EI benefits they do receive. The Liberal government lowered the threshold of hours to be eligible for EI payments, decreased wait times and eliminated requirements to accept lower pay – positive steps to address gender inequality and women's poverty. However, nowhere in



**NEEDS
WORK**

In times of crisis women and girls face increased violence and their specific needs are often ignored. The government has demonstrated real leadership in welcoming over 40,000 Syrian refugees to Canada, but hasn't invested in supporting women's efforts to build lasting peace and stability.

"During our time in government, I expect to make meaningful progress on reducing the wage gap between men and women"

Prime Minister Trudeau in the mandate letter to Minister Monsef, January 2017

Canada do minimum wages constitute living wages. Prime Minister Trudeau sent a disappointing signal to workers who struggle to make ends meet when he announced that raising minimum wages was not on the government's agenda.

- **Pay equity:** The Minister of Labour was mandated to develop a pro-active pay equity regime by 2018. This is an important commitment, but there is no reason to wait until 2018 to table legislation – the gender wage gap has lasted long enough. The 2016 report of the Special Parliamentary Committee on Pay Equity and 2004 Federal Pay Equity Taskforce report contain all the recommendations needed, and Quebec's pay equity legislation can serve as a model.
- **Regulating Canadian corporations operating abroad:** During the 2015 election campaign, the Liberals promised to act on the recommendations of the 2007 National Roundtables on Corporate Social Responsibility. Yet the Liberal government has continued to champion the Harper era Corporate Social Responsibility strategy that relies on voluntary compliance and has proven ineffective in holding corporations accountable for human rights abuses. The government has also not engaged in the UN Human Rights Council's working group tasked with developing an international legally binding instrument to regulate the activities of transnational corporations and other business enterprises.³⁹

Looking forward, the government should:

- ✓ Commit to being a living wage employer and ensure federal government contracts are only given to living wage employers, and encourage provinces and territories to do the same.
- ✓ Introduce pro-active pay equity legislation in 2017, with particular attention to the greater pay equity gap for racialized, Indigenous and immigrant women, and strongly encourage all provinces and territories to adapt similar legislation.
- ✓ Pass legislation that holds Canadian corporations accountable to international law and labour standards, and participate in the Intergovernmental Working Group on Transnational Corporations and Other Business Enterprises.
- ✓ Sign and ratify ILO Convention 189 on Domestic Workers. Around the world, including in Canada, domestic workers are predominantly women and are vulnerable to economic exploitation, overwork, rape and other forms of abuse.

CONCLUSION

Words matter. Having a Prime Minister proudly proclaim that he is a feminist in an era of backlash against women's rights sends a powerful signal. But more than words are required to make lasting progress on gender equality and to meaningfully improve the lives of women living in poverty. In the second year of its mandate, the Liberal government should prioritize the following strategies to deliver on its feminist agenda.

Adopt a feminist approach to policy making across government

A feminist approach is fundamentally new; it is not about tweaking what is already being done or simply investing more in gender-based analysis. The federal government needs to become 'fit for purpose' to deliver on its feminist agenda. High level leadership is required within each department, in addition to capacity building and mentoring. The government should support champions within the bureaucracy and foster innovation and creativity, not a box-ticking approach to gender mainstreaming. The government should also facilitate knowledge exchanges with civil society and experts outside of government. The government has been keen to set up advisory councils, but more robust engagement is required for these initiatives to be meaningful and actually inform policy decisions.

The government's feminist agenda requires a whole-of-government approach that recognizes the many interconnected factors that affect the gendered distribution of power, opportunities and resources, and that ultimately impact women's lives. For example, the government cannot adequately address violence against women without recognizing that poverty wages keep many women trapped in economic insecurity. Strong interdepartmental collaboration can help ensure that policy decisions are coherent and mutually reinforcing.

Apply feminist principles

Integrity and coherence are important feminist principles.⁴⁰ The government must ensure that initiatives to advance women's rights in one area are not undermined by gender-blind policy making in other areas. For example, the government cannot credibly champion women's rights on the global stage while selling arms to countries that will use them to crack down on dissent or violate women's rights. Women's rights cannot be prioritized only when it is convenient; a commitment to gender equality must inform all of the government's policy and spending decisions, both at home and abroad.

The government should put the principles of intersectionality and agency at the heart of its feminist approach. Efforts to advance gender equality must consider how multiple identities such as class, race, religion, sexual orientation and gender identity compound inequality and exacerbate marginalization. The government should also be deliberate about supporting women's meaningful engagement in its feminist agenda. This should include increased funding for women's rights organizations, networks and movements to mobilize, do research and advocacy, and actively engage in consultations about federal policy making.

Raise more revenue to increase investments

The government has made important commitments in its first year in office, but more investments are required to have a real impact. For example, Global Affairs Canada's decision to prioritize spending on programmes that aim to empower women and girls is a very positive one, but if Canada's international aid budget continues to decline these decisions will have a limited impact on the many women living in poverty that we aim to support.

More investments will require more resources. Total federal spending as a percentage of GDP currently stands at 13%, making this government the smallest in the past 60 years.⁴¹ To deliver on its ambitious agenda, the federal government will need to raise more revenue, including by continuing to crack down on tax evasion, reforming the corporate income tax system, and closing regressive tax loopholes - all with an eye to the gendered impact of these changes.

Focus on ending poverty

The government's efforts to promote inclusive growth must include more deliberate action to tackle poverty. It is unacceptable that over 3 million Canadians still live in poverty today, despite Canada's great wealth and resources.⁴² The government's decision to launch a consultation process to support the development of a Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy, and its deliberate engagement of people with lived experience of poverty, are very important steps in the right direction. A feminist government must indeed be committed to legislating a comprehensive federal plan and allocating the required resources to eradicate poverty once and for all.

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