

**2025 NATIONAL REPORT CARD FOR GENDER EQUALITY IN  
SCIENCE, ENGINEERING, TRADES, AND TECHNOLOGY (SETT)**

**SCALING UP:  
An assessment of  
the legislative frameworks,  
implementation frameworks, and  
strategic planning processes of Canada's  
federal-provincial-territorial (FPT) governments  
in comparison to the No. 1-ranked country, Iceland**



*Author:*

Lorraine Hewlett, B.A., M.A., B.Ed., Policy & Legislative Analyst, CCWESTT

*Legislative research contributions:*

Peace Olanipekun, J.D. Candidate, 2026, University of Calgary Faculty of Law

*Statistics and brain research contributions:*

Alicia Bjarnason, PGeol, FGC, M.A., CCIP

## Lexicon

BPfA	Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action
CAF	Canadian Apprenticeship Forum
CBA	Community Benefits Agreement
CBTU	Canada's Building Trades Union
CCWESTT	Canadian Coalition of Women in Engineering, Science, Trades, and Technology
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
FPT	Federal-Provincial-Territorial
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GE	Gender Equality
GEAC	Gender Equality Advisory Council (for the G7 countries)
HRT	Human Rights Tribunal
ICTC	Information and Communications Technology Council
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights
MLA	Member of the Legislative Assembly
MMIWG	Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls
MP	Member of Parliament (Canada)
MPP	Member of the Provincial Parliament
NAP	National Action Plan
NAPGBV	National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence
NIF	Not in force
NLBA	Newfoundland and Labrador Benefits Agreement
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OHS	Occupational Health and Safety
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SETT	Science, Engineering, Trades, and Technology
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math
UN	United Nations
2SLGBTQQA+	Two-spirited, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, Asexual plus

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	6
<b>Introduction</b> .....	10
<b>Current Status of Women in SETT</b> .....	13
<b>Methodology for Report Card Measures</b>	
Legislative Framework .....	16
Implementation Framework .....	22
Strategic Planning Process .....	27
<b>Summary Chart of Federal-Provincial-Territorial (FPT) Report Cards</b> .....	32
<b>Key Findings and Recommendations</b>	
FPT Legislative Frameworks .....	37
FPT Occupational Health and Safety Legislation .....	58
FPT Implementation Frameworks .....	80
FPT Strategic Planning Processes .....	93
FPT Programs to Support Gender Equality .....	121
<b>Endnotes</b> .....	125
<b>Appendix 1:</b> International Agreements to Achieve Gender Equality .....	<a href="#">PDF</a>
<b>Appendix 2:</b> Pay Equity Battles in Canada (Examples) .....	<a href="#">PDF</a>
<b>Report Cards</b>	
Iceland .....	<a href="#">PDF</a>
Government of Canada .....	<a href="#">PDF</a>
British Columbia .....	<a href="#">PDF</a>
Alberta .....	<a href="#">PDF</a>
Saskatchewan .....	<a href="#">PDF</a>
Manitoba .....	<a href="#">PDF</a>
Ontario .....	<a href="#">PDF</a>
Quebec .....	<a href="#">PDF</a>
New Brunswick .....	<a href="#">PDF</a>
Nova Scotia .....	<a href="#">PDF</a>
Prince Edward Island .....	<a href="#">PDF</a>
Newfoundland and Labrador .....	<a href="#">PDF</a>
Yukon .....	<a href="#">PDF</a>
Northwest Territories .....	<a href="#">PDF</a>
Nunavut .....	<a href="#">PDF</a>

*“Progress is achievable, but it is not fast enough. We need to keep pushing forward for gender equality to fulfill the commitment made by world leaders in the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing almost 30 years ago, and the 2030 Agenda. Let us unite to continue dismantling the barriers women and girls face and forge a future where gender equality is not just an aspiration but a reality.”<sup>1</sup>*

*Sima Bahous, UN Women Executive Director, Sep 2024*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*“Gender equality is not an afterthought; it is the backbone of a strong economy and resilient society.”<sup>2</sup>*

*Canadian Research Institute for  
the Advancement of Women  
March 14, 2025*

The *2025 National Report Card for Gender Equality in Science, Engineering, Trades, and Technology (SETT)* is a tool that gender equality advocates and policymakers can use to measure and accelerate Canada’s progress in ending gender inequality, with a focus on the science, engineering, trades, and technology working environment. The information in this report, with its accompanying report cards, can be used to hold the federal, provincial, and territorial (FPT) governments in Canada accountable for achieving the goal of gender equality across the country, particularly for women and gender-diverse individuals pursuing or seeking a career in SETT.

### **The Need to Achieve Gender Equality in SETT**

Over the decades, the Government of Canada has signed numerous international agreements (see [Appendix 1](#)) affirming this country’s intention to achieve gender equality. Most recently, in September 2015, Canada reaffirmed its commitment to achieving gender equality by 2030 when it adopted, along with 192 other member states of the United Nations, the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. Gender equality (Goal #5) is one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 15-year framework.

On a more practical level, the demand for a SETT-skilled workforce to power Canadian industries is escalating and showing no signs of slowing down. Every organization in Canada is increasingly reliant on SETT skills to thrive, whether they operate in government, academia, industry, or the education sector. All these stakeholders face a common challenge: the need to address the significant underrepresentation of women and gender-diverse individuals in the SETT workforce, as Canada cannot afford to underutilize any of the country’s available talent. Achieving this goal requires removing the barriers to participation at every point of the SETT pipeline. We must create an environment where women and gender-diverse individuals can readily engage in SETT education and then utilize those skills to advance through their careers to senior levels. No sector can solve this alone. Leadership is required, and it must be accompanied by accountability.

## Canada Must Stop Backsliding and Take Effective Action

During the last decade, Canada has continued to backslide in the annual rankings of countries taking action to close the gender equality gap. Although Canadian federalism has its challenges, there is much that FPT governments in Canada can learn from the many countries in Europe, which consistently rank much higher. For example, as of June 2025, Iceland has been ranked No. 1 for the last sixteen years. The Icelandic government has been exemplary in establishing both a robust legislative framework and an implementation framework. Furthermore, it has excelled in public consultation and strategic planning. A great deal can be learned from Iceland's and other countries' examples of effective public policy development, public administration, and partnerships with stakeholders.

In Canada, FPT governments have done much better at achieving equality between English and French as official languages than at achieving equality between genders. Like minority language rights, equality is woven into the fabric of our Constitution (see sections 15 (1) and 28 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*) and should receive the same attention and resources to achieve success. According to the data available from Statistics Canada, the lack of equality between genders working in Science, Engineering, Trades, and Technology (SETT) is quite dismal. The percentage of women<sup>1</sup> working in the trades has barely increased in the last 30 years. Nationally, it continues to hover around five per cent (5%). The status quo is *not* effective. Women continue to be under-employed in the trades.

There is *much* work to be done by the FPT governments in Canada to eliminate gender inequality in their respective jurisdiction. All FPT governments need to enact new gender equality legislation and amend current legislation (especially Occupational Health and Safety) to incorporate best practices. Gender equality directorates and gender equality advisory councils still need to be established in some FPT jurisdictions, and *all* current and future Directorates need to be given the necessary legislative authority to close the gender equality gap. Gender equality directorates and advisory councils in Canada continue to remain under-empowered.

Of all SETT categories, the trades, most notably, require a focused and immediate effort to create equality for women and gender-diverse individuals. In addition, FPT governments need to empower their gender equality directorates to implement a robust strategic planning process that strives for excellence and adheres to the highest standard. Quebec, which stands as the lone jurisdiction that has been consistently developing strategic plans and action plans for achieving gender equality, still has room for improvement.

This report examines Iceland and then compares each of Canada's fourteen (14) FPT jurisdictions to assess whether each one has established the necessary legislative framework, implementation framework, and robust strategic planning process to achieve gender equality for women in Canada, and in particular for women in SETT.

This research report also contains 97 recommendations, informed by best practices that have already been successfully implemented in Iceland and other countries. *It is imperative that FPT governments implement these recommended actions as quickly as possible,*

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<sup>1</sup> The number of gender-diverse people working in the trades has not been measured.

not only to improve Canada's ranking on the world stage and to move closer to Canada's commitment to achieving gender equality by 2030 (which is now less than five years away); but more importantly, to improve the working conditions for women and gender-diverse people in Canada, so that the urgently needed SETT-skilled workforce is available to power Canadian industries, improve Canada's economic growth, and ensure the financial well being of a greater percentage of its citizens.

## **Conclusion**

The data and evidence contained in this report provide an opportunity to assess Canada's progress. It is important to compare the current status with the vision. When it becomes obvious that an FPT government has failed to make the desired progress, gender equality advocates, including Members of Parliament (MPs), Members of Provincial Parliaments (MPPs), and Members of Legislative Assemblies (MLAs), can use the information in this report and its accompanying report cards to establish new priorities and better focus governmental efforts.

What so many European countries are demonstrating should not be dismissed as a European model that cannot be applied to Canada. Instead, these **European countries are modelling excellent legislative development, implementation, and strategic planning**. Canada has demonstrated its willingness and ability to develop a proper legislative framework, an implementation framework, and a robust strategic planning process for achieving equality between English and French as official languages in Canada. The Government of Canada, along with many provincial and territorial governments, enacted an Official Languages Act, established an Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, and implemented a process for adjudicating complaints. A similar level of detail and commitment is required to achieve gender equality in Canada.

## **Disclaimer:**

This report assesses legislative frameworks, implementation frameworks, and strategic planning processes. It was beyond the scope of this project to research and evaluate all the types of government *programs* that are also essential for achieving gender equality. These include, for example, affordable housing programs (e.g., transitional housing, public housing, housing cooperatives, and rent supplements), childcare programs, student loan programs, and the possibility of establishing universal basic income programs and universal post-secondary education. Nevertheless, this report does contain some key findings and recommendations regarding employment equity programs.

SETT careers can provide economic security. Access to a career in SETT is limited when resources are unavailable to meet basic needs. Frequently, these types of programs are essential for supporting women and gender-diverse individuals who wish to pursue a career

in SETT. Economic insecurity often limits access to the education and training necessary to obtain the required qualifications for entry into these professions.

Poverty remains a significant barrier to women's participation in SETT. It was also beyond the scope of this project to examine the anti-poverty (or poverty reduction) strategic plans, action plans, and budget plans that exist or do not exist across Canada. An evaluation of current and potential *programs* to support gender equality could be incorporated into future strategic plans and action plans developed by FPT governments, as broader social programs could help alleviate these economic challenges and create more equitable pathways for women and gender-diverse people to enter and thrive in SETT careers.

## **Political Will**

There has been an extensive body of recommendations, frameworks, and commitments (both domestic and international) that Canada has failed to implement. The call from the Canadian Coalition of Women in Engineering, Science, Trades and Technology (CCWESTT) for stronger legislative and implementation frameworks and strategic planning processes does not discard past work. What is needed is the political will and accountability mechanisms to operationalize existing commitments. Strategic plans can be helpful tools, but only when they are meaningfully resourced, transparently tracked, and built on the foundations of past obligations.

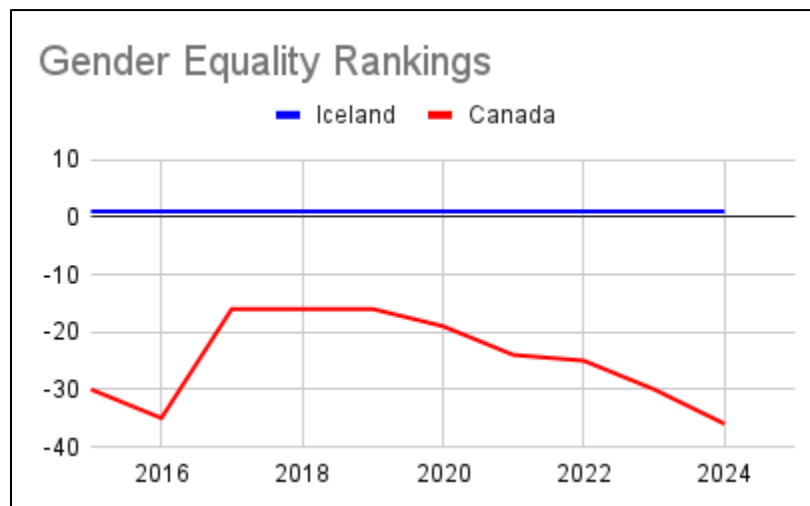
Though we look to Europe for examples of excellent legislative and implementation frameworks and strategic planning processes, much can be learned right here in Canada, by listening to and incorporating the perspectives of Indigenous peoples and the community of activists in Canada (both current and historical) who advocate on behalf of racialized people, people living with disabilities, women, 2SLGBTQIA+, etc. CCWESTT strives to include the voices of women and gender-diverse people of all backgrounds within SETT.

## INTRODUCTION

Every year, an assessment<sup>3</sup> is done of countries around the world regarding the progress each nation-state is making toward achieving gender equality between men and women, commonly referred to as “gender equality.” In 1995, Canada was ranked as the No.1 country in its efforts to achieve gender equality.<sup>4</sup> However, Canada’s ranking has radically changed since 1995.

Between 2017 and 2024, Canada experienced a significant decline in its rankings. In 2017, Canada was ranked in 16<sup>th</sup> place. By 2024, Canada had slipped to 36<sup>th</sup> place. This contrasts radically with the year 1995, when Canada ranked No. 1.

Year	Canada's ranking
<a href="#">2015</a>	30th
<a href="#">2016</a>	35th
<a href="#">2017</a>	16th
<a href="#">2018</a>	16th
2019	N/A
<a href="#">2020</a>	19th
<a href="#">2021</a>	24th
<a href="#">2022</a>	25th
<a href="#">2023</a>	30th
<a href="#">2024</a>	36th
<a href="#">2025</a>	32nd



In contrast to Canada, the country of Iceland has been ranked No. 1 for the last sixteen (16) years in a row. There are important lessons to be learned from Iceland and the other countries that comprise the top fifteen in the world regarding how to close the gender gap and achieve full gender parity. Iceland has been ranked as the most gender-equal country in the world for the 16<sup>th</sup> consecutive year and is the only country to have closed more than 90% of its gender gap.

CCWESTT acknowledges that despite Iceland’s strong legislative framework for gender equality, the lived experience of those most impacted by gender-based violence often does not align with these legal protections. Societal limitations continue to persist, creating the “Nordic Paradox” where robust gender equality legislation coexists with troubling rates of gender-based harassment and violence, e.g., in Icelandic workplaces.<sup>ii</sup> This points to the need for better *implementation* of Icelandic occupational health and safety

<sup>ii</sup> See the study carried out by Jonsdottir, S. D. et al. (2022, Aug 31) *Risk factors for workplace sexual harassment and violence among a national cohort of women in Iceland: a cross-sectional study*. Lancet Public Health. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2468266722002018>

legislation, which outlaws harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, and violence in Icelandic workplaces. Nevertheless, Iceland’s strong legislative structures provide a valuable blueprint that Canada can use to build the necessary and critical foundation upon which to address these persistent inequalities.

Whiting (2023) reported that Iceland “has integrated more women into the economy and the labour force, including into positions of leadership and [Science, Technology, Engineering and Math] STEM professions.”<sup>5</sup> Of particular importance to CCWESTT is the assessment made by Whiting (2023) that “the glass ceiling is even tougher to break for women in STEM careers than non-STEM...”<sup>6</sup>

Canada tends to think it is doing well as a country, as long as it is doing better than the United States. As a country, Canada tends to anchor itself to the United States, despite other countries having a stronger track record. However, the United States ranked 43<sup>rd</sup> in the *2024 Global Gender Gap Report*. In contrast, the province of Quebec has a strong connection to Europe, as many Quebec residents have ancestors from France. Quebec’s greater success in closing the gender equality gap is mainly due to being more strongly anchored to France and Europe than the United States.

In 2024, eleven (11) of the top fifteen (15) countries that have done the best in addressing gender inequality and closing the gender gap were located in Europe (see sidebar).<sup>7</sup> There are important lessons to be learned from European countries about how to close the gender equality gap.

It is essential to note that in 1985, the governments of Quebec and France signed an agreement to increase cooperation and the exchange of information between the two jurisdictions regarding activities and projects that each government was undertaking to turn gender equality in law into gender equality in fact. The agreement was renewed in 1990. After signing the agreement, both governments achieved significant milestones in promoting gender equality. In 2021, the Government of Quebec announced that it would continue to collaborate closely with the Government of France in pursuit of achieving genuine gender equality.<sup>8</sup>

Decades ago, the Government of Quebec declared a distinction between “equality in law” and “equality in fact,” also known as true equality.<sup>9</sup> The Quebec government explained that in the eyes of the law, men and women have been considered equal according to the law since the *Canadian Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms* was established in 1975, which “enshrined the principle of gender equality in law;”<sup>10</sup> however, even though the law acknowledges that men and women have the same rights, “this does not guarantee equality in fact.”<sup>11</sup> Equality in fact “is the realization of equality in law.”<sup>12</sup> As of Aug 31, 2023, the

In 2024, the top 15 countries for closing the gender inequality gap were:

- 1) Iceland
- 2) Finland
- 3) Norway
- 4) New Zealand
- 5) Sweden
- 6) Nicaragua
- 7) Germany
- 8) Namibia
- 9) Ireland
- 10) Spain
- 11) Lithuania
- 12) Belgium
- 13) Moldova
- 14) United Kingdom
- 15) Denmark

NOTE:

- 24) France

Quebec government acknowledged that in Quebec, “true equality between the genders still has not been achieved.”<sup>13</sup>

Quebec’s dilemma of not yet achieving “equality in fact” is influenced by France’s ranking of 24<sup>th</sup> in the 2024 *Global Gender Gap Report*,<sup>14</sup> followed by a decline to 35<sup>th</sup> place in the 2025 *Global Gender Gap Report*.<sup>15</sup> There is still much that Quebec can learn from Iceland, ranked in 1<sup>st</sup> place, as well as the other top 15 countries listed above, which rank more highly than France in effectiveness at closing the gender equality gap.

On a go-forward basis, it would be of tremendous benefit to women and gender-diverse individuals in SETT if the government of each province and territory addressed gender equality within their own jurisdictions, with an approach similar to that of individual European countries. As shown in the chart below, countries in Europe have a total population size that corresponds to that of individual Canadian provinces and territories. Beginning to think like a European country, each provincial and territorial government in Canada could certainly choose to implement the best practices for closing the gender gap that many individual European countries have already demonstrated. Regular consultation with the people who live and work in each of Canada’s provinces and territories would help address the problem of structural gender inequalities.

**Population of Canadian provinces/territories (as of Jun 30, 2024)  
and their closest European equivalents<sup>16</sup>**

**Canadian Province/Territory**

**European Country**

British Columbia	5,646,467
Alberta	4,849,906
Saskatchewan	1,231,043
Manitoba	1,484,135
Ontario	15,996,989
Quebec	9,030,684
New Brunswick	850,894
Nova Scotia	1,072,545
Prince Edward Island	177,081
Newfoundland and Labrador	541,391
Yukon	45,750
Northwest Territories	44,920
Nunavut	40,758

Denmark	5,977,412
Finland	5,617,310
Norway	5,576,660
Ireland	5,255,017
Estonia	1,360,546
Lithuania	2,859,110
Netherlands	18,228,742
Switzerland	8,921,981
Luxembourg	673,036
Estonia	1,360,546
Isle of Man	84,160
Iceland	393,396
Liechtenstein	39,870
Gibraltar	39,329
Monaco	38,631

## CURRENT STATUS OF WOMEN IN SETT

*"We need leadership which is willing to acknowledge the situation we are in, rather than paint a rosy picture by manipulating data."*

*Submission of the Community of Federal Visible Minorities to the  
Employment Equity Review Act Review Task Force (EEART)  
28 April 2022*

A myth still prevails in Canada that gender equality has been achieved. This myth was broadcast across the country on Friday, November 10, 2006, when Beverley J. Oda, the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women, stood during Question Period in the House of Commons and declared that equality between men and women had been achieved in Canada: *"Mr. Speaker, we have to understand that if women are continually told that they are not equal, they will continue to believe that. We say that everyone in Canada is equal."*<sup>17</sup>

Unfortunately, this was an ideological pronouncement. It was not the proper conclusion based on data and evidence. According to Professors A. Litviniuc and C. Claussen at the University of Calgary:

*"Despite evidence to the contrary, many Canadians, especially men, deny that gender inequality exists. For example, 72% of women and 55% of men agree or strongly agree that there are significant obstacles that make it harder for women to succeed compared to men. And unfortunately, Canada does not always do enough to challenge and eliminate such gender-blind attitudes, structures, systems, and institutions that ignore the differences in experiences and needs of different genders."*<sup>18</sup>

### **Current Percentage (%) of Women in SETT Professions**

Indeed, women comprise nearly half of Canada's workforce. According to Statistics Canada, in 2024, "women accounted for 47.3% of the Canadian labour force."<sup>19</sup> However, women's representation in SETT professions is much lower.

#### **Science**

Although women in Canada have achieved gender parity in most physical and life sciences fields, according to Statistics Canada, the situation is much different in the fields of engineering, trades, and technology (see chart below).

## **Engineering**

In 2024, Engineers Canada reported that even though women make up more than half the population in Canada, women “are significantly underrepresented in engineering education and the engineering profession.”<sup>20</sup> Over the past few decades, the number of women enrolling in post-secondary engineering programs has increased, as has the number of women in the engineering profession. However, despite these increases in the percentage of women, men still vastly outnumber women in the field of engineering.<sup>21</sup>

Engineers Canada has pointed out that to solve this problem, there is a great need to focus on the recruitment, retention, and professional development of women in the engineering profession, effect cultural change in the engineering profession to support even greater involvement of women in the profession and develop tactics to successfully reduce the barriers for women and create an “inclusive and supportive workplace culture.”<sup>22</sup>

## **Trades**

After analyzing the data collected during the 2016 Canadian census, the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum (CAF) found that women comprised 14.8% of Canada’s Red Seal workforce, which included apprentices, certified journeypersons, and non-certified tradespeople working in all 50+ Red Seal trades.<sup>23</sup> However, CAF discovered that when selecting service trades (e.g., cook, baker, and hairstylist<sup>iii</sup>) were removed from data collected during the 2016 Census, the share of women in the Red Seal workforce fell to 5.2%.<sup>24</sup> This percentage declined even further to 4.7% during 2016-2021, as the number of women in the Red Seal trades labour market decreased.<sup>25</sup> In contrast, the trades for bakers, painters, and decorators, which have a significantly higher percentage of women, “were the only occupations that saw notable gains in the share of women in the workforce from 2016 to 2021.”<sup>26</sup>

## **Technology**

According to the Information and Communications Technology Council (ICTC), despite women making up nearly half (47.3% in 2024)<sup>27</sup> of the Canadian workforce, they are underrepresented in the digital economy. The ICTC reports that during the decade 2013-2023, the number of women employed in Canada’s digital economy increased by only 0.6%, rising from 34.2% in 2013 to 34.8% in 2023.<sup>28</sup> A deeper analysis (by employment seniority) revealed that the 0.6% increase is due to women obtaining entry-level job positions or those who were in the early stages of their careers.<sup>29</sup> This means that “the gender gap is greater in the upper echelons of the digital economy, with men comprising most senior-level and leadership-level roles.”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>iii</sup> According to CAF (2023, Sep) there are select trades where women account for more than half of the workforce in hairstylist, barber, and baker occupations. In 2021, women comprised 82.4% of hairstylists and barbers, 64.7% of bakers, and 41.8% of cooks (p.10).

**Percentage (%) of female-identifying individuals in SETT professions:**

SETT Field	CAN	BC	AB	SK	MB	ON	PQ	NB	NS	PEI	NL	YK	NT	NU
Professional Engineers <a href="#">(2023)</a>	15.0	14.8	15.8	12.4	13.6	14.3	16.7	13.0	14.0	10.5	15.6	12.0	11.3	n/a
Engineering Degree <a href="#">(2022)</a>	22.3	19.8	21.6	19.3	22.1	23.1	23.6	13.5	22.0	16.9	17.7	18.5	18.5	18.5
Physical and Life Sciences <a href="#">(2021)</a>	60.8	58.2	59.7	56.5	58.0	64.1	58.1	63.8	63.4	67.5	62.3	50.0	50.0	50.0
Mathematics, Computer and Information Sciences <a href="#">(2022)</a>	33.1	32.8	28.1	27.6	30.2	33.2	26.4	21.9	30.6	24.0	36.0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Trades Registrations <a href="#">(2022)</a>	12.6	13.3	12.4	11.6	18.2	13.9	15.4	7.5	0.1	7.7	8.6	8.5	8.5	8.5
Trades Certifications <a href="#">(2022)</a>	10.3	7.5	12.0	11.3	14.9	11.8	9.7	4.4	4.7	4.0	5.8	6.5	6.5	6.5
Tech Sectors <a href="#">(2021)</a>	26.6	26.8	25.9	21.4	25.6	27.8	25.3	19.1	26.3	17.5	24.3	15.7	15.7	15.7

**NOTE:** Engineers Canada and Statistics Canada provided the data in the table above (see hyperlinks within chart).

## METHODOLOGY

*“[P]rogress on ... gender equality, will remain out of reach, unless long-term structural barriers to gender equality, including discriminatory norms, laws and practices, are dismantled. Bold, measurable and concrete commitments are needed, underpinned by predictable, robust and sustainable public resources for gender equality. [sic]... too many countries are witnessing a pushback against gender equality.”<sup>31</sup>*

*UN Women, 2024*

In its 2024 study on gender equality, UN Women identified *the root causes of gender discrimination to be the lack of legal and policy frameworks, the inadequacy of current legal and policy frameworks, and a lack of implementation.*<sup>32</sup> UN Women astutely points out that *there is a need for legal reform.*<sup>33</sup> They have also emphasized the need to strengthen legal and policy frameworks, particularly through gender-responsive institutions, laws, policies, and budgets, as well as promoting positive social norms.<sup>34</sup>

Therefore, this report will assess the current legislative frameworks, implementation frameworks, and strategic planning efforts of FPT governments in Canada for their respective areas of jurisdiction within the country. This report focuses on identifying the major reforms that are most urgently needed.

### METHODOLOGY FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF FPT LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORKS IN CANADA

#### **Human Rights Legislation (Equality in Law)**

The United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights explains, “Gender equality is at the very heart of human rights...”<sup>35</sup> It is essential that discrimination based on sex is prohibited in human rights legislation. Canada’s human rights legislation recognizes women’s legal equality with men and women’s right to equal protection and equal benefits under the law without discrimination based on gender.<sup>iv</sup> Equality between women and men is one of the most fundamental guarantees of human rights legislation.

*Human rights legislation grants women equality in law.* It is aspirational. However, achieving true equality between women and men in real life requires a comprehensive understanding of all of the ways in which women experience discrimination and are denied equality in their day-to-day lives. Critical gaps remain where a woman’s dignity and worth as

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<sup>iv</sup> Some groups of women face additional forms of discrimination based on their age, ethnicity, nationality, religion, health status, marital status, education, disability and socioeconomic status, among other grounds.

a human being are not respected and upheld. In their daily lives (including at school and work), many women experience offences against their human dignity and worth, when they experience harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, gender-based violence, sexual assault, human trafficking (sex trafficking, labour trafficking, etc.), inequality in pay and benefits, and lack of access to childcare, maternity (parental) leave, etc.

In 2014, the United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights called upon Canada to “abolish existing laws, customs, regulations and practices which are discriminatory against women, and to establish adequate legal protection for equal rights of men and women” because “despite the existence of other instruments, women still do not enjoy equal rights with men.”<sup>36</sup> The *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW) articulates that Canada is obliged “to address not only discriminatory laws but also practices and customs and discrimination against women by private actors.”<sup>37</sup>

Consequently, FPT jurisdictions in Canada must develop additional laws, strategies, and programs to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and close the existing gaps. A government cannot stop at simply passing legislation declaring that certain behaviours are now prohibited. That piece of legislation or additional pieces of legislation must contain the mechanism(s) for holding people accountable for now-prohibited behaviour.

Written law is insufficient to guarantee the right to equality. There must be mechanisms in place to ensure that these rights are enforced. The European Network of Experts in Gender Equality noted that despite the provision of rights through gender equality laws, effective enforcement of these rights is so hindered by the length and cost of legal proceedings that “legal rights are in danger of becoming paper entitlements only.”<sup>38</sup>

*“Effective enforcement is also very much hampered by the length and costs of legal proceedings...the real problem ... is that enforcement is difficult and increasingly expensive to the extent that the legal rights are in danger of becoming paper entitlements only.”<sup>39</sup>*

*The European Network of Experts in Gender Equality, 2017*

## **Employment Standards Legislation**

Employment standards legislation enhances working conditions and establishes the minimum standards to which employers must adhere regarding hours of work (including overtime), the payment of wages, time off for vacation, sickness, maternity or parental leave, compassionate leave, and other related matters. Equal pay for work of equal value is considered a fundamental human right and is crucial for promoting a just and equitable workforce. Employment standards legislation should make it clear to employers that men and women (all individuals) must be paid the same wages for doing the same work (equal pay for equal work). It should also clearly inform workers of the adjudication process they should follow if they have a complaint about receiving unequal pay for equal work.

## Pay Transparency Legislation

There is no pay equity without pay transparency. Paragraph 11 of the preamble of the [European Union Pay Transparency Directive](#) clearly states that “the application of the principle of equal pay is hindered by a lack of transparency in pay systems... Workers lack the necessary information to make a successful equal pay claim and, in particular, information about the pay levels for categories of workers who perform the same work or work of equal value.”<sup>40</sup> The European Union’s position is that pay transparency reveals gender bias and discrimination in an employer’s pay structure, enabling workers, employers, and social partners to take appropriate action to ensure that workers receive equal pay for work of equal value, ensuring that true equality between men and women is achieved.

Pay transparency is crucial for achieving pay equity because it enables the identification of potential pay disparities based on factors such as gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or other protected characteristics. When pay information is transparent, employees can see how their pay compares to that of colleagues in similar roles, making it easier to identify potential inequities. Pay transparency helps ensure that employees are paid fairly, regardless of gender, race, or other factors. A study by Harvard Business Review found that pay transparency can help reduce the wage gap by up to 30%.<sup>41</sup> Another study of public university faculty salaries in Canada, published by the National Bureau of Economic Research, found that pay transparency can reduce the pay gap by 20-40%.<sup>42</sup>

## Pay Equity Legislation

In Canada, some provinces have a combination of three legal regimes that address gender-based wage discrimination:

- 1) *Human rights laws* declaring equality between men and women and/or prohibiting workplace discrimination.
- 2) *Employment standards legislation* prohibiting gender-based wage discrimination and/or requiring employers to implement “equal pay for equal work.”
- 3) *Pay equity legislation*, declaring that women must receive “equal pay for work of equal value,” and establishing a separate process for investigating and adjudicating pay inequality complaints by a Pay Equity Commissioner.

The enactment of human rights legislation, which declares equality between men and women, and employment standards legislation that prohibits gender-based wage discrimination, provides women with “equality in law.” However, these provisions are aspirational and do not necessarily result in “equality in fact.”

## Gender Equality Legislation

Gender equality legislation creates an implementation framework by establishing a Gender Equality Directorate, a Gender Equality Advisory Council, and a Gender Equality Complaints Tribunal. This type of legislation also creates legal obligations for the government—regardless of which political party is in power to:

- ❖ Carry out regularly scheduled public consultations.
- ❖ Maintain a strategic plan and the necessary action plan(s) and budget plan(s) for achieving gender equality.
- ❖ Collect the necessary data regarding gender equality.
- ❖ Conduct mandatory evaluations.

Additional pieces of gender equality legislation can create legal obligations for the government to carry out strategic planning to end gender-based violence<sup>v</sup>, eliminate the human trafficking of women and girls, and require that all employers prove that they have implemented pay equity. Gender equality legislation also typically contains provisions for equal representation of men and women.

## Equal Representation (Gender Parity) Legislation

*“Women’s representation is crucial in making their issues and perspectives an integral part of decision- and policy-making processes and, ultimately, be reflected in policies, programs and strategies of government that affect their lives. Men cannot fully represent the interests of women considering their differentiated needs, issues, socialization and experiences.”<sup>43</sup>*

*Philippine Commission on Women, 2020*

In 2022, the European Parliament issued [\*Directive \(EU\) 2022/2381\*](#) on improving the gender balance among Directors of listed companies and related measures. EU member states were directed to encourage the private sector to increase the presence of women at all levels of decision-making and to establish procedures concerning the appointment or election of members to the Board of Directors of listed companies, based on transparency and merit (see Article 8). The intent was “to increase the number of members of the underrepresented sex on their boards...” (see Article 8).

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<sup>v</sup> In Iceland, gender-based violence includes gender-based harassment and sexual harassment in workplaces, schools, activities, and advertisements.

## **Domestic (Family) Violence Legislation**

*“Women make up about half of the world's population. Laws and institutions that improve women's well-being warrant attention and priority. Our research indicates that the presence of domestic violence legislation may have saved many lives of women...”<sup>44</sup>*

*Asif Islam, Senior Economist, The World Bank, and  
Augusto Lopez-Claros, ED of the Global Governance Forum*

Domestic violence legislation matters. Protecting women from domestic violence must be a top legislative priority. In Canada, addressing the impact of domestic violence is a shared responsibility between the federal government of Canada and the governments of its thirteen (13) provinces and territories. The domestic violence legislation in Canada's provinces and territories typically makes available a variety of protection orders to victims of domestic abuse. These include peace bonds, protective orders, or restraining orders.

### **Domestic Violence Leave**

In 2014, the University of Western Ontario finished carrying out a national survey to discover how domestic violence at home affects women at work. The findings were published in a report entitled [CAN WORK BE SAFE, WHEN HOME ISN'T? Initial Findings of a Pan-Canadian Survey on Domestic Violence and the Workplace.](#)<sup>45</sup> Upon reading the recommendations in the report, the Canadian Labour Congress encouraged its union affiliates across Canada to negotiate for domestic violence leave to be included in collective agreements and to demand that governments include this type of leave in the employment standards legislation that governs each FPT jurisdiction.

A decade later, employment standards legislation in Canada typically includes domestic violence leave that can be used for medical attention, counselling, relocation, legal assistance, seeking legal or law enforcement help, and attending a legal proceeding related to domestic violence. This type of leave normally consists of:

- *Paid leave:* Employees are eligible for up to five days of paid leave per calendar year if they are or their child is a victim of domestic violence.
- *Unpaid leave:* Employees are eligible for up to five days of additional unpaid leave.
- *Additional unpaid leave:* Employees may also be eligible for up to 15 weeks of additional unpaid leave.

## Anti-Human Trafficking Legislation

*“True equality for women and girls will not be achieved until all forms of violence, including sexual exploitation and sex trafficking, are eradicated. This will require a broad perspective and action taken in all sectors and in a wide range of policy areas. The results will reflect a stronger nation whose political, social, and economic inequalities are minimized and where human rights and the possibility for everyone to succeed to their greatest potential is achieved.”<sup>46</sup>*

### *The Task Force on Trafficking of Women and Girls in Canada*

Quite frankly, it is hard for women and girls to pursue an education in SETT and become part of a SETT-skilled workforce if they are being held captive and exploited by human traffickers. On November 11, 2020, the UN Women’s Rights Committee “called on governments to pursue all appropriate means to eliminate trafficking in women and girls.”<sup>47</sup> The Committee expressed great concern about the fact that “women and girls continue to be major victims of trafficking across the world, *despite the existing anti-trafficking legal and policy frameworks at national and international levels*”<sup>48</sup> (emphasis added).

Legislation to combat human trafficking is crucial for achieving gender equality because human trafficking is a highly gendered crime that disproportionately affects women and girls, often exploiting their vulnerabilities and perpetuating gender-based inequalities. For example, a 2013 study by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) reported that “worldwide, 98 percent of sex-trafficking victims are women and girls—some as young as 14—who are forced to perform sex acts 365 days a year and are required to hand over all or most of the money to their traffickers.”<sup>49</sup> In 2024, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime reported that, according to the most recent data for North America, 56% of the detected victims are women and 25% are girls, which adds up to a total of 81%.<sup>50</sup> In North America, 69% of these women and girls are trafficked for sexual exploitation.<sup>51</sup>

Trafficking victims are typically coerced and forced, or deceived and recruited, to work in a situation akin to slavery, servitude, or forced labour (not paid for services). Forced labour is a prevalent part of many industries, including agriculture, manufacturing, and domestic services. Frequently, victims are transported from their homes to other locations (e.g., across borders). Human trafficking often involves sexual abuse and other forms of exploitation, severely impacting women's bodily autonomy, safety, and dignity, hindering their ability to participate fully in society.

Human trafficking, particularly for sexual exploitation, is a direct violation of gender equality. Limited economic opportunities can contribute to women’s vulnerability to trafficking. Canada’s 2019-2024 *National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking* states: “Human traffickers exploit human vulnerabilities created by poverty, sexism, racism, wage inequality, and a lack of education, social supports, and employment opportunities.”<sup>52</sup> Gender inequality in the form of gender poverty, lack of viable employment opportunities, lack of

control over financial resources, and limited access to education are all factors that can make women and girls vulnerable to being trafficked.

Effectively tackling human trafficking is a critical step towards creating a more equitable society for all genders and allowing more women to enjoy a career in the SETT-skilled workforce. It is imperative to have a legislative and public policy framework to address this issue, actively protect women and girls from exploitation, and empower them to pursue education and employment in SETT, should they desire to do so.

## **Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Legislation**

It is in the workplace that, both figuratively and literally, “the rubber hits the road.” OHS legislation plays a key role in ensuring that “equality in law” becomes “equality in fact;” in other words, in the reality of one’s day-to-day work life. It is the interface between the declarations of equality contained in human rights legislation and everyday life. OHS legislation (acts and regulations) can create legal obligations for employers to:

- ❖ Provide workplaces that are free of discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, and violence, and are safe from physical and psychological injury.
- ❖ Carry out workplace assessments (identification of hazards and risk assessments).
- ❖ Develop and implement written workplace policies and training programs, and take additional measures to prevent prohibited behaviours.
- ❖ Develop trauma-informed responses to victims and identify supports that are available both internally and externally.
- ❖ Establish a confidential and private process to report, investigate, and resolve incidents and complaints.
- ❖ Establish a process for confidential record keeping and reporting to the jurisdiction, as necessary.
- ❖ Impose consequences upon the party (or parties) who have engaged in prohibited behaviours.
- ❖ Continue to review, evaluate, and improve processes to update workplace policies and programs.
- ❖ Include additional requirements for situations in which a worker is experiencing family (domestic) violence, especially when working at home or working late hours.

### **METHODOLOGY FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF FPT IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORKS IN CANADA**

In 2024, UN Women pointed out that another root cause of gender inequality is “insufficient implementation of laws and policies that protect and promote women’s rights”<sup>53</sup>

(emphasis added). They have proposed that the way to solve this problem is to gather “[k]nowledge and technical expertise on gender-responsive policies and laws in all sectors and at all levels, and capacities to draft, amend and implement gender-responsive laws and policies, in consultation with women-led organizations.”<sup>54</sup> Therefore, according to UN Women, all the FPT governments in Canada need to “increase awareness of the negative effects of discriminatory legislation and policies in all sectors and at all levels, *including ways to monitor, reform, and repeal them*”<sup>55</sup> (emphasis added). In Outcome 4 of its strategic plan, UN Women has stated that there needs to be “institutional, legal and policy reform; [and] financing for gender-responsive policies and practices.”<sup>56</sup>

## Gender Equality Directorates

After the European Parliament issued [Directive 2002/73/EC](#) on September 23, 2002, all European Union (EU) member states and European Economic Area (EEA) countries were obliged to establish an equality body to implement the requirements of EU and national gender equality laws.<sup>vi</sup> According to the Directive, these bodies must be tasked with the promotion, analysis, monitoring, and support of equal treatment of all persons without discrimination on grounds of sex. They may form part of agencies at the national level that are responsible for defending human rights or safeguarding individual rights. These bodies must have the competence to provide independent assistance to victims of gender discrimination, to conduct independent surveys concerning gender discrimination and to publish independent reports and make recommendations (see also Article 20 of Recast Directive 2006/54/EC and Article 12 of Directive 2004/113/EC).

This research report will assess each FPT jurisdiction in Canada to verify if it has established a Gender Equality Directorate (or its equivalent) and to assess the powers that have (or have not) been granted to it, especially in comparison to Iceland.

- ❖ **Legislative Oversight:** In Iceland and in many other European countries, the gender equality directorate is responsible for overseeing several pieces of gender equality legislation.
- ❖ **Enforcement Authority:** In Iceland, the gender equality directorate has legislative power to enforce gender equality legislation, including the imposition of daily fines on employers who have not submitted the necessary evidence to prove that they have implemented pay equity in their establishment.

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<sup>vi</sup> For a detailed analysis of the powers given to the equality bodies established by different EU member states and EEA countries, read Section 10.5 (starting on page 82) of the following document: European Network of Legal Experts in Gender Equality and Non-Discrimination. (2016, December). *A comparative analysis of gender equality law in Europe: A comparative analysis of the implementation of EU gender equality law in the EU Member States, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia and Turkey*. European Commission. 154 pages. <https://www.equalitylaw.eu/downloads/3967-a-comparative-analysis-of-gender-equality-law-in-europe-2016-pdf-867-kb>

- ❖ **Strategic Planning:** Iceland and other European countries have passed legislation that requires the gender equality directorate to carry out strategic planning to achieve gender equality and to oversee the strategic planning of other bodies. Although the FPT jurisdictions in Canada have not enacted gender equality legislation that includes a legal obligation for the gender equality directorate to develop strategic plans, action plans, etc., it is still essential to assess whether gender equality directorates in Canada are engaging in strategic planning.
- ❖ **Data Collection:** Collecting data is essential for tracking progress and for determining what actions and initiatives are working well. According to the conclusions reached by international gender equality analysts, it is imperative that the FPT governments of Canada not only collect more data but also “improve the quality of the gender-specific data they collect.”<sup>57</sup> In too many countries, up-to-date data is not available for tracking and assessing the progress toward the goal of gender equality. More reliable data and a higher quality of data are necessary to “improve the design and targeting of programs and policy initiatives.”<sup>58</sup>
- ❖ **Gender-Based Analysis (Gender Mainstreaming):** In Iceland and many EU member states, [gender mainstreaming](#) is now embedded in legislation and in major EU policies and funding programs to ensure equal access to resources, economic participation, and social protection, particularly for women and underrepresented groups. The goal is to ensure that equality remains a driving force in future policy and budgetary decisions.

### Gender Equality Advisory Councils (Advisory Councils on the Status of Women)

In its gender equality legislation, the Government of Iceland established a gender equality advisory council (known as the [Gender Equality Council](#)), which is the advisory body for the Minister of Equality and the gender equality directorate (known as the [Directorate of Equality](#)). The Prime Minister's Office appoints the advisory council members, who must include representatives from social partners, academia, and organizations promoting gender equality. Iceland's Gender Equality Council functions as a gender equality consultation platform. There are legal obligations<sup>vii</sup> for the Council to assemble at least once a year, prepare the Gender Equality Forum, present a report on its work to the forum, and submit the meeting minutes to the Minister. The Minister also has a legal obligation to meet with the consultation platform once a year and to publish a summary of the meeting minutes as supporting documentation for the Minister's report, which must be issued at least once per legislative period.

In Canada, the Royal Commission of Inquiry on the Status of Women, in its final report published in December 1970, recommended the establishment of Advisory Councils on the Status of Women. During the 1970s and 1980s, most FPT jurisdictions in Canada set up an

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<sup>vii</sup> See Iceland's [Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights Irrespective of Gender, 2020](#), Article 24, paragraphs 1 and 2.

Advisory Council for the Status of Women, some of which still exist today, although some have been disbanded (e.g., at the Federal level). The advisory councils that still exist in some provinces and territories are vastly under-empowered compared to Iceland's Gender Equality Council, and there is typically no strategic planning process into which the advisory council's feedback can be channelled.

### **Gender Equality Tribunals (as an alternate dispute resolution process)**

*"As a matter of principle, where there is a right, there must exist a right of access to a court or tribunal, so that any person who feels that his rights or liberty has been infringed or violated ... may bring the matter to court or tribunal for adjudication. If there is no such recourse open to the aggrieved person, then the right is devoid of any meaning or effect. It is merely illusory."<sup>59</sup>*

Tan Sri Arifin Zakaria, former Chief Judge of Malaya,  
17th Commonwealth Law Conference, Hyderabad, India  
9 February 2011

Iceland, Lithuania, Norway, and other European countries have established alternative dispute resolution processes. Iceland established its [Equality Complaints Committee](#). Lithuania established its [Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson](#). Norway established its [Equality and Anti-Discrimination Tribunal](#).

Iceland's Equality Complaints Committee was established by legislation<sup>viii</sup> and operates as an independent and autonomous entity. Following nomination by Iceland's Supreme Court, the Minister of Equality appoints three representatives to the Equality Complaints Committee for a three-year term. They must all hold a professional, legal qualification or a master's degree in law. The Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson must satisfy the eligibility requirements for a District Court judge. At least two of three, including the Chairperson, must have specialist knowledge in the field of equality. At least one member must have specialist-level knowledge of equality in a broader sense. An equal number of alternates must be appointed in the same manner.

Individuals, enterprises, institutions, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) who feel their rights have been violated<sup>ix</sup> can file a complaint with the Equality Complaints

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<sup>viii</sup> Iceland's Equality Complaints Committee operates according to the authority given to it in Chapter III of the *Act on the Administration of Matters Concerning Equality, No. 151/2020*, and the *Regulation on the Work of the Equality Complaints Committee, No. 1320/2024*.

<sup>ix</sup> Their rights under provisions of *Act No. 150/2020, on Equal Status and Equal Rights Irrespective of Gender*; *Act No. 85/2018, on Equal Treatment Regardless of Race and Ethnic Origin* (Amended with *Act amending the Act on Equal Treatment Irrespective of Race and Ethnic Origin, No. 85/2018* (adding more discrimination factors)); and *Act No. 86/2018, on Equal Treatment in the Labour Market*.

Committee, which can also summon experts to provide advice and assistance. The Committee's rulings are binding for the parties to the case. However, parties may refer a ruling to the courts.

The Women's Aid Organization (WAO) outlines the numerous benefits of establishing a gender equality tribunal.<sup>60</sup> First, a tribunal process improves women's access to remedies and justice through a less costly and quicker process. The mainstream court system can be quite slow and costly in handling gender equality cases. Legal aid is often not an option for embarking on this type of court challenge, as it is typically reserved for individuals with very low incomes, and there are strict criteria that the victim must meet to qualify for legal aid. Furthermore, WAO points out, "the length of court proceedings and the psychological strain are still barriers."<sup>61</sup>

Secondly, the European Union reported that, in many of its member states, the number of litigation cases in the courts regarding gender equality is quite low due to a lack of faith in regular courts and the legal system.<sup>62</sup> An analysis of gender equality bodies in the European Union revealed that many victims of gender discrimination feel more confident in complaining to a gender equality ombudsperson and a tribunal in less formal proceedings at no cost, rather than going to court.<sup>63</sup>

Thirdly, a Gender Equality Tribunal would improve compliance with and enforcement of the right to gender equality. A specialized tribunal that deals with cases related to gender inequality would enforce the rights and protections provided by legislation. A Gender Equality Directorate could also refer cases to the tribunal, which would provide an avenue for the Directorate to ensure that gender equality legislation is being complied with.

Fourthly, a specialized gender equality tribunal can ensure a more gender-sensitive approach in handling gender equality cases, thereby enabling a more effective administration of justice. This is because courts may lack expertise in addressing gender equality concerns, which can lead to inadequate enforcement of gender equality laws and principles.<sup>64</sup> The WAO points out that the establishment of gender equality tribunals has encouraged more victims of gender discrimination to seek redress and ensured a more effective administration of justice for the victims. The WOA points to the example of Norway, where, between 1985 and 2008, the country's Equality and Anti-Discrimination Tribunal decided the overwhelming majority of discrimination cases, compared to the 28 cases concerning gender-based discrimination that were judged in court.<sup>65</sup> In Canada, two civil society groups have played a key role in enhancing gender equality provisions in the Canadian Charter. The National Association of Women in the Law (founded in 1974) was instrumental in getting sections 15(1) and 28 into the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Founded in 1985 by feminist lawyers to ensure Canadian courts protect the gender equality provisions in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, the [Women's Legal Education and Action Fund \(LEAF\)](#) noted "discrepancies in courts' handling of gender equality cases due to a lack of understanding of gender concerns and principles of substantive equality. Since 1985, LEAF has intervened in over 90 cases, which helped advance substantive equality for women and girls in Canada."<sup>66</sup>

Finally, a tribunal's decisions help develop the jurisprudence on gender discrimination.

## METHODOLOGY FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF FPT STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESSES IN CANADA

There is a proven pathway to success in closing the gender equality gap between men and women. According to Whiting (2023), “[g]overnment legislation and funding [are] crucial in this.”<sup>67</sup> In addition, Whiting reported that a “*robust gender strategy is increasingly seen as essential.*”<sup>68</sup> In its previous research, CCWESTT ascertained that “best practice” is to enact legislation that creates a legal obligation for a government, regardless of which political party is voted into power, to develop consecutive strategic plans and the necessary action plans for achieving gender equality.<sup>69</sup>

The necessity for a strategy was also affirmed by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).<sup>x</sup> In 2018, the OECD performed an extensive evaluation of the state of gender equality in Canada. As explained in detail below, the OECD’s two top recommendations were that the Government of Canada develop a national gender equality strategy and work with the provincial and territorial governments in developing a pan-Canadian approach to achieving gender equality across Canada:

Recommendation 1: In the context of Canada’s stated commitment to gender equality and its results and delivery agenda, the OECD suggests that Canada build on positive steps it has taken recently by establishing a Gender Results Framework, and use this framework as a foundation for [*emphasis added*]:

- *The development of an overarching gender equality strategy at the federal level, with specific targets, clear allocation of roles, resources and lines of accountability for the whole of government, and an accompanying implementation plan and a data strategy.* “Anchoring” and aligning this strategy with the results and delivery agenda of the Government and each department (e.g., mandate letters, Results and Delivery Charters, departmental results frameworks) could maximize its effective implementation. (see Recommendation 9)
- *Engagement with Federal, Provincial and Territorial Governments to work towards a pan-Canadian approach and strategy to gender equality, and to support Canada in implementing its international commitments such as CEDAW and SDGs. The impact of such an approach could be boosted by aligning policy objectives developed at Federal, Provincial and Territorial (FPT) levels while respecting the autonomy and flexibility of FPT governments in designing their own policies.*

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<sup>x</sup> The OECD is an intergovernmental organization founded in 1961 “to advise governments on how to deliver better policies for better lives.” Canada was one of the 20 founding member countries. Today, OECD membership has increased to 38 member countries. The OECD is a global policy forum that promotes policies to enhance the economic and social well-being of people worldwide and collaborates with over 100 countries.

This twin-tracked approach clarifies the overarching gender equality objectives for government as well as civil society and allows Canada to address gender inequalities from a holistic and people-centred perspective. This in turn helps improve policy prioritisation as well as transparency and accountability. There is also the potential for enhanced dialogue between the FPT levels of government, facilitating improved policy coherence and a platform to share good practices.<sup>70</sup>

It should be noted that in 1995, when Canada was ranked No. 1 in its efforts to achieve gender equality,<sup>71</sup> Canada had just published its Federal Plan for Gender Equality and had already enacted the (federal) *Employment Equity Act* in 1986.

Iceland is considered to be the top standard for many countries that are developing a more effective approach to achieving gender equality. It's no secret what has led to Iceland's success. According to two gender equality experts in Iceland, the lesson to be learned by other countries is that "gender equality does not come about of its own accord. It requires the collective action and solidarity of women human rights defenders, political will, and tools such as legislation, gender budgeting and quotas."<sup>72</sup>

### **Proper Strategic Planning Process**

A proper strategic planning process is critical for successfully closing the gender equality gap. Many European countries, which have been more successful than Canada, have demonstrated this. In Canada, the province of Quebec most closely adheres to the proper strategic planning process.

Iceland has shown the wisdom of enacting legislation that creates the legal obligation for the government, regardless of which political party is in power, to carry out robust strategic planning. The commitment to achieving gender equality was no longer optional. It became the government's legal obligation to all the women of Iceland. Achieving equality between women and men was prohibited from falling off the list of top governmental priorities.

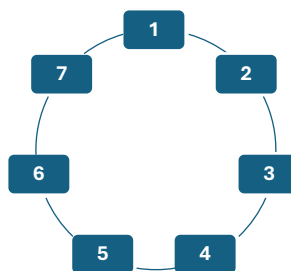
Other countries in Europe have also created this legal obligation to do strategic planning. The Government of Lithuania successfully followed this process to achieve gender equality in STEM<sup>xi</sup>.<sup>73</sup> Lithuania's success in closing the gender gap in STEM fields of work was achieved by strengthening the legal obligations and accountability of all employers, as well as implementing thorough and well-designed strategic planning.

The steps and outcomes of proper strategic planning are listed below. They must be repeated until the long-term objective of gender equality is finally achieved.

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<sup>xi</sup> In 2022, there was breaking news that women in the Republic of Lithuania now make up more than 55% of all scientists and engineers and 49% of women in science, technology, and innovation.

- Step 1: Stakeholder Consultation
- Step 2: Strategic Plan
- Step 3: Action Plan
- Step 4: Budget Plan
- Step 5: Implementation Plan
- Step 6: Communications Plan
- Step 7: Evaluation Plan  
(Repeat)



Stakeholder Consultation

In its 2024 assessment of gender equality, UN Women has emphasized the importance of governments carrying out stakeholder consultation and has called for “[s]ustainable, transparent, collaborative mechanisms, procedures and obligations for formal and meaningful consultation in decision-making between governments and women and girls in all their diversity, and the organizations they lead.”<sup>74</sup> Iceland has demonstrated best practices by enacting legislation that has created a legal obligation for the government to consult with stakeholders every two years<sup>xii</sup> during each 4-year gender equality action plan.

Meaningful jurisdiction-wide public consultation is crucial for ensuring that strategic plans, action plans, and budget plans are responsive to the needs, perspectives, and experiences of all relevant stakeholders, including local communities, grassroots groups, and civil society organizations. Without effective public consultation, any strategic plans, action plans, and allocated funding may prove ineffective or unacceptable to the people they aim to assist and may even reinforce existing inequalities.

Strategic Plans, Action Plans, and Budget Plans

Iceland’s success in being ranked No. 1 in closing the gender inequality gap for the past fifteen (15) years is largely based on these additional shifts in public policy, as explained in a briefing by the Government of Iceland:

“In order to promote gender equality, the Government has run four-year action plans; under Article 9 of the *Gender Equality Act*, the Minister of Social Affairs shall present to Parliament, within one year of parliamentary elections,

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<sup>xii</sup> Article 25 of Iceland’s *Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights Irrespective of Gender*, No. 150/2020 states: “The Minister shall convene a Gender Equality Forum every two years, to discuss gender equality issues. The ministry handling equality matters shall ensure that the Forum’s discussions are compiled and submitted to the Minister. The Minister shall determine the programme of each Forum. The Forum shall be open to all; the ministry handling equality matters shall invite members of Althingi, representatives of national and municipal government institutions, including their gender equality representatives, and representatives of the social partners and civil society organisations with gender equality issues on their agenda.”

a motion for a parliamentary resolution on a plan on equality issues after having received proposals made by the various ministries and the Centre for Gender Equality. This plan includes a detailed plan of action and an estimate of the funding needed for individual projects on equality issues."<sup>75</sup>

### Implementation Plans

Once a strategic plan, action plan, and budget plan have been finalized and approved, each government department (or Ministry) needs to incorporate the responsibilities assigned to it into its four-year departmental (business) plan and explain how different divisions or units will carry out these obligations. The outcome of their efforts should also be reported in annual departmental (or Ministry) results reports. Four-year departmental (business) plans should never be silent about the actions that will be taken to implement the current strategic plan, action plan, and budget plan.

### Communication Plans

Too often, government departments (Ministries) do not take the time to consider how best to continue communication with elected officials, key stakeholders, and members of the public after public consultations are initially held to develop the long-term objectives of a strategic plan and the short-term goals of the associated action plan(s) and budget plan(s). It is highly unfortunate that developing a communications plan to accompany the strategic plan and action plan(s) is overlooked, forgotten, or underestimated in importance.

While the government officials directly involved in drafting plans may be well aware of what is happening, those outside the planning team are often left uninformed. The effective implementation of strategic plans and action plans relies on input from and the commitment of a wide range of individuals who must be involved and informed throughout the implementation process, from the early stages to the ultimate achievement of results.

Successful communications plans establish goals, define key audiences, identify key messages, create a tactical outreach plan, and specify a timeline for moving forward. Effective communication ensures that all governmental departments (Ministries) and stakeholders are aware of their roles in achieving the short-term goals of the action plan and the long-term objectives of the strategic plan. Although government communications plans are internal documents, they must include sharing information with members of the general public who want to stay up-to-date on the progress being made by key players. *The publication of annual reports on the progress being made on the strategic plan and current action plan serves as an essential means of communication with the public.*

### Evaluation Plans

Evaluations are an essential step in the strategic planning cycle. The evaluation principles, criteria, and quality standards need to be developed in advance of publishing a

strategic plan and its associated action plan(s). In its *Evaluation Policy 2024-2028*, the Government of Iceland explains:

“Evaluation is defined as ‘the systematic and objective assessment of an ongoing or completed project, programme or policy, its design, implementation and results. The aim is to determine the relevance, coherence and fulfillment of objectives, development efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. An evaluation should provide information that is credible and useful, enabling the incorporation of lessons learned into the decision-making process of both recipients and donors. Evaluation also refers to the process of determining the worth or significance of an activity, policy or program. An assessment, as systematic and objective as possible, of a planned, ongoing, or completed development intervention.’

Evaluations should contribute to evidence-based policy and decision-making, as well as development and organizational effectiveness. Evaluations also serve as an important tool for accountability and provide... taxpayers and stakeholders... with information on the utilization of funds... and results... Iceland’s policy... for... 2024-2028 is results-based, and evaluations are an essential part of keeping track of and demonstrating results.”<sup>76</sup>

## ASSESSMENT OF PROGRAMS TO SUPPORT GENDER EQUALITY

**Disclaimer:** Achieving gender equality is impossible without essential support programs. The need to improve current programs or create new programs is beyond the scope and capacity of this research report.

For example, there is a need for research to assess the effectiveness of childcare programs and efforts to achieve employment equity, such as:

- ❖ employment equity legislation (e.g., *Canada Employment Equity Act*)
- ❖ policies (e.g., GNWT Affirmative Action Policy)
- ❖ programs (e.g., the Federal Contractors Program)
- ❖ community benefits agreements (e.g., British Columbia Investment Benefits)

## SUMMARY CHART OF FINAL REPORT CARDS

FINAL GRADES	ICE	CDA	BC	AB	SK	MB	ON	PQ	NB	NS	PEI	NL	YK	NT	NU
Legislative Framework	91%	58%	24%	27%	30%	52%	52%	48%	39%	42%	45%	55%	36%	36%	21%
OHS Legislative Framework	71%	79%	62%	85%	75%	70%	66%	45%	79%	50%	76%	60%	71%	49%	42%
Implementation Framework	91%	64%	45%	45%	27%	45%	45%	73%	64%	45%	36%	55%	45%	55%	27%
Strategic Planning Process	73%	33%	13%	23%	7%	17%	40%	53%	7%	17%	17%	13%	17%	13%	3%
<b>TOTAL PERCENTAGE</b>	82%	59%	36%	45%	35%	46%	51%	55%	47%	39%	44%	46%	42%	38%	23%
<b>GRADE</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>F</b>
	A+ (90 – 100%)		A (80 – 89%)			B (70 – 79%)		C (60 – 69%)		D (50 – 59%)		F (0-49%)			

### LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

	ICE	CAN	BC	AB	SK	MB	ON	PQ	NB	NS	PEI	NL	YK	NT	NU
<i>Equality in Law (Aspirational)</i>															
<b>Human rights legislation</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
• Equality of women & men	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
• Pregnant individuals protected	✓	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	✓
• Equal pay (women & men)	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓	NO	✓	NO	NO	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO
<b>Employment standards legis'n</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
• Equal pay (women & men)	✓	✓	NO	NO	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓	✓	NO	NO	✓	NO	NO
• Maternity or Parental Leave	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>(Equality in Fact in Real Life)</i>															
<b>Pay transparency legislation</b>	NO	NO	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	✓	NO	NO	NO
• or provisions in ES legislation	NO	✓	n/a	NO	NO	NO	✓	NO	NO	NO	✓	n/a	NO	NO	NO
<b>Pay equity legislation</b>	✓	✓	NO	NO	NO	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	NO	NO
• Proactive (not just reactive)	✓	✓	NO	NO	NO	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	NO	NO
• Pay Equity Commission(er)	✓	✓	NO	NO	NO	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓	NO
• Pay Equity Tribunal	✓	HRT	NO	NO	NO	✓	✓	✓	NO	NO	✓	✓	NO	NO	NO
• Public service workers	✓	✓	NO	NO	NO	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO
• Para-public service workers	✓	✓	NO	NO	NO	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO
• Private Sector workers	✓	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	✓	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
• Equal Pay Confirmation	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	✓	NO	NO	NO
• Equal Pay Certification	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
• Equal Pay Symbol	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
<b>Gender equality legislation</b>	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
• Legal obligation to plan	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
• Legal obligation to do GBA	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
• Legal obligation to consult	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
• Obligation to collect data	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
• Legal obligation to evaluate	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
• GE directorate established	✓	✓	NO	NO	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
• GE advisory council establish'd	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
• GE Tribunal established	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
<b>Domestic violence legislation</b>	✓	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	NO	NO	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
• Domestic violence leave	NO	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	NIF
<b>Equal representation legis'n</b>	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
<b>Anti-human trafficking legis'n</b>	✓	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
• Legal obligation to plan	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO

## OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

<b>OHS (Mainstream workplaces)</b>	<b>ICE</b>	<b>CAN</b>	<b>BC</b>	<b>AB</b>	<b>SK</b>	<b>MB</b>	<b>ON</b>	<b>PQ</b>	<b>NB</b>	<b>NS</b>	<b>PEI</b>	<b>NL</b>	<b>YK</b>	<b>NT</b>	<b>NU</b>
Workplace (modern definition)	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
Harassment (defined)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sexual Harassment (defined)	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	✓	NO	NO	NO	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO
Bullying (defined)	✓	NO	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
Violence (defined)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Psychological safety (& injury)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓	NO	NO	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓
Policies & Prevention Plans	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
▪ Harassment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
▪ Sexual harassment	✓	✓	NO	✓	✓	NO	✓	NO	✓	NO	✓	NO	✓	NO	NO
▪ Bullying	✓	NO	✓	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	NO	NO
▪ Violence	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Employers obliged to train re:	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
▪ Harassment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓	NO	✓	NO	NO	✓	✓	NO	NO
▪ Sexual harassment	✓	✓	NO	✓	✓	NO	✓	NO	✓	NO	NO	NO	✓	NO	NO
▪ Bullying	✓	NO	✓	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	✓	NO	NO	NO	✓	NO	NO
▪ Violence	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓
On-site complaint process	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Applies to 3 <sup>rd</sup> parties	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Toilet Facilities	NO	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
▪ Toilet paper	NO	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓	✓
▪ Soap & water	NO	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	NO	✓	✓
▪ Hand-drying equipment	NO	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	NO	✓	✓
▪ Menstrual product disposal	NO	✓	NO	✓	NO	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
▪ Cleanliness	NO	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>OHS (Mining Industry)</b>	<b>ICE</b>	<b>CDA</b>	<b>BC</b>	<b>AB</b>	<b>SK</b>	<b>MB</b>	<b>ON</b>	<b>PQ</b>	<b>NB</b>	<b>NS</b>	<b>PEI</b>	<b>NL</b>	<b>YK</b>	<b>NT</b>	<b>NU</b>
Workplace (modern definition)	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	n/a	NO	NO	NO	NO
Harassment (defined)	✓	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓	NO	n/a	✓	✓	NO	NO
Sexual harassment (defined)	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	✓	NO	NO	NO	n/a	NO	NO	NO	NO
Bullying (defined)	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	n/a	NO	NO	NO	NO
Violence (defined)	✓	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓	NO	n/a	✓	✓	NO	NO
Psychological safety (& injury)	✓	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓	NO	NO	n/a	NO	✓	NO	NO
Policies & prevention plans	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	n/a	✓	✓	NO	NO
▪ Harassment	✓	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓	NO	n/a	✓	✓	NO	NO
▪ Sexual harassment	✓	✓	NO	✓	✓	NO	✓	NO	✓	NO	n/a	NO	✓	NO	NO
▪ Bullying	✓	NO	NO	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	✓	NO	n/a	✓	✓	NO	NO
▪ Violence	✓	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓	NO	n/a	✓	✓	NO	NO
Employers obliged to train re:	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	n/a	✓	✓	NO	NO
▪ Harassment	✓	✓	NO	✓	✓	NO	✓	NO	✓	NO	n/a	✓	✓	NO	NO
▪ Sexual harassment	✓	✓	NO	✓	✓	NO	✓	NO	✓	NO	n/a	NO	✓	NO	NO
▪ Bullying	✓	NO	NO	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	✓	NO	n/a	NO	✓	NO	NO
▪ Violence	✓	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓	NO	n/a	NO	✓	NO	NO
On-site complaint process	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓	✓	n/a	✓	✓	NO	NO
Applies to 3 <sup>rd</sup> parties	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	n/a	✓	✓	✓	✓
Toilet facilities	NO	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	n/a	✓	✓	✓	✓
▪ Toilet paper	NO	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	n/a	✓	NO	✓	✓
▪ Soap & water	NO	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	n/a	NO	NO	✓	NO
▪ Hand-drying equipment	NO	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	n/a	NO	NO	✓	✓
▪ Menstrual product disposal	NO	✓	NO	✓	NO	✓	✓	NO	NO	NO	n/a	NO	NO	NO	NO

▪ Cleanliness	NO	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓	✓	n/a	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>OHS (Onshore Oil &amp; Gas)</b>	<b>ICE</b>	<b>CDA</b>	<b>BC</b>	<b>AB</b>	<b>SK</b>	<b>MB</b>	<b>ON</b>	<b>PQ</b>	<b>NB</b>	<b>NS</b>	<b>PEI</b>	<b>NL</b>	<b>YK</b>	<b>NT</b>	<b>NU</b>
Workplace (modern definition)	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	n/a
Harassment (defined)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	NO	n/a
Sexual harassment (defined)	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	✓	NO	NO	NO	✓	NO	NO	NO	n/a
Bullying (defined)	✓	NO	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	n/a
Violence (defined)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	NO	n/a
Psychological safety (& injury)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓	NO	NO	✓	NO	✓	NO	n/a
Policies & prevention plans	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	n/a
▪ Harassment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	NO	n/a
▪ Sexual harassment	✓	✓	NO	✓	✓	NO	✓	NO	✓	NO	✓	NO	✓	NO	n/a
▪ Bullying	✓	NO	✓	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	NO	n/a
▪ Violence	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	NO	n/a
Employers obliged to train re:	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	n/a
▪ Harassment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓	NO	✓	NO	NO	✓	✓	NO	n/a
▪ Sexual harassment	✓	✓	NO	✓	✓	NO	✓	NO	✓	NO	NO	NO	✓	NO	n/a
▪ Bullying	✓	NO	✓	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	✓	NO	NO	NO	✓	NO	n/a
▪ Violence	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓	NO	✓	NO	✓	NO	n/a
On-site complaint process	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	n/a
Applies to 3 <sup>rd</sup> parties	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	n/a
Toilet Facilities	NO	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	n/a
▪ Toilet paper	NO	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓	n/a
▪ Soap & water	NO	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	NO	✓	n/a
▪ Hand-drying equipment	NO	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	NO	✓	n/a
▪ Menstrual product disposal	NO	✓	NO	✓	NO	✓	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	✓	n/a
▪ Cleanliness	NO	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	n/a
<b>OHS (Offshore Oil &amp; Gas)</b>	<b>ICE</b>	<b>CDA</b>	<b>BC</b>	<b>AB</b>	<b>SK</b>	<b>MB</b>	<b>ON</b>	<b>PQ</b>	<b>NB</b>	<b>NS</b>	<b>PEI</b>	<b>NL</b>	<b>YK</b>	<b>NT</b>	<b>NU</b>
Workplace (modern definition)	NO	NO	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	NO	n/a	n/a	NO	NO	NO	n/a	n/a	n/a
Harassment (defined)	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	✓	n/a	n/a	✓	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a
Sexual harassment (defined)	✓	NO	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	✓	n/a	n/a	NO	NO	NO	n/a	n/a	n/a
Bullying (defined)	✓	NO	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	NO	n/a	n/a	NO	NO	NO	n/a	n/a	n/a
Violence (defined)	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	✓	n/a	n/a	✓	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a
Psychological safety (& injury)	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	NO	n/a	n/a	✓	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a
Policies and prevention plans	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	✓	n/a	n/a	✓	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a
▪ Harassment	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	✓	n/a	n/a	✓	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a
▪ Sexual harassment	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	✓	n/a	n/a	✓	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a
▪ Bullying	✓	NO	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	NO	n/a	n/a	NO	NO	NO	n/a	n/a	n/a
▪ Violence	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	✓	n/a	n/a	✓	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a
Employers obliged to train re:	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	✓	n/a	n/a	✓	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a
▪ Harassment	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	✓	n/a	n/a	✓	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a
▪ Sexual harassment	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	✓	n/a	n/a	✓	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a
▪ Bullying	✓	NO	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	NO	n/a	n/a	NO	NO	NO	n/a	n/a	n/a
▪ Violence	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	✓	n/a	n/a	✓	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a
On-site complaint process	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	✓	n/a	n/a	✓	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a
Applies to 3 <sup>rd</sup> parties	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	✓	n/a	n/a	✓	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a
Toilet facilities	NO	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	NO	n/a	n/a	✓	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a
▪ Toilet paper	NO	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	NO	n/a	n/a	✓	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a
▪ Soap & water	NO	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	NO	n/a	n/a	✓	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a
▪ Hand-drying equipment	NO	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	NO	n/a	n/a	✓	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a
▪ Menstrual product disposal	NO	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	NO	n/a	n/a	NO	✓	NO	n/a	n/a	n/a
▪ Cleanliness	NO	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	NO	n/a	n/a	✓	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a

OHS (Nuclear Industry)	ICE	CDA	BC	AB	SK	MB	ON	PQ	NB	NS	PEI	NL	YK	NT	NU
Workplace (modern definition)	n/a	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	NO	n/a
Harassment (defined)	n/a	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	✓	n/a
Sexual harassment (defined)	n/a	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	NO	n/a
Bullying (defined)	n/a	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	NO	n/a
Violence (defined)	n/a	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	✓	n/a
Psychological safety (& injury)	n/a	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	✓	n/a
Policies & prevention plans	n/a	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	✓	n/a
▪ Harassment	n/a	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	✓	n/a
▪ Sexual harassment	n/a	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	✓	n/a
▪ Bullying	n/a	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	NO	n/a
▪ Violence	n/a	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	✓	n/a
Employers obliged to train re:	n/a	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	✓	n/a
▪ Harassment	n/a	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	✓	n/a
▪ Sexual harassment	n/a	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	✓	n/a
▪ Bullying	n/a	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	NO	n/a
▪ Violence	n/a	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	✓	n/a
On-site complaint process	n/a	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	✓	n/a
Applies to 3 <sup>rd</sup> parties	n/a	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	✓	n/a
Toilet Facilities	n/a	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	✓	n/a
▪ Toilet paper	n/a	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	✓	n/a
▪ Soap & water	n/a	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	✓	n/a
▪ Hand-drying equipment	n/a	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	✓	n/a
▪ Menstrual product disposal	n/a	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	✓	n/a
▪ Cleanliness	n/a	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	✓	n/a

## IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

	ICE	CDA	BC	AB	SK	MB	ON	PQ	NB	NS	PEI	NL	YK	NT	NU
Human Rights Commission(er)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO
Human Rights Tribunal	NO	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	NO	NO	NO	✓	✓	✓	✓
Minister for Status of Women	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Gender Equality Directorate	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO
• Legislative oversight	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
• Enforcement authority	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
• Strategic planning	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	NO	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	NO	NO	✓	NO
• Data collection	✓	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	✓	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
• GBA Plus Implementation	✓	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	✓	✓	NO	NO	✓	NO	NO	NO
GE Tribunal (Complaints)	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
GE Advisory Council	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

## STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Public Consultation (in advance of developing strategic plans, action plans and budget plans to achieve gender equality)															
	ICE	CAN	BC	AB	SK	MB	ON	PQ	NB	NS	PEI	NL	YK	NT	NU
Gender Equality	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	✓	✓	✓	NO	NO	NO	✓	NO	NO	NO
Anti-Human Trafficking	✓	✓	NO	✓	NO	NO	✓	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
Gender-Based Violence	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓	NO	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO
Women in STEM	Done	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
Women in Trades	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO

<b>Strategic Plans (to achieve gender equality)</b>																
	<u>ICE</u>	<u>CDA</u>	<u>BC</u>	<u>AB</u>	<u>SK</u>	<u>MB</u>	<u>ON</u>	<u>PQ</u>	<u>NB</u>	<u>NS</u>	<u>PEI</u>	<u>NL</u>	<u>YK</u>	<u>NT</u>	<u>NU</u>	
Gender Equality	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	
Anti-Human Trafficking	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	
Gender-Based Violence	✓	✓	NO	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓	✓	NO	✓	✓	NO	
Women in STEM	Done	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	
Women in Trades	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	
<b>Action Plans (to accompany a strategic plan for achieving gender equality)</b>																
	<u>ICE</u>	<u>CDA</u>	<u>BC</u>	<u>AB</u>	<u>SK</u>	<u>MB</u>	<u>ON</u>	<u>PQ</u>	<u>NB</u>	<u>NS</u>	<u>PEI</u>	<u>NL</u>	<u>YK</u>	<u>NT</u>	<u>NU</u>	
Gender Equality	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	
Anti-Human Trafficking	✓	NO	NO	✓	NO	NO	NO	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	
Gender-Based Violence	✓	✓	✓	NO	NO	NO	✓	✓	✓	NO	NO	NO	✓	✓	NO	
Women in STEM	Done	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	
Women in Trades	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	
<b>Budget Plans (to accompany strategic plans and action plans for achieving gender equality)</b>																
	<u>ICE</u>	<u>CDA</u>	<u>BC</u>	<u>AB</u>	<u>SK</u>	<u>MB</u>	<u>ON</u>	<u>PQ</u>	<u>NB</u>	<u>NS</u>	<u>PEI</u>	<u>NL</u>	<u>YK</u>	<u>NT</u>	<u>NU</u>	
Gender Equality	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	✓	NO	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	
Anti-Human Trafficking	NO	NO	NO	✓	NO	NO	✓	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	
Gender-Based Violence	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Women in STEM	Done	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	
Women in Trades	NO	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	
<b>Implementation Plans (how government departments (Ministries) will implement strategic, action, and budget plans)</b>																
	<u>ICE</u>	<u>CDA</u>	<u>BC</u>	<u>AB</u>	<u>SK</u>	<u>MB</u>	<u>ON</u>	<u>PQ</u>	<u>NB</u>	<u>NS</u>	<u>PEI</u>	<u>NL</u>	<u>YK</u>	<u>NT</u>	<u>NU</u>	
Gender Equality	<b>Disclaimer:</b> The precise implementation of responsibilities assigned in a strategic plan or action plan to individual government departments or ministries is typically outlined in their respective four-year <i>Departmental (Business) Plans</i> (e.g., creating a new unit, hiring additional staff, amending legislation, etc.) and reported on in their end-of-year <i>Results Reports</i> . It was beyond the capacity of this research project to identify precisely which government departments or Ministries are involved in implementing each strategic plan and action plan, and to uncover what details exist in their individual departmental (business) plans and results reports.															
Anti-Human Trafficking																
Gender-Based Violence																
Women in STEM																
Women in Trades																
<b>Communication Plans (progress reports on strategic plans, action plans, and budget plans to achieve gender equality )</b>																
	<u>ICE</u>	<u>CDA</u>	<u>BC</u>	<u>AB</u>	<u>SK</u>	<u>MB</u>	<u>ON</u>	<u>PQ</u>	<u>NB</u>	<u>NS</u>	<u>PEI</u>	<u>NL</u>	<u>YK</u>	<u>NT</u>	<u>NU</u>	
Gender Equality	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	✓	NO	NO	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	
Anti-Human Trafficking	NO	✓	NO	✓	NO	NO	✓	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	
Gender-Based Violence	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓	NO	✓	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	NO	
Women in STEM	Done	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	
Women in Trades	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	
<b>Evaluation Plans (of strategic plans, action plans, budget plans, implementation plans, and communication plans)</b>																
	<u>ICE</u>	<u>CDA</u>	<u>BC</u>	<u>AB</u>	<u>SK</u>	<u>MB</u>	<u>ON</u>	<u>PQ</u>	<u>NB</u>	<u>NS</u>	<u>PEI</u>	<u>NL</u>	<u>YK</u>	<u>NT</u>	<u>NU</u>	
Gender Equality	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	
Anti-Human Trafficking	✓	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	
Gender-Based Violence	✓	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	✓	NO	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	
Women in STEM	Done	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	
Women in Trades	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	

**KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:  
FPT LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORKS**

**Human Rights Legislation**

In response to the *UN Declaration of Human Rights*, issued on December 10, 1948, all FPT governments in Canada enacted human rights legislation to declare equality in law for men and women and/or of all individuals and to prevent discrimination on prohibited grounds (e.g., sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression). However, it took over 50 years for this to be achieved nationwide. Most FPT jurisdictions also established a Human Rights Commission and a tribunal to adjudicate complaints, although there was a delay of several decades in some provinces and territories between the passing of human rights legislation and the establishment of a human rights commission. In the case of British Columbia, the province’s Human Rights Commission was dismantled for almost two decades (from 2002 to 2019), which created a major setback for people living in that province.

The province of Saskatchewan was the first FPT jurisdiction to enact human rights legislation, passing the *Saskatchewan Bill of Rights* in 1947. Over a decade later, in 1960, the Government of Canada enacted the *Canadian Bill of Rights*, the country’s first federal law to protect human rights and fundamental freedoms. Although it was considered groundbreaking legislation, it was limited and ineffective because it applied only to federal and not to provincial and territorial statutes. Between 1960 and 1982, the *Canadian Bill of Rights* was cited in 35 cases and 30 of those cases were rejected by the courts.<sup>77</sup> Although the *Canadian Bill of Rights* is still in effect, it was superseded by the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* in 1982. Eventually, all the provinces and territories in Canada enacted human rights legislation. The Northwest Territories was the last FPT jurisdiction to pass its *Human Rights Act*, which came into force on July 1, 2004.

***The enactment of human rights legislation across Canada:***

1947: <i>Saskatchewan Bill of Rights</i>	1972: HR Commission established (cases adjudicated by the Courts)
1960: <i>Canadian Bill of Rights</i>	1961: HR Commission established
1962: <i>Ontario Human Rights Code</i>	1967: HR Commission established
1963: <i>Nova Scotia Human Rights Act</i>	1967: HR Commission established
1967: <i>New Brunswick Human Rights Act</i>	1976: HR Commission established
1968: <i>PEI An Act Respecting Human Rights</i>	1974: HR Commission established
1969: <i>Newfoundland Human Rights Code</i>	1971: HR Commission established
1970: <i>Manitoba Human Rights Act</i>	1973: HR Commission established
1972: <i>Alberta Human Rights Act</i>	1973: HR Commission established
1973: <i>British Columbia Human Rights Code</i>	1975: HR Commission established
1975: <i>Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms</i>	1977: HR Commission established
1977: <i>Canadian Human Rights Act</i>	(cases adjudicated by the Courts)
1982: <i>Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms</i>	1987: HR Commission established
1987: <i>Yukon Human Rights Act</i>	

2002: British Columbia  
2003: *Nunavut Human Rights Act*  
2004: *NWT Human Rights Act*  
2019: British Columbia

2002: HR Commission **dismantled**  
2003: HR Tribunal established  
2004: HR Commission established  
2019: HR Commissioner appointed

The United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights has declared that even though human rights legislation *prohibits* gender-based discrimination and progress has been made in trying to ensure women's rights, women and girls continue to experience discrimination and violence. As a result, they are denied equality and dignity. Discrimination and violence against women and girls are deeply rooted in the fabric of society and are persistent and *systematic*.<sup>78</sup>

Human rights legislation enshrines the *principle* of equal opportunity and equal treatment of men and women (and all individuals) in matters of employment and occupation. Although women and gender-diverse people have *equality in law* with men through the enactment of human rights legislation in all fourteen FPT jurisdictions in Canada, they have not yet achieved "*equality in fact*." In other words, they are not experiencing equality with men in their day-to-day work lives.

Several issues were identified during the review of human rights legislation across Canada. First, most FPT human rights legislation now prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, gender expression, pregnancy, and childbirth. However, three provinces need to amend their legislation.

**Recommendation #1:** That the one remaining province (SK) add "gender expression" to the list of prohibited grounds in its human rights legislation, as the thirteen other FPT jurisdictions have done.

**Recommendation #2:** That the remaining two provinces (BC, PEI) insert wording into their human rights legislation to protect individuals from discrimination due to the possibility of becoming pregnant, being pregnant, or childbirth, as the other twelve FPT jurisdictions have done.

In 2020, Iceland repealed its gender equality act entitled the *Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men, 2008*. The Icelandic government made a deliberate decision to revise the wording of its new legislation from gender-specific to gender-neutral. Its new gender equality act is entitled the *Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights Irrespective of Gender, 2020*, which states:

"The objective of this Act is to prevent discrimination on the basis of gender and to maintain gender equality and equal opportunities for the genders in all spheres of society. All people shall have equal opportunities to benefit from their own enterprise and to develop their skills, irrespective of gender. The term "gender" in this Act means women, men and persons whose gender is registered as neutral in Registers Iceland, unless otherwise stated."

Donald L. Revell, Retired Chief Legislative Counsel with the Ontario government, and Jessica Vapnek, Lecturer at the UC Hastings College of the Law, explain that since the 1970s, the English-speaking world has successfully transitioned from male-centric language (where “he” was presumed to include women) to a style of legislative drafting that was gender neutral. The result has been that in most jurisdictions, women no longer feel invisible and can see themselves in legislation that applies to them.<sup>79</sup>

Revell and Vapnek further explain that in recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the rights of those who identify as neither male nor female. This group is not represented in traditional gender-neutral drafting and argue for gender-silent wording in legislation:

“Language is an instrument that can be used as a tool to oppress, discriminate, and exclude – or it can equally well be used to advance equality. We believe it is high time to treat non-binary persons with the respect and fairness now accorded to women in legislation. We believe all jurisdictions should embrace **gender-silent** drafting as an honourable way to treat one another in a non-binary world...”<sup>80</sup>

In 2024, the Government of Canada’s Department of Justice issued instructions entitled [Gender-Inclusive Language](#), which include recommended techniques for gender-inclusive legislative language in English (and also French<sup>xiii</sup>) in the drafting of future legislation.

**Recommendation #3:** That all fourteen FPT governments in Canada modernize human rights legislation and use gender-silent language so that instead of using binary and gender-specific terms (e.g., men/women), language becomes non-binary and gender-silent (e.g., individuals) and is inclusive of all.

## Employment Standards Legislation

Since the payment of wages to workers is a fundamental component of employment standards legislation, it needs to declare that employers must give all individuals the same pay for doing the same work (equal pay for equal work) and cross-reference this declaration to the jurisdiction’s human rights legislation (which prohibits discrimination based on sex and gender) and to any pay equity legislation.

There is considerable legislative inconsistency across Canada. Twelve jurisdictions (CDA, BC, AB, MB, ON, PQ, NB, NS, PEI, NL, YK, NT) have equal pay provisions in their human rights legislation, while two (SK, NU) do not. Seven jurisdictions (CDA, SK, MB, ON, NB, NS, YK)

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<sup>xiii</sup> See the article [Rédaction législative inclusive](#) in the *Guide fédéral de jurilinguistique législative française* for recommended techniques in French.

have equal pay provisions in their employment standards legislation, and seven do not (BC, AB, PQ, PEI, NL, NT, NU).

From a worker's point of view, when they read their jurisdiction's employment standards legislation, it may not be clear how best to make a pay equity complaint if the appropriate adjudication process is not clearly stated in the Act. It should be crystal clear whether a worker should submit a pay equity complaint to the Employment Standards Board, Pay Equity Commission(er) or Tribunal, or the Human Rights Commission(er) or Tribunal.

The jurisdiction must determine whether it is appropriate for the Employment Standards Board to handle a pay equity complaint. If there is no Pay Equity Tribunal, it may make the most sense for pay equity complaints to be resolved by the Human Rights Commission. Most FPT human rights commissions are already resolving pay equity issues due to pay equity issues being usually tied to discrimination (gendering of job classes), and it appears that most jurisdictions (even those without pay equity Acts) have incorporated pay equity issues into their human rights complaint systems.

**Recommendation #4:** That the one remaining province (SK) and one remaining territory (NU) amend their human rights legislation so that the principle of pay equity is included, as the other twelve FPT jurisdictions have already done.

**Recommendation #5:** That the one remaining province (SK) and one remaining territory (NU) add "equal pay" provisions to their employment standards legislation, as the other twelve FPT jurisdictions have already done.

**Recommendation #6:** That all fourteen FPT jurisdictions review their employment standards legislation to ensure it:

- 1) Contains equal pay provisions, which cross-reference to the jurisdiction's human rights legislation and any existing pay equity legislation.
- 2) Clearly states the adjudication process to be used to resolve pay equity complaints, whether that be the:
  - a) Employment Standards Board
  - b) Human Rights Tribunal
  - c) Pay Equity Tribunal

### ***Pay Equity Paradox***

The Canadian Human Rights Commission explains that pay equity is internationally recognized as a fundamental human right and is about *equal pay for work of equal value*, which means "that if two different jobs contribute equal value to an employer's operations, then the employees in those jobs should receive equal pay." The Commission further explains that "the idea of 'equal pay for work of equal value' is similar to the idea of comparing apples to oranges—although they are different, they are equally nutritious."<sup>81</sup>

“Equal pay for work of equal value” better addresses the feminization of certain job classes and the underpaying of those professions. Equal pay for work of equal value stipulates that, even when the tasks are different, the pay should be the same because the value of the work is the same. *Employment standards legislation does not currently take this into account.*

“Equal pay for work of equal value” is often stated in human rights legislation rather than in employment standards legislation. This ensures fairness and equality by preventing women and gender-diverse people from being paid less than men for essentially the same job responsibilities, which can negatively impact their economic stability and overall societal well-being. This also ensures fairness and equality by preventing jobs often seen as more feminine from being undervalued and underpaid despite providing equal societal and economic value. These disparities can negatively impact the economic stability and overall societal well-being of those in these roles, who are often women.

Although the right to receive “equal pay for work of equal value” may be declared in human rights legislation, as noted by the Human Rights Commission of Saskatchewan, there can be a significant issue with adjudicating complaints using human rights legislation (see next page).

**Recommendation #7:** That all fourteen (14) FPT jurisdictions review the complaints process contained in their employment standards legislation and their human rights legislation to ensure that the “Pay Equity Paradox” (see next page) is not impeding women and gender-diverse individuals, especially in the private sector, from having their pay equity complaints resolved in a fair and just manner.

## **Pay Transparency Legislation**

On May 10, 2023, the European Parliament adopted [\*Directive \(EU\) 2023/970\*](#) to enhance the application of the principle of equal pay for equal work, or work of equal value, by men and women through pay transparency and enforcement mechanisms. EU member states have been directed to amend their legislation to conform to this newly agreed-upon standard.

Presently, there is considerable inconsistency across Canada regarding pay transparency. Some jurisdictions (BC, AB, NL) have stand-alone pay transparency legislation, and others (ON, PEI, CDA) have limited pay transparency provisions in their employment standards legislation. Five provinces (SK, MB, PQ, NB, NS) and all three territories (YK, NT, NU) have no pay transparency requirements in any legislation.

In March 2023, Human Rights Commissioner of British Columbia Kasari Govender reacted to the tabling of pay transparency legislation in the BC legislature by stating that “while there are some positive elements to the bill, it lacks the approach necessary to make a significant difference on pay equity in the province.”<sup>82</sup> The HR Commissioner pointed out that BC has one of the highest gender pay gaps in Canada (at 17% in 2022) and still lacks proactive pay equity legislation that requires employers to take action to close wage gaps.

### ***The Pay Equity Paradox***

*“During 2004-2005, the Commission had more than 200 pay equity complaints in its system, a large number of which were dismissed by the Chief Commissioner on the basis that they do not fall within the jurisdiction of The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code. Most of the complaints brought to the Commission in recent years invited the Commission to go beyond its limited legislative authority.”*

*Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission  
2004-2005 Annual Report*

The *Saskatchewan Human Rights Code* prohibits gender-based discrimination, particularly with respect to the terms and conditions of employment, including wages. The Human Rights Commission’s viewpoint is that the Code may be violated in situations where it can be proven that a female-dominated job position is paid at a wage rate that is less than a male-dominated job position, if the work performed in the female-dominated job position is obviously of equal (or greater) value to the work being performed in the job position dominated by men. However, the Commission explains the dilemma in adjudicating so many of the pay equity complaints it receives:

“To that very limited extent, the Commission takes the position that it has authority to determine complaints of wage discrimination. Some jurisdictions have established, through pay equity legislation, regulatory schemes for assigning value to various jobs and requiring non-discriminatory pay scales for jobs that are equivalent in value. The *Saskatchewan Human Rights Code* establishes no basis upon which to determine the value of various jobs.”

Consequently, after completing its review of the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code in 1996, the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission recommended in its final report entitled *Renewing the Vision: Human Rights in Saskatchewan*, that the Government of Saskatchewan:

- ❖ Enact proactive pay and comprehensive equity legislation to address discrimination in the setting of women's wages.
- ❖ Create a separate, specialized agency — a Pay Equity Commission — that would be responsible for administering pay equity legislation in Saskatchewan.

Commissioner Govender has pointed out that a critical component missing from the pay transparency legislation is accountability. Specifically, there are no enforcement mechanisms, such as fines or other penalties, in place when employers fail to comply. There is also the absence of a centralized database that enables the assessment of pay gaps and changes over time. The problem with voluntary pay transparency policies is that they do not reduce pay gaps in any meaningful way. She also warned that British Columbia's new pay transparency legislation will not drive "systems-level change," and that "this legislation will be seen as a solution to the gender pay gap when in reality British Columbia is still decades behind other provinces. This legislation only inches us further along—when what we really need are strides towards a more equal economy."<sup>83</sup>

In February 2023, dozens of organizations, advocates, and academics in BC joined in partnership to issue an urgent plea for the provincial government to enact pay equity legislation, helping to close the gender inequality gap. On March 2, 2023, a total of 128 signatories were included in an open letter addressed to Premier David Eby and key cabinet ministers. Signatories called on them to bring in a pay equity act "that enshrines in law the responsibility of all employers to identify and close gaps in pay for work of equal value."<sup>84</sup> The letter stated that the government's plan for pay transparency legislation (which would require employers to report salary data, bonus pay and overtime for different demographics) did not go far enough in addressing the problem of unequal pay between the genders.

Pay transparency legislation is necessary "to close the stubbornly persistent gender wage gap," which is even greater for women who are Indigenous, women of colour, or women who have recently immigrated. According to the most recent data from Statistics Canada, "Women earned 89 cents for every dollar a man earned in 2021... That's an 11.1 percent gap between the sexes. Indigenous women earn 20.1 percent less, and immigrant women who landed as adults earn 20.9 percent less..."<sup>85</sup>

In the November 2024 edition of *Harvard Law Review*, K.S. Mettler explains that one way pay transparency can help shrink the pay gap is by allowing women to negotiate wages or salaries and identify potential discrimination through the disclosure of pay range information on job postings. In addition, Mettler also argues that effective pay transparency also requires benefits transparency.<sup>86</sup>

Across Canada, benefits can include health insurance, life insurance, retirement plans, staff (or Executive) housing, extra compensation for working in remote (rural) locations, company shares, and more.

**Recommendation #8:** That the remaining provinces (SK, MB, ON, PQ, NB, NS, PEI) and territories (YK, NT, NU) enact stand-alone pay transparency legislation, as the provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, and Newfoundland and Labrador have already done; alternatively, issue regulations containing pay transparency provisions as the Government of Canada has done under the *Employment Equity Act*.

**Recommendation #9:** That all FPT pay transparency legislation include, at a very minimum, not only salary data, bonus pay, overtime for different demographics, but also benefits,

which include health insurance, life insurance, retirement plans, staff (or Executive) housing, extra compensation for working in remote (rural) locations, company shares, etc.

## Pay Equity Legislation

*“The cost of wage discrimination over the course of someone’s career can be staggering and has significant impacts on the social and economic well-being of countless women, families and seniors. Pay transparency legislation by itself can provide us with more information about the problem if it is robust enough, but if it doesn’t lay the foundation for complementary pay equity legislation, we will not have the policy tools necessary to correct it.”<sup>87</sup>*

*Kasari Govender, Human Rights Commissioner of British Columbia  
March 7, 2023*

Human rights legislation typically prohibits gender-based discrimination and prohibits employers from paying employees differently for similar work based on a worker’s sex, gender, or other prohibited grounds. However, the complaints-driven process contains no positive legal obligation for employers.

As a result, in Canada, efforts to achieve pay equity have required enormous and prolonged legal battles, *which individual women simply cannot afford to fight, and in one particular case, could not outlive*. Typically, a union (funded by union dues) and supported by staff members who are legal advisors, have been more successful in fighting decades-long pay equity complaints. In Canadian labour history, there are several examples of prolonged and agonizing court battles that took place after a pay equity complaint. These include:

- ❖ a 13-year battle with the Government of the Northwest Territories (see [Appendix 2](#))
- ❖ a 15-year battle with Air Canada (see [Appendix 2](#))
- ❖ a 16-year battle with the Government of Canada (see story on next page)
- ❖ a 28-year battle with Canada Post (see [Appendix 2](#))

In 2018, the Government of Canada enacted the [Act to Establish a Proactive Pay Equity Regime within the Federal Public and Private Sectors, 2018](#) (Article 1 gives it the “short title” as *The Pay Equity Act*), which came into force on Aug 31, 2021. It replaced the solely complaint-based system in Section 11 of the *Canadian Human Rights Act* with a proactive pay equity system for federally regulated public service and private-sector employers with 10 or more employees.

Currently, seven provinces in Canada (MB, ON, PQ, NB, NS, PEI, NL) have implemented proactive pay equity legislation. The remaining six provinces and territories (BC, AB, SK, YK, NT, NU) still have legislation that only reacts to complaints and fails to place any legal obligation on employers to implement pay equity.

### **16-Year Battle for Pay Equity in the Federal Public Service (1983 - 1999)**

In August 1983, the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) filed a complaint with the Canadian Human Rights Commission. The PSAC alleged that the federal government was violating its own human rights legislation, namely the *Canadian Human Rights Act*, by denying equal pay for work of equal value to its workers, the vast majority of whom were women, employed in a wide range of clerical positions.

On March 8, 1985 (International Women's Day), in response to the PSAC's human rights complaint, the Canadian government announced a joint union-management initiative to study the federal government's pay system. The study took four (4) years to complete. The results showed a wage gap between male and female employees doing work of equal value. However, the federal government backed away from the study's conclusions.

Consequently, in 1990, the PSAC filed a second complaint with the Canadian Human Rights Commission. This time, the complaint included the original group of clerical workers and other female-dominated job classifications including "secretarial workers, hospital workers, librarians, education support staff and data processing employees."

The Canadian Human Rights Commission referred the case to a Human Rights Tribunal, the members of which were appointed in January 1991. The Government of Canada made many court appearances to challenge the Tribunal's jurisdiction to hear the case. The government lost each time, and the Tribunal proceeded to conduct over 260 days of hearings during a six-year period, which ended in January 1997.

On October 29, 1999, the PSAC won its long battle with the Treasury Board over pay equity for workers in the federal public service. The victory resulted in the payment of retroactive pay (with interest) to approximately 230,000 PSAC members (and former members). The pay adjustments totalled \$3 billion. Furthermore, the salaries for various female-dominated classifications were adjusted to adhere to the legal obligation to implement equal pay for work of equal value.

None of Canada's fourteen (14) FPT jurisdictions has implemented pay equity legislation similar to that of Iceland. Since 2017, employers in Iceland have been legally required to submit proof that they have implemented pay equity, which is confirmed or certified for the next three years. Iceland even issues a pay equity symbol that employers can post in their workplace.

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### ***Iceland's Pay Equity Symbol***



*In 2017, [Equal Pay Certification](#) came into effect in Iceland. Workplaces with 25+ employees are legally obliged to obtain certification. An Employer's "equal pay system" must undergo an audit by an independent certification body. When an Employer meets all the criteria of the [Equal Pay Standard](#), then the Equality Office of Iceland awards it an equal pay certificate and the [Equal Pay logo](#). This accreditation affirms the Employer's commitment to fair pay practices and pay equity within its organization.*



*"The logo shows an image showing a dial, a stamp, runes, and the smiling faces of two different individuals. The shape of the logo is reminiscent of a coin or money, thus indicating that the individuals shown there are valued equally."  
[\(webpage\)](#)*

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Eight of the fourteen FPT jurisdictions (CDA, MB, ON, PQ, NB, NS, PEI, NL) have enacted stand-alone pay equity legislation. For example, Ontario and Quebec implemented pay equity legislation that applies not only to public service (government) workers and para-public (quasi-government) workers but also to private sector workers (if there are more than 10 employees).

However, if not done properly, as in the case of Newfoundland and Labrador (see the story on the next page), these legislative moves can meet with a great deal of criticism from women who feel that their needs and opinions, based on thorough and meticulous research, were ignored and not taken into consideration as the government drafted legislation.

In 2001, the New Democratic Party (NDP) Government of British Columbia passed [legislation](#) to add pay equity provisions to the [British Columbia Human Rights Code, 1996](#) (current to Aug 19, 2025). The new provisions allowed any woman who believed she was not being paid as much as a man (in the same workplace doing similar work) to file a complaint with the BC Human Rights Commission. *However, the legislation was repealed several months later by the new Liberal government.* The public was advised that the action taken did not necessarily mean the end of pay equity in British Columbia. Then Attorney General Geoff Plant announced that the government had appointed an independent task force "to review

**PAY EQUITY**  
**Newfoundland and Labrador**

On International Women's Day, March 8, 2017, Gerry Rogers, a female Member of Newfoundland and Labrador's House of Assembly (MHA), introduced a formal motion calling for the government to start the process to enact pay equity legislation. Five years later, on April 17, 2022, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador announced the long-awaited pay equity legislation.

However, the St. John's Status of Women Council [criticized the new legislation](#) for missing the mark. First, when the legislation came into effect on April 1, 2023, it only applied to core government workers, a relatively small group of workers within the public sector. As a result, the legislation only benefited a very tiny percentage of workers in the province, and the provincial government gave no timeline regarding when workers in healthcare, education, and the private sector would be added to the legislation. Second, during the previous summer, the St. John's Status of Women Council released a report detailing best practices and outlining what the Council wished to see in pay equity legislation. However, the Council was disappointed to see that these best practices "seem to be missing from the government's legislation." Third, the Council noted that the Pay Equity Officer appointed by the provincial government does not report to the public concerning the legislation's oversight and maintenance. Fourth, there were problems with the consultation process. The Council's advocacy coordinator, Bridget Clarke, explained that there was no consultation process in which the St. John's Status of Women Council or any of its partners were able to participate, and that excluding groups like the Council was a "misstep" by the government. Her conclusion was that "major gaps in pay equity legislation could've been avoided had there been more engagement and consultation with community leaders." In addition, she commented that, "At this point, we've been told that consultation is really coming after the bulk of the legislation has been drafted. And... I think anyone can see that that really doesn't allow for meaningful engagement from the very beginning."

On April 12, 2023, a year after the legislation was announced, the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour released a report entitled *Newfoundland and Labrador Needs an Equality Reset*, calling for a complete reset of and [ten amendments](#) to the province's recently enacted pay equity legislation, and meaningful conversations with workers' representatives. The current legislation was not judged to be effective for a province in which women, on average, earn only 66 percent (%) of what men do in a year, and ineffective in achieving the vision and mission of the provincial government's Office of Women and Gender Equality's of "true social, legal, cultural, and economic equality in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador." The Workers Action Network joined the provincial Federation of Labour in [calling for an overhaul](#) of the legislation.

In October 2024, nearly a year after the deadline, the St. John's Status of Women Council expressed its concern that the pay equity regulations, which the provincial government [promised](#) to deliver by December 31, 2023, were nowhere to be found.

**NOTE:** As of September 2025, no evidence can be found that the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has issued the promised pay equity regulations.

options, models, costs and effectiveness of private sector pay equity legislation and to make recommendations to the Legislature.”<sup>88</sup> However, almost 25 years later, stand-alone pay equity legislation has yet to be passed.

Across the country, FPT Employment Standards Offices tend to be overwhelmed with complaints. It can take many months for a complaint about unfair employment practices even to be considered, let alone acted upon. Therefore, it is often more effective to establish a separate adjudication process that addresses complaints specifically about the lack of pay equity.

FPT human rights legislation and/or employment standards legislation across Canada gives some recourse for pay discrimination. However, these Acts are based on complaints. Therefore, it places the onus on employees to report pay discrimination, rather than shifting the responsibility to employers to prevent it proactively. FPT governments need to develop legislation that contains legal obligations for employers to demonstrate that they have implemented pay equity. The responsibility must be placed on employers.

**Recommendation #10:** That the remaining eight provinces (BC, AB, SK, MB, NB, NS, PEI, NL) and three territories (YK, NT, NU) enact proactive pay equity legislation, as the Governments of Canada, Ontario and Quebec (CDA, ON, PQ) have done, which covers:

- 1) public service (government) workers,
- 2) para-public service (quasi-government)<sup>xiv</sup> workers, and
- 3) private sector employees working in private businesses with 10 or more employees.

**Recommendation #11:** That the three remaining provinces (BC, AB, SK) and the three territories of (YK, NT, NU) enact or amend pay equity legislation so that, in addition to a complaints-based resolution process, all of the following employers have a legal obligation to submit proof, at regular intervals (e.g., every three years), that they have implemented pay equity:

- 1) Public service employers (government departments/Ministries),
- 2) Para-public employers (quasi-government agencies), and
- 3) Private-sector employers with 10 or more employees.

**Recommendation #12:** That the governments of all fourteen FPT jurisdictions enact (or amend) pay equity legislation so that it contains the legal obligation for the respective FPT government to issue a pay equity symbol to certify that employers have submitted the evidence to prove that they have implemented pay equity in their workplace(s).

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<sup>xiv</sup> A quasi-government agency is a business entity that provides specific governmental services. Due to their special status, they are not quite a governmental agency but are not private businesses either.

## Gender Equality Legislation

Across Canada, there is a lack of legislation in each of Canada's fourteen FPT jurisdictions to formally establish a gender equality directorate, to give it the same kind of powers and authority as the gender equality directorate found in Iceland and many EU countries (e.g., Lithuania), and that contains a legal obligation for the government to *maintain* a strategic plan and the necessary action plan(s) and budget plan(s) for achieving gender equality. This type of gender equality legislation has been instrumental in closing the gender gap in Iceland and many other European countries. Due to the division of powers within Canadian federalism, each of Canada's fourteen (14) FPT jurisdictions must address gender equality within its respective jurisdictional responsibilities. Nevertheless, the federal government has a tremendous opportunity to play a leadership role and facilitate the coordination of efforts nationwide.

Unfortunately, all FPT gender equality directorates (or their equivalents) in Canada remain under-empowered. In one of the two cases where a piece of legislation does exist, Article 3 of the [\*Department for Women and Gender Equality Act, 2018\*](#) (current to Aug 11, 2025), only authorizes the Minister to recommend policies and programs, undertake research related to those policies and programs, and distribute grants and contributions. On a practical level, WAGE Canada has essentially been left in a state of "analysis paralysis." It has not been adequately empowered to facilitate the achievement of gender equality across Canada. There is no gender equality legislation that WAGE (Canada) is responsible for implementing, and there is no legal obligation to maintain a national strategic plan for achieving gender equality and to bring it forward to the Parliament of Canada for approval every four years, within one year of the most recent federal election.

In Canadian jurisprudence, several pieces of legislation contain a legal obligation to maintain a strategic plan and specify the necessary components of the plan. The provinces of Ontario and Quebec have demonstrated this "best practice" in several pieces of their provincial legislation:

- ❖ The [\*Ontario Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy Act, 2021\*](#) (current to Aug 14, 2025), which contains the legal obligation for the Government of Ontario to maintain an anti-human trafficking strategy that aims to end human trafficking in Ontario and support persons who have experienced human trafficking and states the necessary components of the plan.
- ❖ The [\*Ontario Anti-Racism Act, 2017\*](#) (current to Aug 12, 2025) contains the legal obligation for the Government of Ontario to maintain an anti-racism strategy that aims to eliminate systemic racism and advance racial equity and states the necessary components of the plan.
- ❖ The [\*Ontario Poverty Reduction Act, 2009\*](#), contains the legal obligation for the Government of Ontario to maintain the poverty reduction strategy set out in *Breaking*

*the Cycle — Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy* and states the necessary components of the plan.

- ❖ The *Quebec Act Respecting Occupational Health and Safety, 1979* (current to Apr 01, 2025) contains the legal obligation for the Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail (Commission for Standards, Equity, Health and Safety at Work) to have a strategic plan, which must be tabled in the House of Assembly to be reviewed by a Parliamentary committee, and a legal obligation to submit a follow-up results report (see Articles 161.1-161.5, 163, and 163.1).
- ❖ The *Quebec Act Respecting the Governance of State-Owned Enterprises, 2006* (current to Apr 01, 2025), which contains the legal obligation for a state-owned enterprise to develop a strategic plan which contains mandated components (see Article 34) and to submit the plan to the Government for approval and be tabled in the National Assembly (see Article 35).

**Recommendation #13:** That the governments of all fourteen (14) FPT jurisdictions in Canada enact gender equality legislation similar to that passed by the Icelandic Government, which:

- ❖ Contains the legal obligation for the respective FPT government to **maintain** a 4-year gender equality strategic plan and the associated action plan(s) and budget plan(s).
- ❖ Formally establishes the jurisdiction's Gender Equality Directorate and outlines its legal obligation to:
  - Implement all of the jurisdiction's gender equality legislation.
  - Collect the necessary data regarding gender equality.
  - Evaluate the government's gender equality strategic plans, action plans, budget plans, implementation plans, communications plans, evaluation plans, etc.
  - Issue pay-equity certification to employers for the next 3-year period.
- ❖ Formally establishes the jurisdiction's Gender Equality Advisory Council and its responsibility to:
  - Carry out public consultation every two years for strategic planning purposes.
  - To meet annually with the Minister responsible for the Status of Women (and Gender Equality), and the Gender Equality Directorate, in order to give advice to their jurisdiction's government.
- ❖ Formally establishes the jurisdiction's Gender Equality Tribunal (adjudication process).
- ❖ Contains the legal obligation for municipal governments, unions, universities, colleges, Boards of Education, and public schools (K-12) to develop gender equality strategic plans and action plans.

## **ADDITIONAL LEGISLATIVE CHANGES TO ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY IN ICELAND**

Iceland's Directorate of Equality, a special institution under the administration of the Prime Minister, monitors the implementation of the following pieces of equality legislation:

- ❖ [Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights Irrespective of Gender, no 150/2020](#)
- ❖ [Act on the Administration of Matters Concerning Equality, no. 151/2020](#)
- ❖ [Act on Equal Treatment Irrespective of Race and Ethnic Origin, no. 85/2018](#)
- ❖ [Act Amending the Act on Equal Treatment Irrespective of Race and Ethnic Origin, no. 85/2018 \(adding more discrimination factors\)](#)
- ❖ [Act on Equal Treatment in the Labour Market, no. 86/2018](#)

The Government of Iceland also made other legislative changes to close the gender equality gap. In 2009, Iceland passed legislation to ban the entire sex trade for gender-equality reasons. By-law No. 54/2009 was enacted on Apr 30, 2010, to amend paragraph 206 of the *General Penal Code* No. 19/1940. The passing of this law was seen as a victory against the sexual exploitation of women and as leading the way on women's equality, based on recognizing women as equal citizens rather than commodities for sale.

Iceland's new understanding of gender equality means no woman is for sale. It is illegal to advertise and to benefit from prostitution, e.g., through pimping and other means. At the time the law was passed, there was confidence that the law would create a change in attitudes towards women, and that "the men of Iceland will just have to get used to the idea that women are not for sale."\*

In 2010, amendment No. 85/2010 was made to the *Act on Restaurants, Accommodation Establishments and Entertainment* to ban these businesses from profiting from the nudity of their employees. That means no strip clubs, no lap dancing, no hiring of topless waitresses, and no pornography.

In 2010, Iceland also passed a law requiring company boards to have a minimum of 40% of women or men on corporate boards of directors in all state-owned enterprises, publicly traded firms, and all private limited companies with 50 or more employees (see amendment No. 13/2010 to the *Act respecting Public Limited Companies* No.2/1995). As a result, by 2021, women occupied about 42% of managerial roles and 40% of parliamentary positions in Iceland.

\* Bindel, J. (2010, March 25). [Iceland: the world's most feminist country](#). The Guardian. Paragraph 12.

## Equal Representation (Gender Parity) Legislation

Women comprise half the adult population in Canada. Statistics Canada reported that, as of July 1, 2024, men and women were close to numerical parity, with 20,638,255 men and 20,650,344 women living in Canada.<sup>89</sup> This means there were slightly more women than men.

Women should have the right to equal representation as citizens. However, according to Statistics Canada, in 2023, 69.4% of federally elected officials (Members of Parliament) were men, and 30.6% were women.<sup>90</sup> Moving from the federal to the provincial-territorial level, women are better represented in provincial and territorial legislatures, where they currently constitute approximately 35% of elected positions.<sup>91</sup>

Before the creation of the territory of Nunavut in 1999, the Nunavut Implementation Commission developed a [proposal](#) to promote gender equality in the new territorial legislature by creating electoral districts that would each elect one man and one woman. The resulting assembly with gender parity would have been a world's first, but this proposal received only 43% of the vote and was defeated. Twenty-five years later, in 2024, a member of the Nunavut Implementation Commission wrote a [reflection](#) about the “opportunity lost” for achieving gender parity in the newly created territory.

In 2004, the New Brunswick Advisory Council on the Status of Women called for equal representation. It made the following recommendations in its brief entitled [Women and Electoral Reform in New Brunswick](#), which was submitted to the New Brunswick Commission on Legislative Democracy:

*Recommendation 5:* That legislators and representatives of the First Nations communities decide on formulas for the allocation of at least two seats in the New Brunswick Legislative Assembly for elected representatives of the First Nations peoples, and for the fair representation of women and men in these seats.

*Recommendation 6:* That the provincial government set a target of equal proportions of women and men on provincial bodies and adopt a proactive approach to recruit and select potential female appointees. Vacancies on provincial agencies, boards and commissions should be publicly advertised, and the government should systematically use and promote existing databases such as the Advisory Council's Talent Bank to identify potential appointees.

Except in the province of Quebec, there are no laws in the remaining FPT jurisdictions requiring the equal representation of men and women on the Boards of Directors of crown corporations. In 2007, the Government of Quebec brought into force the [Act Respecting the Governance of State-Owned Enterprises, 2006](#) (current to Apr 01, 2025), which states in Article 43(2) that the Government must establish a policy, which contains the objective “that the boards of directors of the enterprises as a group include an equal number of women and men...” The law applies to Quebec's state-owned enterprises (crown corporations), such as

Hydro-Quebec, the Société de la Place des Arts de Montréal, and Héma-Quebec.<sup>xv</sup> When the law came into force in 2006, women accounted for 31% of Board members within state-owned enterprises in Quebec; in 2022, the number had risen to 53%.<sup>92</sup> More broadly in Canada, men held 70.2% and women held 29.8% of the total Board of Directors positions as of July 31, 2024, of the 610 companies (including those in Quebec) that had disclosed the number of women Directors on their Boards.<sup>93</sup>

**Recommendation #14:** That the Government of Canada and the remaining twelve (12) provinces and territories implement the best practice demonstrated by the Government of Quebec and enact equal representation legislation, requiring crown (state-owned) corporations to appoint or elect, based on transparency and merit, 50% women members to their Board of Directors.

## Domestic (Family) Violence Legislation

In June 2022, after the Coroner’s Inquest into the triple femicide of Carol Culleton, Anastasia Kuzyk, and Nathalie Warmerdam, the Coroner’s top recommendation was for the Government of Ontario to “Formally declare intimate partner violence an epidemic.”<sup>94</sup> Three years later, in 2025, [100 municipalities](#) in Ontario, including the cities of Toronto and Mississauga, have formally declared intimate-partner violence an epidemic.

Anti-violence advocates have called for the Government of Ontario to do the same and to take decisive action. In support, four female Members of the Provincial Parliament (MPPs) co-sponsored [Bill 173, An Act Respecting Intimate Partner Violence, 2024](#), which received first and second reading on April 10, 2024, and is still before a [committee](#) to decide whether to pass it or not.

The draft legislation would be more effective if it contained a legal obligation for the Government of Ontario always to maintain a strategic plan for preventing and eliminating intimate-partner, domestic (family) violence and violence against Indigenous women and two-spirit+ people. Ontario’s recently created Indigenous Women’s Advisory Council has called for the Government of Ontario to pass legislation to ensure that the current *Pathways to Safety* strategy “remains a priority for future governments, in the same way that Ontario has legislated a response to human trafficking (Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy Act, 2021), racism (Anti-Racism Act, 2017), and poverty reduction (Poverty Reduction Act, 2009).”<sup>95</sup>

**Recommendation #15:** That the Government of Ontario enact legislation to create a legal obligation for the Ontario government to always maintain a strategic plan to prevent and eliminate gender-based violence (e.g. domestic, family, and violence against Indigenous women and girls, two spirit+ people, etc.), in response to the recommendation made by the Ontario Indigenous Women’s Advisory Council.

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<sup>xv</sup> The law does not require parity on the Board of Directors of publicly traded or private companies in Quebec.

**Recommendation #16:** That the Government of Canada and the remaining twelve provinces and territories enact legislation to create a legal obligation for the government of their respective jurisdiction to maintain a strategic plan and the necessary action plan(s) to prevent and eliminate domestic (family) violence and gender-based violence against Indigenous women and girls, two-spirit+ people, etc.

According to the law firm Baker McKenzie, “Some of the biggest problems facing Canada are the disparities in provincial and territorial laws (even so far as vastly different definitions of what constitutes domestic violence).”<sup>96</sup>

**Recommendation #17:** THAT the remaining nine provinces (AB, SK, MB, ON, PQ, NB, NS, PEI, NL) and three territories (YK, NT, NU) amend their domestic violence legislation so that it contains a similar definition as the one found in the *British Columbia Family Law Act*:

1. In this Act,  
“family violence” includes, with or without an intent to harm, a family member,
  - (a) physical abuse of a family member, including forced confinement or deprivation of the necessities of life, but not including the use of reasonable force to protect oneself or others from harm,
  - (b) sexual abuse of a family member,
  - (c) attempts to physically or sexually abuse a family member,
  - (d) psychological or emotional abuse of a family member, including
    - (i) intimidation, harassment, coercion or threats, including threats respecting other persons, pets or property,
    - (ii) unreasonable restrictions on, or prevention of, a family member's financial or personal autonomy,
    - (iii) stalking or following of the family member, and
    - (iv) intentional damage to property, and
  - (e) in the case of a child, direct or indirect exposure to family violence;

## **Anti-Human Trafficking Legislation**

According to Statistics Canada, from 2013 to 2023, there has been an overall year-over-year increase in the number of police-reported incidents of human trafficking. During this 10-year period, the provinces of Nova Scotia and Ontario had the highest average annual rates of police-reported human trafficking. Statistics Canada admits that “official statistics only give a partial picture of human trafficking in Canada due to the crime’s hidden and underreported nature.”<sup>97</sup>

In 2025, the lack of legislation containing the legal obligation for the federal government to always maintain a national anti-human trafficking strategy (and the necessary action plans) and to carry out the necessary public consultations has created a huge dilemma for organizations that were working diligently on combatting human trafficking. The Government of Canada’s 5-year *National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking 2019-2024*

expired on December 31, 2024, and *there was no new strategic plan to replace it. Furthermore, the government could not say when a new plan would be ready.* The news outlet, The Pointer, which was investigating the issue, reported: “No timeline for a draft of an updated strategy or consultations was provided by the government, with the spokesperson only stating things are ‘in the early planning stages.’”<sup>98</sup>

This occurred at a time when, according to the Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking (CCET), “this brutal victimization of girls and women has continued to increase in all corners of the country.”<sup>99</sup> A major concern was that when the previous strategy expired in 2016, it took almost three years for the federal government to introduce a new strategy.

An effort had been made in the Canadian Senate to avoid the disaster of having a strategy due to expire with no new strategy to replace it. On May 09, 2023, 19 months before the 2019-2024 national strategy was due to expire, [\*Bill S-263, An Act respecting the National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking\*](#), received first reading. The draft Bill contained the legal obligation for the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness to fulfill Canada’s obligations under international agreements, maintain and update the National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking, conduct public consultations (and with whom), and review the national strategy every five years and table those reviews in Parliament.

In contrast to the Government of Canada, the province of Ontario enacted its [\*Combating Human Trafficking Act, 2021\*](#), which imposes a legal obligation on the Ontario government to “maintain an anti-human trafficking strategy that aims to end human trafficking in Ontario”<sup>100</sup> (see Section 2(1)). No other province or territory has yet implemented this best practice of enacting anti-human trafficking legislation containing the legal obligation for all future governments to always maintain a strategic plan to combat human trafficking.

There have also been recent calls for the development of an anti-human trafficking strategy for the province of New Brunswick.<sup>101</sup> Less than a year ago, in November 2024, a conference was held in Fredericton to facilitate the collaboration of survivors, advocates, policy makers, and community members to find ways to combat human trafficking and support survivors. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) has been advocating for the provincial government to establish a dedicated human trafficking unit in New Brunswick, as has already been done in the adjoining province of Nova Scotia, which has been busy laying charges of sex and labour trafficking offences.

In a written statement, Public Safety Minister Robert Gauvin responded, “I recognize the urgency of this file and will be engaging with officials within government departments, our policing partners, and experts in this field, as well as survivors to learn more about human trafficking within New Brunswick.”<sup>102</sup> Although he couldn’t say what would come from having those conversations, he further stated that there was work to be done and committed to taking the appropriate action.

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## HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN CANADA'S NORTH

Yukon, the Northwest Territories, and Nunavut, the three territories in Canada's north, are not immune to human trafficking because of their geographical remoteness and smaller populations (compared to larger provinces such as Ontario).

In 2013, a 146-page report, entitled *Service and Capacity Review For Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking in Nunavut*, was released. The report, prepared for the federal Department of Justice, was written by Helen Roos, President of Roos-Remillard Consulting Services and the Chair of the Ottawa Coalition to End Human Trafficking. The report contained dozens of disturbing stories from Inuit human-trafficking victims and from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). "[T]he sheer volume of stories seems to imply sexual exploitation is widespread among Inuit in Nunavut and beyond." [[Nunatsiaq News story](#)] ([Ottawa Citizen story](#)).

In 2014, Sgt. André Menoche, who was the head of the RCMP's Human Trafficking National Coordination Centre, warned that the human trafficking situation in Nunavut could get worse because it involves organized crime, which, although generally concentrated in large southern cities, can become a factor in northern crime and exploitation. "Nunavut is not an exception," Menoche said. In 2016, researcher Helen Roos reported that human trafficking is still happening in Nunavut and that up to 20 percent of Nunavut youth could be victims of trafficking.<sup>103</sup>

In 2017, for the first time, a man was charged with human trafficking in the Northwest Territories. Sgt. Dean Riou, who led the Federal Investigations Unit at the RCMP's G Division, announced that a woman rescued in Yellowknife had been brought to the capital city to be exploited in the sex trade industry. "We are aware of vulnerable women from the Northwest Territories who have been brought to other communities to be exploited in the sex trade," reported Riou. "We are also aware of women from other jurisdictions being brought up to Yellowknife for that same purpose."<sup>104</sup>

In 2018, after a 3-year study by the Yukon Status of Women Council, it was announced that the sex trade is alive and well in Yukon.<sup>105</sup>

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**Recommendation #18:** That the remaining six provinces (BC, PQ, NB, NS, PEI, NL) and three territories (YK, NT, NU) enact legislation to prevent and eliminate human trafficking, a best practice already implemented by the provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario.

**Recommendation #19:** The Government of Canada and the remaining nine provinces (BC, AB, SK, MB, PQ, NB, NS, PEI, NL) and three territories (YK, NT, NU) either enact new or amend existing anti-human-trafficking strategy legislation (as the province of Ontario has already

done with its [Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy Act, 2021](#)) to ensure that the legislation contains the legal obligations for the government, regardless of which political party is in power to:

- ❖ Always maintain a 4-year strategic plan and the necessary action plan(s) to eliminate human trafficking in that jurisdiction.
- ❖ Consult with stakeholders every two (2) years during a 4-year strategic plan and/or action plan.
- ❖ Collect the necessary data to measure the results of efforts made to eliminate human trafficking.
- ❖ Carry out a formal evaluation of the jurisdiction's strategic plan, action plan(s), budget plan, implementation plan, and communications plan.

Twenty years ago, in a meeting in Warsaw, Poland, the Council of Europe made history. On 16 May 2005, at the Warsaw Summit of Heads of State and Government, the [Council of Europe Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings, 2005](#), was opened for signature. Fourteen (14) member states signed on the first day. Today, all Council of Europe member states have ratified the [Convention](#), and several non-member states have also joined it.

Article 36 of the Convention established the [Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings](#) (GRETA), which is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Convention by the member states of the Council of Europe and other signatories. GRETA comprises a minimum of 10 and a maximum of 15 members who are selected from member states based on their competence in the areas covered by the Convention. Their term of membership is four years, renewable once. The Convention emphasizes the importance of ensuring geographical and gender balance, as well as multidisciplinary expertise, when electing GRETA members. It stipulates that GRETA members sit in their individual capacity and must be independent and impartial in the exercise of their functions. GRETA meets in plenary sessions three times a year, conducts visits, and prepares and publishes country reports that evaluate the legislative and other measures taken by member states and other signatories to implement the provisions of the Convention. It also publishes regular reports on its activities.

**[Recommendation #20:](#)** That the Prime Minister of Canada immediately call a First Ministers Conference to discuss the drafting of a *Canadian Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings* and to issue a consultation paper to seek input from provincial and territorial governments, Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous governments, experts, stakeholders, and survivors from across Canada to develop a national strategic plan and the accompanying action plan(s) to combat and eliminate human trafficking across Canada.

**[Recommendation #21:](#)** That the Government of Canada immediately establish a national group of experts on action to prevent human trafficking to monitor and evaluate the legislative and other measures taken by all fourteen (14) FPT jurisdictions, and to publish annual reports on progress being made and issues that still need to be addressed.

## KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY LEGISLATION

Occupational health and safety legislation complements human rights legislation. It can play a crucial role in ensuring that equality in law becomes equality in fact, so that women and gender-diverse individuals experience being treated with respect and as equal to men in their day-to-day work life.

SETT workplaces need to be safe, inclusive, and welcoming environments that promote equality and respect. However, many women and gender-diverse people in SETT still face harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, and violence in the workplace. The statistics get worse for people of colour, people with disabilities, and Indigenous peoples.

### ***The Reality of Unsafe Workplaces: What the Numbers Say***

Group	Key Statistic	Source
Women workers	<b>48%</b> of women have experienced workplace harassment or sexual assault	Statistics Canada, Harassment in Canadian Workplaces (2020)
2SLGBTQ+ workers	<b>62%</b> reported sexual harassment or violence in the workplace	Canadian Labour Congress, Harassment and Violence in Canadian Workplaces (2022)
Workers with disabilities	<b>76%</b> reported harassment or violence; 55% reported sexual harassment	Canadian Labour Congress, Harassment and Violence in Canadian Workplaces (2022)
Indigenous workers	<b>79%</b> reported harassment or violence; 48% faced sexual harassment	Canadian Labour Congress, Harassment and Violence in Canadian Workplaces (2022)
African-Canadian workers	No consistent national stat, but regional reports (e.g., Nova Scotia) show over <b>60%</b> experience race-based harassment	African Nova Scotian Decades for People of African Descent Coalition, Workplace Racism Report (2022)
Immigrant workers	<b>35%</b> of immigrant women and 20% of immigrant men reported workplace harassment or sexual assault	Statistics Canada, Harassment in Canadian Workplaces (2020)
Canadian-born Men	<b>36%</b> have experienced workplace harassment or sexual assault	Statistics Canada, Harassment in Canadian Workplaces (2020)

Credit: Lauren Coady, Glooscap Health and Safety Consulting

### Sexual Harassment in the Workplace:

On Feb 12, 2024, Statistics Canada released new findings in its [\*Gender Results Framework: A New Data Table on Workplace Harassment\*](#). They announced that in Canadian workplaces, 44% of women (and 29% of men) reported experiencing inappropriate sexualized behaviours, which include inappropriate verbal and non-verbal communication, behaviour related to sexually explicit materials, and unwanted physical contact or suggested sexual relations. In the 25 to 34 age group, 57% of women (and 37% of men) experienced inappropriate sexualized behaviours in the workplace.<sup>106</sup>

## Bullying in the Workplace:

According to Drs. Ruth and Gary Namie at the Workplace Bullying Institute, *abuse in the workplace “is the only form of abuse ... that is not yet taboo. All other forms have been condemned – abuse of children, spouses, partners—while bullying at work is still considered a normal, inevitable, or even a necessary business practice.”*<sup>107</sup>

Of the fourteen (14) FPT jurisdictions in Canada, only five provinces (BC, AB, NB, PEI, NL) and one territory (YK) prohibit “bullying” in their occupational health and safety legislation. Unlike Iceland, none of the six jurisdictions in Canada defines “bullying.” Typically, it is mentioned as a type of harassment or is part of a hybrid (combined) definition with harassment.

Bullying can be violent, but most workplace bullying is subtle and often happens within the rules (e.g., scheduling hours of work, assigning work duties, setting deadlines, etc.).

## Sexual Violence in the Workplace

On Feb 12, 2024, Statistics Canada released new findings based on the results of its [Survey on Sexual Misconduct at Work, 2020](#), in which it was revealed that 13 per cent of women (and 3% of men) reported sexual assaults in the workplace.<sup>108</sup> Sexual assault was defined as sexual attacks, unwanted sexual touching, and sexual activity to which the victim was unable to consent because they were manipulated, coerced, intoxicated, or forced in another way. In addition, certain age groups are more severely targeted than others:

“Canadians aged 25 to 34 experience the highest rate of workplace harassment or sexual abuse, with 60 percent of women and 39 percent of men reporting such experiences. Inappropriate sexualized behaviour reported was nearly double for women in this age group at 57 percent, with 37 percent for men.”<sup>109</sup>

## ***The Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019***

It is essential to note that on January 30, 2024, the Government of Canada issued a [news release](#) announcing that the [Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019](#), the first-ever global treaty on ending violence and harassment at work, had formally entered into force in Canada.

There is much work to be done to align all FPT jurisdictions in Canada with the obligations (see next page) of the international treaty, so that workplaces become safer for all workers, especially women in SETT.

## **THE NEED TO IMPLEMENT THE VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT CONVENTION, 2019**

The desire to protect workers from harassment, sexual harassment, and violence in various manifestations of the “workplace” was powerfully demonstrated at the international level in 2019, when the [C190 – Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019](#), was presented to delegates from countries around the world.

Canada [ratified](#) the Convention on January 30, 2023. The challenge now is to fulfill these obligations, some of which include:

### *Article 3*

This Convention applies to violence and harassment in the world of work occurring in the course of, linked with, or arising out of work:

- (a) in **the workplace, including public and private spaces** where they are a place of work;
- (b) in places where the worker is paid, takes a rest break or a meal, or uses sanitary, washing and changing facilities;
- (c) **during work-related trips, travel, training, events or social activities;**
- (d) through work-related communications, including those enabled by information and communication technologies;
- (e) in **employer-provided accommodation;** and
- (f) when **commuting to and from work.**

### *Article 4*

1. Each member which ratifies this Convention shall respect, promote and realize the right of everyone to a world of work free from violence and harassment.
2. Each Member shall adopt, in accordance with national law and circumstances and in consultation with representative employers’ and workers’ organizations, an inclusive, integrated and gender-responsive approach for the prevention and elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work. Such an approach should take into account **violence and harassment involving third parties**, where applicable, and includes:
  - (a) prohibiting in law violence and harassment;
  - (b) ensuring that relevant policies address violence and harassment;
  - (c) **adopting a comprehensive strategy** in order to implement measures to prevent and combat violence and harassment;
  - (d) **establishing or strengthening enforcement and monitoring mechanisms;**
  - (e) ensuring access to remedies and support for victims;
  - (f) providing for sanctions;
  - (g) **developing** tools, guidance, **education and training**, and raising awareness, in accessible formats as appropriate; and
  - (h) **ensuring effective** means of inspection and **investigation of cases of violence and harassment**, including through labour inspectorates or other competent bodies.

## Outdated (last-century) definitions of “workplace”

FPT jurisdictions must amend legislation (acts and regulations) to provide a more modern and accurate definition of “workplace” so that it is no longer just a physical work site<sup>xvi</sup>. The new definition must include any location, both on and off the worksite, where an employee is required to either physically attend or electronically engage in work-related activities, during or outside of work hours.

Furthermore, the new definition of “workplace” must also recognize multiple and decentralized sites, including remote fly-in-fly-out (FIFO) operations with residential arrangements and common areas, as well as a variety of transportation requirements. Depending on where their work must be carried out, women in SETT may be required to travel by airplane, airship, helicopter, spacecraft, boat, submarine, submersible, canoe, train, ATV, bombardier, snowmobile, or even by dog sled. These methods of transportation also comprise part of the workplace.

**Recommendation #22:** That all fourteen (14) FPT jurisdictions revise their occupational health and safety legislation (Acts and Regulations) to give a more accurate and comprehensive definition of the modern “workplace,” so that it includes the modern reality of virtual workplaces.

### **Sample Definition:**

1. In this Act,  
“workplace” means,
  - (a) All offices, mining site areas, oil and gas exploration sites, including:
    - change areas,
    - cafeterias, and
    - confined spaces such as elevator enclosures.
  - (b) Camps, accommodations, and social areas, especially in remote fly-in-fly-out (FIFO) settings.
  - (c) Work-related and work-provided transportation and settings, including airplanes, airports, motorized vehicles, and non-motorized methods of transportation.
  - (d) In-person or online work-related events or gatherings, including social events where participation is the norm.
  - (e) Online and electronic venues, such as work meetings, emails, phone calls, and chat rooms.

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<sup>xvi</sup> The [NWT Occupational Health and Safety Regulations, 2015](#) (last amended in 2024), for example, contain a poor definition of “workplace,” which is simply defined as “a work site”. That definition is not found at the beginning of the Regulations in the Interpretation (Definitions) section. Instead, it is buried in Part 22, which deals with hazardous products and the Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS). The [NWT Safety Act, 1988](#) (last amended in 2023) defines a work site as “a location where a worker is, or is likely to be, engaged in work, or a thing at, on, in or near which a worker is, or is likely to be, engaged in work.”

- (f) The clarification that employee actions in the surrounding community outside of work hours may still include legislated obligations and protections regarding workplace sexual harassment and violence.

### ***When the workplace is outside the country***

For a woman or gender-diverse individual working in SETT, the workplace can also be located outside of Canada. For example, some women work for Canadian mining companies and for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that operate outside of Canada. There have been very public complaints about sexual harassment and sexual assault that have been experienced by a Canadian woman employed by a Canadian company or organization while working for that organization in a foreign country. There is a need for stronger protection of Canadian women in such workplaces.

One such case is that of [Chelsey Rhodes](#), a young woman who worked for Engineers Without Borders (EWB), who was silenced by receiving a settlement and signing a non-disclosure agreement, but later became a whistleblower. On August 8, 2019, the organization posted a [public statement](#) in which it expressed regret for Chelsey's negative experience with EWB. It also listed some of the steps taken to address the issues she raised, such as banning the use of non-disclosure agreements in personnel matters, establishing a clear and accessible Complaints Policy and Procedure, updating and strengthening their Sexual Relations Policy, suspending the Junior Fellowship program until health, safety and wellness requirements were met and more support was put in place, and establishing an independent Office of the Ombudsperson. This is only one example of how a woman in SETT can be employed by a Canadian company or organization, and is working outside of Canada, but still needs to be protected in Canadian legislation from harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, and violence.

There is a need to amend FPT occupational health and safety legislation to protect women and gender-diverse individuals employed by a Canadian company or organization (e.g., mining, engineering, or a non-governmental organization) who work outside of Canada (e.g., in a third-world or developing country).

**[Recommendation #23:](#)** That all fourteen (14) FPT jurisdictions in Canada amend their occupational health and safety legislation so that the definition of “workplace” also includes worksites outside the country in which women and gender-diverse workers, employed by companies registered as a business in their jurisdiction, are performing their work duties.

### **Missing or outdated definitions of discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, and violence**

Most occupational health and safety legislation in Canada either contains an old, last-century definition or completely lacks a definition of *harassment*, *sexual harassment*, *bullying*, and *violence*. In contrast, the country of Iceland specifically created a [Regulation on Measures](#)

*Against Bullying, Sexual Harassment, Gender-Based Harassment and Violence in the Workplace, 2015*, two objectives of which are to “prevent bullying, sexual harassment, gender-based harassment and violence in the workplace, including through prevention, [and to] promote mutual respect in the workplace, such as by increasing awareness and understanding that bullying, sexual harassment, gender-based harassment and violence are behaviours that are not permitted in the workplace” (see Article 2a and 2b).

Although the definitions contained in Iceland’s regulation could be improved, the objectives of the regulation are very sound. The regulation also specifically states: “An employer has a duty to prevent bullying, sexual harassment, gender-based harassment or workplace violence from occurring in the workplace and must make it clear to employees that such behaviour is prohibited” (see Article 6).

Iceland’s *Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights Irrespective of Gender, 2020*, contains not only a definition of gender-based harassment, sexual harassment, and gender-based violence, but also contains definitions of direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, and multiple discrimination. These are definitions that could also be added to the occupational health and safety legislation of Canada’s fourteen (14) FPT jurisdictions.

OHS legislation is a mechanism that governments can use to create legal obligations for employers to prevent harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, and violence that far too many women and gender-diverse individuals continue to face in male-dominated SETT workplaces.

**Recommendation #24:** That the governments of all fourteen (14) FPT jurisdictions in Canada amend their occupational health and safety legislation to include:

- 1) A definition of:
  - a. direct discrimination,
  - b. indirect discrimination, and
  - c. multiple discrimination.
- 2) A prohibition of these types of discrimination in the workplace.
- 3) A legal obligation for employers to create written policies and prevention plans to prevent and eliminate these three types of discrimination in the workplace.
- 4) A legal obligation for employers to train workers about how to prevent and eliminate these three types of discrimination in the workplace.
- 5) A legal obligation for employers to have a process to receive, investigate, and resolve complaints about discrimination in the workplace.

**Sample definition:**

1. In this Act, the following definitions shall apply:

“*direct discrimination*” means when an individual receives, based on gender, treatment less favourable than another individual receives, has received or would receive in comparable situations.

“*indirect discrimination*” means when an apparently neutral provision, criterion or practice puts individuals of one gender at a disadvantage compared with individuals

of another gender, unless this can be objectively justified by a legitimate aim, and the means of achieving that aim are appropriate and necessary.

*"multiple discrimination"* means when an individual is subjected to discrimination on the basis of more than one reason for discrimination that this Act and the Human Rights Act provide protection against. Multiple discrimination can either be integrated in such a way that two or more reasons for discrimination create a special basis for discrimination, or it can be dual/multiple so that the discrimination is based on two or more independent reasons for discrimination.

**Recommendation #25:** All fourteen (14) FPT jurisdictions in Canada must amend Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) legislation so that it:

- ❖ Includes a comprehensive stand-alone definition of
  - harassment,
  - sexual harassment,
  - bullying, and
  - violence.
- ❖ Specifically states that these behaviours are prohibited in the workplace.

**Sample Definition:**

1. In this act,  
**"harassment"** means,
  - (a) engaging in any action, conduct or comment, whether it occurs once or repeatedly, against a worker in a workplace that is known or ought reasonably to cause offence, humiliation or other physical or psychological injury or illness to an employee, including any prescribed action, conduct or comment.

**Sample Definition:**

1. In this Act,  
**"sexual harassment"** means
  - (a) engaging in a vexatious comment or conduct, of a sexual nature, whether it occurs once or repeatedly, against a worker in a workplace because of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, where the course of comment or conduct is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome, or
  - (b) making a sexual solicitation or advance where the person making the solicitation or advance is in a position to confer, grant or deny a benefit or advancement to the worker and the person knows or ought reasonably to know that the solicitation or advance is unwelcome.
  - (c) engaging in same-sex or opposite-sex sexual harassment.
  - (d) engaging in sexual harassment that is verbal, physical, expressed, implied, and occurs either in-person or electronically/online during or outside of work hours.
  - (e) Sexual harassment includes<sup>110</sup>:
    - (i) A person in authority asking an employee for sexual favours in return for being hired or receiving promotions or other job benefits.

- (ii) Sexual advances with actual or implied work-related consequences
- (iii) Unwelcome remarks, questions, jokes, or innuendo of a sexual nature, including sexist comments or sexual invitations.
- (iv) Verbal abuse, intimidation, or threats of a sexual nature
- (v) Leering, staring, or making sexual gestures
- (vi) Display of pornographic or other sexual materials
- (vii) Offensive pictures, graffiti, cartoons, decals<sup>xvii</sup>, or sayings
- (viii) Unwanted physical contact such as touching, patting, pinching or hugging
- (ix) Physical assault of a sexual nature

**Sample Definition:**

1. In this Act,  
**"bullying,"** whether at a work site or work-related, means,
  - (a) health-harming mistreatment, whether it occurs once or repeatedly, by one or more employees of a fellow employee, consisting of abusive conduct that takes the form of verbal, physical, or financial abuse; or
  - (b) conduct that is perceived as threatening, intimidating, coercive, or humiliating;
  - (c) defamation of a worker's reputation;
  - (d) orchestrated ostracism;
  - (e) undermining a worker's performance;
  - (f) work sabotage; or
  - (g) the withholding of necessary resources, decision-making and organizational support;
  - (h) the expectation that to keep their job position, an employee must:
    - (i) work an unreasonable number of work hours per day, week, or month.
    - (ii) accept a lower amount of pay for travel to a work site.

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<sup>xvii</sup> In March 2020, X-Site Energy Services, an Alberta energy servicing company, took responsibility for a decal bearing its logo beneath a sexually suggestive cartoon appearing to depict teenage climate activist Greta Thunberg. In a statement posted to its website, the company stated that it recognized that it was not enough to apologize for the image that triggered outrage. "This does not reflect the values of this company or our employees, and we deeply regret the pain we may have caused." The image, which appears to be a sticker or decal, shows the silhouette of a naked woman or girl from behind, with her two long braids being pulled back by hands behind her. The word "Greta" was written across her lower back, and an "X-Site Energy Services" logo was at the bottom of the illustration. The image resembled Greta Thunberg, a 17-year-old activist from Sweden who drew a massive crowd when she attended a climate strike in Edmonton, Alberta, the previous fall. The teenager frequently wore her hair in two long braided pigtails. X-Site stated that it is committed to recovering and destroying all the decals it distributed and hopes that everyone will stop republishing the image.

### **Sample Definition:**

1. In this Act,  
    **“violence,”** whether at a work site or work-related, means,
  - (a) the threatened, attempted or actual conduct of a person that causes or is likely to cause physical or psychological injury or harm and includes domestic or sexual violence.
  - (b) Engaging in violence that is verbal, physical, expressed, implied, and occurs either in-person or electronically/online during or outside of work hours.<sup>xviii</sup>

### **When Domestic Violence Enters the Workplace**

A woman’s workplace can also be her home if she works remotely (either every workday or a few days a week) or electronically engages in work-related activities. In these cases, how can work be safe when life at home is not, or when domestic violence, family violence, spousal violence, intimate partner violence, and sexual violence can follow you into the workplace? There is also the dilemma of when women (e.g., in geology, mining, biology, archeology) are working out in the field with an abusive husband/partner who is also doing fieldwork alongside her.

Ontario has set a precedent in addressing this issue within its [\*Occupational Health and Safety Act, 1990\*](#) (current to Sep 11, 2025), which states:

#### *PART III.0.1: Violence and Harassment*

##### *Domestic violence*

32.0.4 If an employer becomes aware, or ought reasonably to be aware, that domestic violence that would likely expose a worker to physical injury may occur in the workplace, the employer shall take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances for the protection of the worker. 2009, c. 23, s. 3.

The Act also applies to virtual (remote) work. Section 3 (1.1) creates a legal obligation for the employer to provide a safe “telework” place free of intimate partner/domestic violence.

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<sup>xviii</sup> In most jurisdictions, workers are unable to sue an employer/colleague for the stand-alone civil wrong of workplace harassment (i.e. being able to obtain damages just for the fact of the harassment without it being tied to job loss or discrimination). The exception to that is Alberta, where the courts have recently recognized a common law tort of harassment (*Alberta Health Services v Johnston*, 2023 ABKB 209 (CanLII), <https://canlii.ca/t/jwlr3>). The U.S *Workplace Bullying Accountability Act* is an example of a statutory tort of harassment. This would be useful in Canada, given that judges outside of Alberta have been reluctant to create one. The benefit of a statutory tort is that it provides an additional avenue for victims of workplace harassment to seek redress and compensation. This is not something the federal government could do alone. Each province/territory would have to create their own.

## PART I: APPLICATION

### Private residences

2. (1.1) Despite subsection (1), this Act applies to telework performed in or about a private residence or the lands and appurtenances used in connection therewith. 2024, c. 19, Sched. 4, s. 2 (2).

**Recommendation #26:** That the Government of Canada (CDA) and the remaining nine provinces (BC, AB, SK, MB, PQ, NB, NS, PEI, NL) and three territories (YK, NT, NU) review all the occupational health and safety legislation that governs mainstream workplaces (which includes the construction industry), the mining industry, the onshore oil and gas industry, the offshore oil and gas industry, and the nuclear industry to determine the amendments that can be made to:

- Provide employees with a workplace that is safe from the intrusion of domestic violence, family violence, spousal violence, intimate partner violence, and both physical and digital sexual violence.

### Missing or outdated definitions of “injury”

There are still provinces and territories in Canada that have occupational health and safety legislation in which the definition of “injury” focuses solely on physical bodily injuries and fails to acknowledge psychological injuries. In addition, the legal obligations regarding the creation of workplace policies and prevention plans are exclusively focused on physical safety in the workplace, and not on psychological safety.

Brain research has confirmed that under situations of acute stress and abuse, psychological injuries develop, which can be seen in a brain scan. There is robust neuroscientific evidence<sup>111</sup> supporting the claim that chronic stress and psychological trauma can lead to observable structural and functional changes in the brain. Neuroimaging studies using MRI and fMRI have consistently documented alterations in three major brain regions involved in emotion regulation and memory:

- *Hippocampus*: Reduced volume due to prolonged cortisol exposure.
- *Amygdala*: Hyperactivity and enlargement due to constant threat perception.
- *Prefrontal Cortex*: Functional and volumetric reduction affecting decision-making and impulse control.

These changes in the brain are especially pronounced in individuals with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), complex trauma, and early-life abuse.

**Recommendation #27:** (*Mainstream workplaces*) That the remaining four provinces (ON, NB, NS, NL) amend the occupational health and safety legislation that governs *mainstream workplaces* to clearly state that the definition of “injury” includes not only physical bodily injury but also psychological injury.

**Recommendation #28:** (*Mining industry*) That the remaining five provinces (BC, ON, NB, NS, NL) and two territories (NT, NU) amend the occupational health and safety legislation that governs the *mining industry* to clearly state that the definition of “injury” includes not only physical bodily injury but also psychological injury as the other six jurisdictions (CDA, AB, SK, MB, PQ, and YK) have already done.

**Recommendation #29:** (*Onshore oil and gas industry*) That the remaining four provinces (ON, NB, NS, NL) and one territory (NT) amend the occupational health and safety legislation that governs the *onshore oil and gas industry* to clearly state that the definition of “injury” includes not only physical bodily injury but also psychological injury.

**Sample Definition:**

1. In this Act,  
“injury,” whether at a work site or work-related, means
  - (a) a physical illness, disease, physical bodily injury, or disablement
  - (b) a psychological injury manifesting as the deterioration or impairment of a person’s mental health, the increasing severity of which could result in a mental illness or disorder, as diagnosed by a psychiatrist or psychologist, described in the most recent Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders published by the American Psychiatric Association.

**Recommendation #30:** That all fourteen (14) FPT jurisdictions in Canada must amend occupational health and safety legislation so that the purposes of the legislation include:

*Purposes*

1. The purposes of this Act are
  - (a) to promote and maintain the physical and psychological health and safety of workers;
  - (b) to prevent both physical and psychological injuries in the workplace; and
  - (b) to promote and maintain a working environment that is free of harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, and violence;

**Recommendation #31:** That all fourteen (14) FPT governments amend their occupational health and safety legislation to create legal obligations for employers to carry out the necessary training of workers to prevent and eliminate direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, multiple discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, and violence in the workplace.

**Recommendation #32:** That FPT jurisdictions review and amend occupational health and safety legislation (Acts and regulations) to ensure the legislation contains the legal obligation for mining and mineral exploration companies, as well as oil and gas companies, to:

- a) Identify what actions comprise harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, and violence.

- b) Create effective policies and procedures to prevent harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, and violence.
- c) Appropriately investigate allegations.
- d) Develop effective trauma-informed responses.
- e) Take effective action to protect the target(s).
- f) Ensure that any harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, or violence stops immediately.
- g) Implement appropriate employee discipline, up to and including dismissal, of the perpetrator(s).

**Recommendation #33:** That all fourteen (14) FPT jurisdictions in Canada review and amend their jurisdiction’s occupational health and safety legislation that governs mainstream workplaces (including the construction industry), the mining industry, the onshore oil and gas industry, the offshore oil and gas industry, and the nuclear industry, so that employees are protected against an employer taking reprisals<sup>xix</sup> against employees or imposing sanctions for reporting harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, and violence in the workplace or cooperating in the reporting or complaint process.

### **Lack of legal obligations to have written policies and plans to prevent and eliminate harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, and violence in the workplace**

An examination of the fourteen (14) FPT jurisdictions’ occupational health and safety legislation that governs mainstream workplaces, the mining industry, the onshore and offshore oil and gas industry, and the nuclear industry shows that there is a lack of consistency regarding the legal obligation for employers to have written policies and prevention plans to prevent and eliminate harassment, sexual harassment, bullying and violence in the workplace. In some jurisdictions (e.g., PQ, NT, NU), there is a legal obligation for employers to have policies and plans in place to prevent serious bodily injury and fatal injuries, but no obligation to develop policies and plans to prevent and eliminate inappropriate social interactions in the workplace. In other jurisdictions (e.g., CDA, SK), there is a legal obligation for employers to address harassment, sexual harassment, and violence, but not bullying.

In contrast, in 2015, the Icelandic government enacted occupational health and safety legislation that prohibits all four behaviours in the workplace and that obliges all employers to have policies and prevention plans. The Icelandic Occupational Health and Safety Regulation No. 1009/2015 on *Measures against bullying, sexual harassment, gender-based harassment and violence in the workplace* states:

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<sup>xix</sup> A reprisal therefore occurs when an employer threatens or takes disciplinary action in response to an employee claiming or trying to claim their employment and/or human rights. Examples of a reprisal include reduced work hours, unwarranted poor performance reviews, formal reprimands, demotions and even terminations.

## Article 2

The objective of this regulation is to:

- a. prevent bullying, sexual harassment, gender-based harassment and violence in the workplace, including through prevention,
- b. promote mutual respect in the workplace, such as by increasing awareness and understanding that bullying, sexual harassment, gender-based harassment and violence are **behaviors that are not permitted** in the workplace,
- c. action will be taken in accordance with a **written plan** for safety and health at work, cf. Chapter II, if a complaint, suggestion or reasonable suspicion of bullying, sexual harassment, gender-based harassment or violence at work is made and
- d. that action will be taken in accordance with a **written plan** for safety and health at work, cf. Chapter II, if an employer becomes aware of bullying, sexual harassment, gender-based harassment or violence at work or disagreements in employee relations that are likely to lead to such behavior, if no action is taken.

*CHAPTER II: A written plan for safety and health at work.*

### *Article 5 Health Protection Plan*

(Para 1) [T]he employer shall draw up a **prevention plan** which, among other things, states what actions shall be taken to prevent bullying, sexual harassment, gender-based harassment and violence at work.

**Recommendation #34:** That the Government of Canada (CDA) and the remaining seven provinces (BC, SK, MB, ON, PQ, NS, NL) and three territories (YK, NT, NU) amend their occupational health and safety legislation that governs mainstream workplaces, the mining industry, onshore oil and gas, offshore oil and gas, and the nuclear industry to contain a legal obligation for employers to develop written policies and prevention plans to prevent and eliminate harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, and violence in the workplace, as the provinces of AB, NB, and PEI have already done.

### **Lack of legal obligations for employers to train workers on how to prevent and eliminate harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, and violence in the workplace**

An examination of the fourteen (14) FPT jurisdictions' occupational health and safety legislation that governs mainstream workplaces, the mining industry, the onshore and offshore oil and gas industry, and the nuclear industry shows that there is a lack of consistency regarding the legal obligation for employers to *train workers* about how to prevent and eliminate harassment, sexual harassment, bullying and violence in the workplace. Depending on the industry (especially mining), in some jurisdictions (e.g., BC, PQ, NT, NU), there is no legal obligation for employers to train workers on how to eliminate these inappropriate behaviours in the workplace. In other jurisdictions (e.g., CDA, SK, ON), there is

a legal obligation for employers to train workers about eliminating harassment, sexual harassment, and violence, but not bullying in the workplace.

In Iceland, Article 14 of the [Act on Working Environment, Health and Safety in the Workplace](#) (1980) contains the legal obligation for employers to “ensure that the employees receive education and training for their jobs...” In addition, the Icelandic government has developed training modules (see [webpage](#)) to support employers in the education and training of their workers about:

- Bullying (definition, video, and examples)
- Sexual harassment (definition, video, and examples)
- Gender-based harassment (definition, video, and examples)
- Violence (definition, video, and examples)

The occupational health and safety legislation enacted by the Government of Canada contains the strongest provisions regarding the obligations of the employer to provide training to workers. The [Canada Labour Code, 1985 \(PDF\)](#) (current to Sep 1, 2025) contains the following legal obligation for employers:

- ❖ Employers must receive training in the prevention of harassment and violence in the workplace (see Article 125. (z.162).
- ❖ Employees, including those who have supervisory or managerial responsibilities, must receive training in the prevention of harassment and violence in the workplace (see Article 125. (z.161).
- ❖ Employers must ensure that the person designated by the employer to receive complaints relating to occurrences of harassment and violence has knowledge, **training** and experience in issues relating to harassment and violence and has knowledge of relevant legislation (see Article 125. (z.163)).

In addition, regarding the training to recognize, minimize, prevent, and respond to workplace harassment and violence, the [Canada Occupational Health and Safety Regulations, 1986 \(PDF\)](#) (current to Sep 1, 2025) contain the legal obligations for employers:

- ❖ Update the training at least once every three years and following any change to an element of the training. (see Articles 12.(3) and 12.(5))
- ❖ Provide the training to all new employees within three months of being hired (see Article 12.(4)(a)) and at least once every three years after that (see Article 12.4(b)) and following any update to the training or their assignment to a new role or activity where there could be an increased risk of workplace harassment and violence (see Article 12.(4)(c))
- ❖ The **employer must undergo the training** within one year after the day on which these Regulations come into force and **at least once every three years after that.** (see Article 12.(6))

## **MINING INDUSTRY: NO TRAINING REQUIRED ABOUT INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOURS IN THE WORKPLACE**

A review of the occupational health and safety legislation that governs various industries across Canada reveals an alarming number of workplaces in which employers have no legal obligation to train workers on how to prevent and eliminate harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, and violence in the workplace. The mining industry is the most shocking, and second to that is the onshore oil and gas industry.

In a 2022 study, for example, the Mining Industry Human Resources (MiHR) Council announced that sexual harassment and violence continue to occur in mining workplaces across Canada. Unfortunately, women scientists, engineers, tradespeople, and technicians are particularly vulnerable in the mining sector because, in some provinces and territories, legislation governing the mining sector remains severed from mainstream occupational health and safety legislation and does not keep pace with evolving best practices. For example, the [Northwest Territories Occupational Health and Safety Regulations, 2015](#), and the [Nunavut Occupational Health and Safety Regulations, 2016](#) both state:

### *Application*

2. These regulations do not apply to work in respect of
  - (a) a mine, as defined in section 1 of the *Mine Health and Safety Act*; or
  - (b) the exploration, production and conservation of oil and gas resources.

When examining the four pieces of occupational health and safety legislation (see below) that govern the mining industry in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, one cannot even find the words 'harass', 'harassment', 'bullying', or 'violence', or the phrase 'sexual harassment,' let alone a legal obligation to train workers on how to prevent and eliminate these behaviours in the workplace. Training requirements focus solely on physical safety and the prevention of serious bodily injuries and fatal injuries. There is no focus on psychological safety and the prevention of psychological injuries. Additionally, the word 'complaint' cannot be found, nor is there a legal requirement for the employer to have a process in place to receive, investigate, and resolve complaints about harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, and violence in the workplace. In both jurisdictions, the mining regulations only go so far as to state, in Article 18.01(d) under Part XVIII: Duties of Employees: "An employee shall behave in an orderly manner and not engage in improper or *foolhardy behaviour* such as *horseplay fighting*, playing *practical jokes* or other conduct that may create or constitute a danger to himself or herself or any other person."

- ❖ [Northwest Territories Mine Health and Safety Act, 1994](#) (last amended in 2010)
- ❖ [Northwest Territories Mine Health and Safety Regulations, 1995](#) (last amended in 2018)
- ❖ [Nunavut Mine Health and Safety Act, 1994](#) (last amended in 2007)
- ❖ [Nunavut Mine Health and Safety Regulations, 1995](#) (last amended in 2003)

**Recommendation #35:** That all fourteen (14) FPT jurisdictions in Canada upgrade their occupational health and safety legislation that governs mainstream workplaces, the mining industry, onshore oil and gas, offshore oil and gas, and the nuclear industry to contain a legal obligation for employers to *train workers, upon their initial hiring and every three years afterwards*, about how to prevent and eliminate direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, and violence in the workplace.

**Recommendation #36:** That all fourteen (14) FPT governments develop training modules in multiple languages (including those of new immigrants) that employers can use to educate workers in their jurisdictions about how to identify, prevent, and eliminate direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, and violence in the workplace.

### **Lack of process to receive, investigate, and resolve complaints about harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, and violence in the workplace**

An examination of the fourteen (14) FPT jurisdictions' occupational health and safety legislation that governs mainstream workplaces, the mining industry, the onshore and offshore oil and gas industry, and the nuclear industry shows that there is a lack of consistency regarding the legal obligation for employers to create a process to receive, investigate, and resolve complaints about harassment, sexual harassment, bullying and violence in the workplace. Depending on the industry (especially mining), in some jurisdictions (e.g., PQ, NT, NU), there is no legal obligation for employers to receive, investigate and resolve complaints about these inappropriate behaviours in the workplace. In other jurisdictions (e.g., CDA), there is a legal obligation for employers to have a process in place to address complaints about harassment, sexual harassment, and violence, but not bullying in the workplace.

Iceland's Occupational Health and Safety Regulation No. 1009/2015 on [Measures against bullying, sexual harassment, gender-based harassment and violence in the workplace](#), states:

#### *Article 5 Health Protection Plan*

(Para 2) The employer shall also explain the actions to be taken if a **complaint, suggestion or reasonable suspicion** is made that **bullying, sexual harassment, gender-based harassment or violence** is occurring or has occurred in the workplace or if the employer is aware of such behaviour.

The occupational health and safety legislation enacted by the Government of Canada contains the strongest provisions regarding the obligations of the employer to create an internal process to receive, investigate, and resolve complaints about harassment, sexual harassment, and violence in the workplace. Article 125.(1)(a) of the [Canada Labour Code, 1985 \(PDF\)](#) (current to Sep 1, 2025) states:

## **NWT Onshore Oil & Gas Industry Hybrid legislation eliminates protection for women in SETT**

The occupational health and safety legislation that currently governs the onshore oil and gas industry in the Northwest Territories is an unsatisfactory hybrid of territorial and federal legislation. The [Northwest Territories Safety Act, 1988](#) (last amended in 2023)(current to Sep 12, 2025) governs the onshore oil and gas industry. However, the [Northwest Territories Occupational Health and Safety Regulations, 2015](#) (last amended in 2024)(current to Sep 12, 2025) state in Article 2(b): “These regulations do not apply to work in respect of the exploration, production and conservation of oil and gas resources.”

Yet, it is within those regulations that there is a definition of harassment and violence, an acknowledgement that a work injury also includes a psychological injury, and the legal obligation for employers to develop and implement a written policy on harassment and violence.

Instead, the Government of the Northwest Territories [adopted](#) (see Article 1) the Government of Canada’s [“Oil and Gas Health and Safety Regulations”](#) (current to Sep 12, 2025), issued under the *Canada Labour Code*. However, that particular federal government regulation provides very little protection to NWT workers. This is because in the Government of Canada’s occupational health and safety legislation, the bulk of the protection against harassment and violence in the workplace is found in [Part II: Occupational Health and Safety of the Canada Labour Code](#) (current to Sep 1, 2025) and in the [Work Place Harassment and Violence Prevention Regulations, 2020](#), (current to Sep 1, 2025) neither of which was adopted by the Government of the Northwest Territories and neither of which applies to the territory’s onshore oil and gas industry.

Although they are 90 pages long, the [NWT Oil and Gas Installations Regulations, 2014](#), do not address the topics of harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, and violence. Those words cannot be found. These NWT regulations also do not address the protection of mental health or psychological safety. The keywords cannot be found. Furthermore, the NWT regulation does not contain the legal obligation for employers to develop written policies and plans to prevent harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, and violence in the workplace. The keywords “policy,” “policies,” and the phrase “prevention plan” are not found.

“employers have a **legal obligation to “investigate**, record and report, in accordance with the regulations, all accidents, **occurrences of harassment and violence**, occupational illnesses and other hazardous occurrences known to the employer.” Articles 127(1) – 127(12) detail the legal obligation for employers to have an “internal complaint resolution process.”

Unfortunately, in some provinces and territories, depending on the industry, the occupational health and safety legislation contains no legal obligation for the employer to have an internal complaint resolution process. This is particularly problematic in the mining industry (PQ, NT, NU) and the onshore oil and gas industry (PQ, NT).

**Recommendation #37:** That all fourteen (14) FPT jurisdictions amend their occupational health and safety legislation that governs mainstream workplaces, the mining industry, onshore and offshore oil and gas industry, and nuclear industry to create a legal obligation for employers to have an internal complaint resolution process to receive, investigate, and resolve complaints about direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, and violence in the workplace.

**Recommendation #38:** (*Onshore oil and gas industry*) That the Government of the Northwest Territories amend the occupational health and safety legislation that governs the onshore oil and gas industry in the Northwest Territories to create legal obligations for employers to:

- 1) Develop and implement written policies and prevention plans to prevent and eliminate direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, and violence in the workplace.
- 2) Train workers how to prevent and eliminate harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, and violence in the workplace.
- 3) Develop an internal complaint resolution process to receive, investigate, and resolve complaints about direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, and violence in the workplace.

### **OHS legislation fails to apply to all third parties entering the SETT workplace**

*“Violence or harassment in the workplace may originate from anyone the worker comes into contact with in a workplace, such as a client, a customer, a student, a patient, a co-worker, an employer, or a supervisor. Or the person may be someone with no formal connection to the workplace, such as a stranger or a domestic/intimate partner, who brings violence or harassment into the workplace. A continuum of inappropriate behaviours can occur at the workplace. This can range from offensive remarks to violence.”<sup>112</sup>*

*Guide to the Occupational Health and Safety Act  
Government of Ontario*

In 2024, the Government of Quebec made legislative changes to its [\*Act Respecting Labour Standards, 1979\*](#) (current to May 27, 2025), which expanded employer obligations to prevent psychological harassment by “any person” towards their employees, including suppliers, customers, clients, or other third parties (see Article 81.19). This new best practice needs to scale out across Canada.

**Recommendation #39:** That the governments of all fourteen (14) FPT jurisdictions amend their occupational health and safety legislation so that harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, and violence are prohibited behaviours in the workplace, not only for employers and workers, but also for all third parties, including contractors, sub-contractors, suppliers, customers, clients, visitors and guests in the workplace.

**Recommendation #40:** That all fourteen (14) FPT jurisdictions amend their OH&S legislation so that it clearly states that the application of the Act and regulation(s) not only applies to employers, prime contractors (constructors), and employees but also extends to all subcontractors, third-party contractors, service providers, suppliers (e.g., if working on-site), temporary staffing agencies, clients, visitors, and guests entering the workplace area or interacting with workers.

### **Toilet facilities that discriminate against women in SETT**

In some provinces and territories, there are industries and workplaces where employers are not legally obliged to provide workers with proper toilet facilities. At the very minimum, employers should have a legal obligation to provide workers with toilet facilities that contain a clean, sit-down toilet, toilet paper, soap, water, hand-drying equipment, and a disposal container for menstrual products within arm’s reach of the toilet.

In Ontario, the occupational health and safety legislation governing mainstream workplaces still allows for the provision of toilet facilities to be optional. *Only if the employer provides toilets* will there be a legal obligation (as of Jan 01, 2026) to keep them clean and keep a record, which must be made available to employees, indicating when the toilets were last cleaned. Regarding the duties of employers and the provision of washroom facilities, the [\*Ontario Occupational Health and Safety Act, 1990\*](#) (current to Sep 12, 2025) states:

23.1(1): A constructor shall ensure, on a project, that **the washroom facilities, if any, that are provided by the constructor** for the use of workers are maintained in a clean and sanitary condition. 2024, c.19, Sched.4. s. 5.

25.3(1): An employer shall ensure that the **washroom facilities, if any, that are provided by the employer** for the use of workers are maintained in a clean and sanitary condition. 2024, c. 19, Sched. 4, s. 7.

**Recommendation #41:** That the Government of Ontario (ON) amend its *Occupational Health and Safety Act* so that all employers have the legal obligation to provide toilet facilities with

sit-down toilets, toilet paper, soap & water, hand-drying equipment, a disposal container for menstrual products, and to keep the toilet facilities clean and sanitary.

Under the *BC Occupational Health and Safety Regulation, 1997* (current to Aug 26, 2025), and issued under the *BC Workers Compensation Act*, if employers provide washroom facilities, they have a legal obligation to maintain them in a clean and sanitary condition. However, the current wording in the legislation is vague and open to considerable misinterpretation. The regulations currently state:

- 4.85. (3) **If** washroom facilities are provided, they must be
- (a) maintained in proper working order,
  - (b) kept clean and sanitary, and
  - (c) **provided with the supplies necessary** for their use.

The regulations do not explicitly state that employers in mainstream workplaces must provide toilets, toilet paper, soap and water, hand-drying equipment, and a covered container for the disposal of menstrual products. It should not be assumed that every employer will interpret “the supplies necessary” in the same way.

**Recommendation #42:** That the Government of British Columbia (BC) amend the occupational health and safety legislation that governs mainstream workplaces so all employers have the legal obligation to provide toilets, toilet paper, soap and water, hand-drying equipment, and a covered disposal container for menstrual products.

The occupational health and safety legislation governing workplaces in the Yukon territory is also short on specifics. Although there is a legal obligation to provide clean “toilet facilities” for workers, there is no legal obligation to provide toilet paper, soap and water, hand-drying equipment, or a disposal container for menstrual products in the occupational health and safety legislation that governs the territory of Yukon. The words “toilet” or “toilets” cannot be found in the *Yukon Workers Safety and Compensation Act, 2021* (last amended in 2024). The word “toilet” is only found once in the 604-page *Yukon Workplace Health and Safety Regulations, 2006* (last amended in 2022), which state:

*Sanitation and accommodation*

- 1.71 (1) Workers shall be provided with sufficient clean sanitary **toilet** facilities, taking into account the nature of the work, the number of workers and the gender of the workers.

**Recommendation #43:** That the Government of Yukon (YK) immediately amend the *Yukon Workplace Health and Safety Regulations, 2006*, to include the legal obligation for employers to ensure that all toilet facilities contain toilet paper, soap and water, hand-drying equipment, and a covered disposal container for menstrual products.

The occupational health and safety legislation of the other provinces and territories contains a legal obligation to provide toilets, toilet paper, soap, water, and hand-drying equipment, and to maintain toilet facilities in a clean and sanitary condition. However, their legislation is missing the legal requirement for employers to provide a covered disposal container for menstrual products.

**Recommendation #44:** That the remaining five provinces (SK, PQ, NB, NS, PEI) and two territories (NT, NU) immediately amend their occupational health and safety legislation that governs mainstream workplaces (and the underground mining industry in NS and the nuclear industry in SK) to include a legal obligation for employers to install a covered disposal container for menstrual products within arm's reach of the toilet.

### ***Toilet facilities in mine refuge stations***

In the occupational health and safety legislation that governs the mining industry in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, when it comes to providing toilet facilities in a *refuge station*, in which anyone trapped underground during an emergency/disaster needs to take refuge while they await rescue, there is only a legal obligation for the mine manager to provide “a sealable container that can be used as a toilet.”<sup>xx</sup>

**Recommendation #45:** That the Government of the Northwest Territories (NT) and the Government of Nunavut (NU) immediately amend their *Mining Health and Safety Regulations* so mine managers have the legal obligation to supply all “refuge stations” with a sit-down toilet, toilet paper, soap and water, hand-drying equipment, a disposal container for menstrual products, and keep the toilet facilities in the refuge station clean and sanitary.

The *Occupational Health and Safety Regulation, 1997* (current to Aug 26, 2025), issued under the *Workers Compensation Act*, is silent in Article 22.50 regarding the requirements for toilet facilities in underground (emergency) refuge stations, where workers must wait for rescue after a mining disaster. In contrast, both the Northwest Territories and Nunavut *Mine Health and Safety Regulations* state that, at the very minimum, “8.71. The manager of a mine shall ensure (a) that a refuge station is equipped with (vi) a sealable container that can be used as a toilet.”

**Recommendation #46:** That the Government of British Columbia (BC) amend the occupational health and safety regulations that govern underground mining refuge stations so that all underground mining employers have the legal obligation to provide toilets, toilet paper, soap, hand-drying equipment, and a covered disposal container for menstrual products and to keep toilet facilities in refuge stations clean and sanitary.

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<sup>xx</sup> See Article 8.71(a)(vi) in both the *NWT Mine Health and Safety Regulations, 1995* (current to Sep 17, 2025) and the *Nunavut Mine Health and Safety Regulations, 1995* (current to Sep 12, 2025).

## Unequal protection of women in SETT under occupational health and safety legislation

There is systemic discrimination against women in SETT working in jurisdictions where not all industries are governed by mainstream occupational health and safety legislation (Act and Regulations) of the province or territory. The most extreme example of this problem can be seen when one compares the Northwest Territories and Nunavut with Alberta.

The pieces of OHS legislation in Canada that raise the greatest concern are those that govern the mining industry in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, where the occupational health and safety regulation of the mining industry has been completely severed from mainstream OHS legislation. The Mine Health and Safety Act and Regulations of both the Northwest Territories and Nunavut do not even mention the words “harassment”, “sexual harassment”, “bullying”, or “violence”, and do not contain a legal obligation for the owner or operator (employer) of a mine site to train workers about how to prevent and eliminate these behaviours in the workplace. There is also no legal obligation to have a process for investigating any complaints about these types of behaviours.

Section 18.01 of both the [NWT Mine Health and Safety Regulations, 1995](#) (last amended in 2018) and the [Nunavut Mine Health and Safety Regulations, 1995](#) (last amended in 2003) only contains a legal obligation for workers not to play practical jokes, or engage in “horseplay fighting” or other “foolhardy behaviour” that could create a danger to oneself or others:

### *PART XVIII: DUTIES OF EMPLOYEES*

18.01. An employee shall

...

- (d) behave in an orderly manner and not engage in improper or **foolhardy behaviour** such as **horseplay fighting, playing practical jokes** or other conduct that may create or constitute a danger to himself or herself or any other person;

The *Alberta Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Act* and its associated *Alberta Occupational Health and Safety Code (Regulation)* apply to all mine sites and to all oil and gas exploration sites and production facilities in the province. In contrast, the Northwest Territories continues to keep the mining industry severed from its mainstream OHS legislation. The *NWT Occupational Health and Safety Regulations* (last amended in 2024) state in Section 2, “These regulations do not apply to work in respect of (a) a mine, as defined in section 1 of the *Mine Health and Safety Act*; or (b) the exploration, production and conservation of oil and gas resources.”

The Northwest Territories has a separate [NWT Mine Health and Safety Act](#) (last amended 15 years ago, in 2010) and [NWT Mine Health and Safety Regulations](#) (last amended in 2018). They also have separate [NWT Oil and Gas Occupational Safety and Health Regulations](#), which are exceptionally cryptic. However, they do state that the NWT has adopted the [Oil and Gas Occupational Safety and Health Regulations](#) made under Part II of the *Canada Labour Code*, but with the changes set out in the Schedule to the NWT regulations (see Section 1).

Part of the dilemma of trying to modernize the occupational health and safety legislation for the mining industry in the NWT is the lack of good governance. For example, in January 2025, there was an alarming percentage of vacant positions on the [Mine Occupational Health and Safety Legislation Committee](#), which was established “to advise and make recommendations on matters concerning the *Mine Health and Safety Act* and regulations; matters concerning occupational health and safety of persons working in or about a mine; and any matter concerning the occupational health and safety of persons working in a mine that is referred to it by the Minister from time to time.”

According to Section 48(1) of the [NWT Mine Health and Safety Act](#), the Committee must consist of at least seven members: a Chief Inspector, three members recommended by workers, three members recommended by owners, and other such members as the Minister considers advisable to appoint. As of January 10, 2025, there were vacancies in two of the three legally required positions representing the owners of mine sites and in two of the three legally required positions representing workers in the mining industry, one of whom is to serve as the Chairperson. The legislation does not provide for the appointment of a Vice Chairperson or alternate members, and the Act is silent on quorum.

**Recommendation #47:** The remaining two provinces (BC, NS) and two territories (NT, NU) amalgamate the occupational health and safety legislation (Acts and regulations) that govern the mining industry and the onshore oil and gas industry into their mainstream occupational health and safety legislation, as eight provinces (AB, SK, MB, ON, PQ, NB, PEI, NL) and one territory (YK ) have already done.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORKS</b></p>
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## Human Rights Commissions

Most human rights commissions are backlogged, underfunded, and lack sufficient adjudicators to adequately address the complaints being brought forward. The spotlight was shone on this problem when, in 2020, in a report entitled the [Ombudsman Act Investigation Report Communication and Expectation: Fairness, Service Delivery and the Manitoba Human Rights Commission](#), the Manitoba Ombudsman revealed that wait times for the assignment of a human rights complaint to an investigator had increased from four (4) months in 2012 to 23 months in 2017. Five years after the initial report, there has only been a minuscule improvement. In March 2025, the Manitoba Human Rights Commission released a report entitled [Improving Wait Times in the Human Rights Complaint System](#), which reported that the wait time was currently 22 months.

In January 2024, LEAF Winnipeg wrote to the Manitoba Minister of Justice and the Minister of Families regarding the backlog of complaints made to the Manitoba Human Rights Commission (MHRC). Extensive delays create an undeniable access-to-justice

problem. Typically, there is a two-year wait after filing a complaint to have an investigation team assigned to a case, an additional year before a hearing is scheduled, and it takes even longer to reach a resolution.

LEAF Winnipeg expressed its viewpoint that: “The fundamental principle of ‘no right without a remedy’ is severely compromised when individuals experiencing discrimination are left waiting for years to have their issues resolved.”<sup>113</sup> Complainants can end up feeling that it’s just not worth it, especially as the years-long waiting period takes its toll on them physically, emotionally, and mentally, adding to the injustice they suffered.

**Recommendation #48:** That all fourteen (14) FPT governments in Canada conduct an official review of the length of time that it takes for complainants to be assigned an investigation team, for a hearing to be scheduled, and for a decision to be issued, in order to determine the appropriate level of funding (e.g., to hire more officers and adjudicators) that is needed to improve the ability of human rights commissions across the country to respond to complaints in a more timely manner, and to reduce the current backlogs.

## **Ministers responsible for the Status of Women**

In 1971, following the publication of the *Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada*, the Government of Canada appointed the first Minister responsible for the Status of Women. Most provincial and territorial governments eventually followed suit.

However, the existence of this Cabinet Minister position has been very precarious in some FPT jurisdictions. For example, on May 24, 2015, many news stories were published that in the province of Alberta, with the election of the Rachel Notley NDP government, it was the first time in almost twenty years that the Premier had appointed a Minister responsible for the Status of Women.

Ten (10) years later, at the federal level, on Friday, March 14, 2025, while delegates from 189 countries, including Canada, were attending sessions of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW), the recently elected Prime Minister of Canada, Mark Carney, unveiled his newly appointed Cabinet. Women across the country were stunned by the elimination of the full-time position of the Minister for Women and Gender Equality. Furthermore, the department would report to a man, Stephen Guilbeault, the Minister of Canadian Culture and Identity, and Parks Canada, who would essentially handle WAGE Canada off the side of his desk.<sup>xxi</sup> The portfolio was at high risk of being sidelined. The announcement sparked a huge outcry. Over 400 organizations from across Canada signed a [joint statement](#) protesting the elimination of the WAGE Minister and demanding that the full-time, designated Cabinet position be reinstated.

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<sup>xxi</sup> The concept of “side-of-desk work” refers to all the things you need to do apart from what you believe your core job is.

*“Gender equality demands dedicated leadership, accountability, and sustained attention —none of which can be adequately achieved when it is treated as an afterthought within a larger, unrelated ministry.”<sup>114</sup>*

*Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women  
March 14, 2025*

The almost 400 signatories agreed that the elimination of the Cabinet position of the Minister of Women and Gender Equality Canada was “unacceptable... regressive... [and] sends a troubling message about the current government’s priorities and commitment to advancing rights for ... gender equality at large.”<sup>115</sup>

There was great concern that the elimination of the position of Minister for Women and Gender Equality and the assignment of that portfolio to the heritage Minister would result in “the unravelling of decades of progress on women’s rights and the prevention of male violence against women,” and that the move by the interim Prime Minister sent “the wrong signal about 55 years of vital work,”<sup>116</sup> and also sent the message that the rights, safety, and well-being of women, girls, and gender-diverse people living in Canada were not a top priority with his government.<sup>117</sup>

The Sexual Assault Services of Saskatchewan (SASS) expressed its deep concern, which was shared by many advocacy groups across Canada, about the new Prime Minister’s decision to eliminate the full-time position of Minister for Women and Gender Equality (WAGE):

“This move undermines decades of progress in advancing gender equity and addressing gender-based violence in Canada. However, eliminating this ministerial position weakens the government’s ability to address these critical issues effectively. Gender equality cannot be an afterthought—it requires dedicated leadership, accountability, and sustained investment. We urge the Prime Minister to reconsider this decision and reinstate a dedicated Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth to ensure these vital issues remain a national priority.”<sup>118</sup>

A strong call was heard from across the country for him to commit to restoring the WAGE (senior) Cabinet Minister position in his future Cabinet, if the Liberal Party wanted to win the upcoming election on April 28, 2025. Prime Minister Carney [reinstated](#) the position on May 13, 2025, when he unveiled his new Cabinet after winning the election.

### ***Forum of Federal-Provincial-Territorial (FPT) Ministers responsible for the Status of Women***

Each of the fourteen (14) FPT jurisdictions in Canada has a Minister responsible for the Status of Women in their respective jurisdiction, except for British Columbia, which has a Parliamentary Secretary. The first meeting of the FPT Forum of Ministers responsible for the Status of Women was held in Ottawa, the nation’s capital, in 1982, the same year that

women's rights were enshrined in *Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. The annual FPT meetings are held with the intention of sharing information, exchanging best practices, and exploring issues and opportunities to develop initiatives that advance gender equality.

Women and Gender Equality (WAGE) Canada plays an active role in supporting the Government of Canada's priorities on gender equality through its intergovernmental relations with provinces and territories (P/Ts). Canada's Minister for Women and Gender Equality is the federal chair. The federal Minister co-chairs with a provincial or territorial Minister Responsible for the Status of Women on an annual rotational basis. In addition to annual meetings, ministerial meetings can also be arranged on an ad hoc basis to discuss key emerging issues. FPT senior officials meet regularly throughout the year to advance the annual agenda and work plan mandated by the Ministers. Currently, the work of the FPT Forum focuses on five priority pillars:

- 1) economic participation and prosperity,
- 2) education and skills development,
- 3) leadership and democratic participation,
- 4) gender-based violence and access to justice, and
- 5) poverty reduction, health, and well-being.

### ***Engaging With National Indigenous Leaders and Representatives***

In 2017, the National Indigenous Leaders and Representatives were invited to their first annual meeting with the FPT Ministers responsible for the Status of Women.<sup>119</sup> Since 2017, meetings have been held between the FPT Ministers and National Indigenous Leaders and Representatives prior to the annual FPT ministerial meetings. These meetings provide a dedicated space for Indigenous leaders to focus on the issues and priorities they have identified. Their participation in the Forum has provided valuable insight and information to assist FPT jurisdictions in understanding how best to address issues of mutual concern.

**Recommendation #49:** That all future FPT meetings of the Ministers responsible for the Status of Women across Canada include on the standing agenda an update and discussion concerning how the Government of Canada and the governments of all thirteen (13) provinces and territories are implementing "best practices" for establishing the proper legislative framework, implementation framework, and strategic planning process, to achieve gender equality in all fourteen (14) jurisdictions in Canada finally.

**Recommendation #50:** That the following issues be placed on the standing agenda for FPT meetings of the Ministers responsible for the Status of Women:

- 1) Creation and standardization of pay transparency legislation
- 2) Creation and standardization of pay equity legislation
- 3) Creation of gender equality legislation (similar to Iceland's) in all FPT jurisdictions to:
  - a. Better empower gender equality directorates and gender equality advisory councils, and

- b. Create legal obligations for each FPT government to maintain a gender equality strategic plan, action plan(s), and budget plan(s).
- 4) The modernization, upgrading, and standardization of occupational health and safety legislation to prevent and eliminate gender-based discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, bullying and violence in the workplace, and to protect the psychological health and safety of women and gender-diverse people in the workplace.

**Recommendation #51:** That there be mandate letters for each FPT Minister responsible for the Status of Women, and that these letters must include the responsibility for ensuring the establishment of the proper legislative framework and implementation framework and for carrying out the proper strategic planning to achieve gender equality in their respective jurisdiction.

**Recommendation #52:** That there be mandate letters for each FPT Minister responsible for the Status of Women, and that these letters include the responsibility to carry out jurisdiction-wide public consultations, and to develop all the strategic plans, and the associated action plan(s), budget plan(s), implementation plans, communication plans, and evaluation plans for achieving gender equality in each Minister's jurisdiction.

## Gender Equality Directorates

The European countries that have made the greatest progress in closing the gender equality gap have demonstrated that, after enacting more effective gender equality legislation (either new or amended), it is essential as part of the implementation framework to set up a Gender Equality Directorate which is responsible for:

- overseeing the implementation of all gender equality legislation;
- developing and implementing the government's strategic plans and action plans for achieving gender equality;
- developing budget plans and accounting for the expenditure of the funding allocated to the action plans and their various initiatives;
- collecting data to measure the effectiveness of action plan initiatives;
- carrying out an official evaluation of the effectiveness of the strategic plan(s), action plan(s), budget plan(s), and communication plan(s); and
- adjudicating complaints about the lack of gender equality.

In Iceland, the Prime Minister's Office oversees the implementation of the [\*Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights Irrespective of Gender, 2020\*](#) (the "Gender Equality Act"). However, the Directorate of Equality is responsible for its administration according to the [\*Act on Administration of Matters Concerning Equality, 2020\*](#). The Prime Minister's Office appoints a Gender Equality Council and a Complaints Committee on Gender Equality.

The Directorate of Equality, the Gender Equality Council, and the Complaints Committee operate independently of each other. The Directorate of Equality provides counselling and education in the field of gender equality, while the Gender Equality Complaints Committee examines cases and delivers rulings in writing on whether provisions of the “Gender Equality Act” have been violated. The Committee’s ruling may not be referred to a higher authority. In cases that may be expected to influence policy on the labour market, the Committee shall seek comments from the national federations of workers and employees before delivering its ruling. The rulings of the Complaints Committee shall be binding for the parties to each case. The parties may refer the Committee’s rulings to the courts.

In Canada, the following FPT government offices are responsible for the Status of Women and serve as the equivalent of a gender equality directorate, despite the differences in how the offices are named:

- ❖ Women and Gender Equality Canada ([weblink](#))
- ❖ British Columbia Gender Equity Office ([weblink](#))
- ❖ Alberta Status of Women and Inclusion Branch ([weblink](#))
- ❖ Saskatchewan Status of Women ([weblink](#))
- ❖ Women and Gender Equity Manitoba ([weblink](#))
- ❖ Ontario Office of Women’s Social and Economic Opportunity ([weblink](#))
- ❖ Quebec Secretariat for the Status of Women ([weblink](#))
- ❖ New Brunswick Women’s Equality Branch ([weblink](#))
- ❖ Nova Scotia Status of Women Office ([weblink](#))
- ❖ Prince Edward Island Interministerial Women’s Secretariat ([weblink](#))
- ❖ Newfoundland and Labrador Office of Women and Gender Equality ([weblink](#))
- ❖ Yukon Women and Gender Equity Directorate ([weblink](#))
- ❖ NWT Gender Equity Division ([weblink](#))
- ❖ Nunavut Department of Family Services<sup>xxii</sup> ([weblink](#))

The current mandate given to WAGE Canada keeps the Ministry stuck in analysis paralysis, as it continues to distribute funding to organizations to conduct research, year after year. Many of the projects throughout the years have provided an astute diagnosis of the systemic barriers that prevent the country of Canada from achieving gender equality. Yet, WAGE has not been empowered to follow through and implement those recommendations. WAGE needs to be given legislated authority in a way similar to the Office of the Official Languages Commissioner, which is responsible for monitoring the

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<sup>xxii</sup> There is no evidence that the Government of Nunavut has created the equivalent of a gender equality directorate. The *Nunavut Establishment of Departments and Responsibility for Acts Regulations, 2024*, established under *The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act*, states in Article 13: “The Minister responsible for the Status of Women and the Department of Family Services are responsible for the administration of the Qullit Nunavut Status of Women Council Act.”

implementation of the *Official Languages Act*, and in a way similar to Iceland's [Directorate of Equality](#).

**Recommendation #53:** The Government of Canada must empower Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE) with the legislative authority to ensure that federal gender equality legislation is implemented, develop national strategic plans and action plans for achieving gender equality, collect the necessary data, and formally evaluate the success or failure of those national strategic plans, action plans, budget plans, all FPT implementation plans, and communication plans.

**Recommendation #54:** Each of the provincial and territorial governments must properly empower their designated gender equality directorate (government office) responsible for the Status of Women in their respective FPT jurisdiction so that the Directorate is responsible for implementing gender equality legislation, carrying out public consultations, developing strategic plans and action plans for achieving gender equality, distributing funding to stakeholders, collecting the necessary data, issuing annual progress reports on strategic plans and action plans, and evaluating gender equality strategic plans, action plans, budget plans, implementation plans (e.g. found in government 4-year departmental plans), and communication plans.

## Gender Equality Advisory Councils

In 1946, the United Nations Economic and Social Council passed a resolution to establish the Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW). Today, UNCSW is the world's leading intergovernmental body and largest annual gathering dedicated exclusively to promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women. It would take 25 years and considerable political agitation by women across Canada, who were fed up with their unequal status, before the Canadian government finally established a national body with a similar purpose

On 3 February 1967, Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson established the [Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada](#). The commission's mandate was to inquire into and report on the status of women in Canada, and to make specific recommendations to the federal government to ensure equality for women in all aspects of society. The commission was launched at a time when the women's movement was in full swing and other governments worldwide were addressing similar issues. Feminist social activists across Canada were fed up with their unequal status and envisioned a more inclusive Canada in which women could grow, achieve, and thrive without limitations.

In 1971, in response to one of the Report's recommendations,<sup>xxiii</sup> the federal government established the Office of the Co-ordinator, Status of Women and appointed the

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<sup>xxiii</sup> "Therefore, we recommend that a federal Status of Women Council, directly responsible to Parliament, be established to (a) advise on matters pertaining to women and report annually to Parliament on the progress

first Minister responsible for the Status of Women. For the first five years, the Status of Women was overseen by the Privy Council Office. The Office of the Co-ordinator of the Status of Women was funded by an annual budget approved by the Parliament of Canada. The Co-ordinator, who was appointed by an Order-in-Council, was the head of the agency.

Another of the Royal Commission's recommendations was the establishment of a Council for the Status of Women in each province and territory, with sufficient funding and authority to ensure its work was effective.<sup>xxiv</sup> As early as 1973, the provinces and territories, except for British Columbia, began establishing advisory bodies based on the federal government's model, the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women. Many still exist today despite being seriously affected by significant budget cuts in recent years (see the Council on the Status of Women in Quebec). However, the general trend has been towards dismantling them (see previous page).

Meanwhile, on Friday, October 24, 1975, Icelandic women went on strike, which completely paralyzed the country<sup>xxv</sup> and opened the eyes of many Icelandic men. The women basically shut down Iceland for the day to protest the fact that women in the workplace made 60% less wages than their male counterparts and to protest that many women were unable to work, as they had to stay home to do the housework and raise the children. At 14h05 (2:05 pm), at the exact time when they would have earned their day's wages if they had been paid at the same average hourly wage as men, approximately 25,000 women throughout Iceland walked off the job (be it their formal work or informal work). The participation rate of women in the capital city of Reykjavik was almost 90%.

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being made in improving the status of women in Canada, (b) undertake research on matters relevant to the status of women and suggest research to Women's National Commission. Background Note . January 8. 1970 . 392 The Royal Commission on the Status of Women topics that can be carried out by governments, private business, universities, and voluntary associations, (c) establish programmes to correct attitudes and prejudices adversely affecting the status of women, (d) propose legislation, policies and practices to improve the status of women, and (e) systematically consult with women's bureaux or similar provincial organizations, and with voluntary associations particularly concerned with the problems of women." *The Royal Commission on the Status of Women*, 1970, pp 391-392 paragraph 17, <https://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/200/301/pco-bcp/commissions-ef/bird1970-eng/bird1970-part3-eng.pdf>

<sup>xxiv</sup> "Such organizations are needed at the provincial level and should, as we recommended above, co-operate closely with the Status of Women Council. Therefore, we recommend that, where it has not already been done, each province and territory establish a government bureau or similar agency concerned with the status of women which would have sufficient authority and funds to make its work effective." *The Royal Commission on the Status of Women*, 1970, page 392, para 18. <https://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/200/301/pco-bcp/commissions-ef/bird1970-eng/bird1970-part3-eng.pdf>

<sup>xxv</sup> Many schoolteachers were women, so schools closed or were barely functioning. The walkout disrupted telephone services, as many of the operators were women. The printing of newspapers was halted, as the typesetters were all women. Most daycares closed because the daycare workers were women, so Icelandic men had to take their children to work with them. In stores, easy-to-cook meals sold out, as did candy and sweets, and items to distract children. The strike continued until midnight, after which the women returned to work. The typesetters returned to set newspapers which were almost entirely devoted to the women's strike.

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## Advisory Councils on the Status of Women

- 1971: The BC Government established the Vancouver Status of Women (VSW)
- 1972: The [Yukon Status of Women Council](#) was established under the *Societies Act* and is still operating in 2025.
- 1973: Canada established the [Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women](#) (CACSW)
- 1973: The (Quebec) Conseil du statut de la femme was established and is still operating in 2025.
- 1975: The [PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women](#) was established and is still operating in 2025.
- 1976: The [Saskatchewan Action Committee, Status of Women \(SAC\)](#)
- 1980: The Government of Manitoba established the province's Advisory Council on the Status of Women. In 2023, the Council was renamed the Manitoba Gender Equity Council.
- 1973: The Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women (CACSW) was established.
- 1973: The [Ontario Advisory Council on the Status of Women](#) was established.
- 1977: The [New Brunswick Advisory Council on the Status of Women](#) was established.
- 1977: [Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women](#) was established and is still operating in 2025.
- 1980: [Newfoundland and Labrador Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women](#) was established and is still operating in 2025.
- 1986: Alberta established the Advisory Council on the Status of Women, which operated from [1986-1987](#).
- 1987: The Alberta Advisory Council on the Status of Women was **disbanded**.
- 1987: The Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues was established under the *Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues Act*, and is still operating in 2025.
- 1989: The [Saskatchewan Action Committee, Status of Women \(SAC\)](#) was **disbanded**.
- 1990: The [Northwest Territories Council on the Status of Women](#) was established, and it is still operating in 2025.
- 1995: The Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women (CACSW) was **disbanded**
- 1996: The Ontario Advisory Council on Women's Issues was **disbanded** because the *Ontario Advisory Council on Women's Issues Act* (passed in 1986) expired and was never replaced by Premier Mike Harris' conservative government.
- 1999: Nunavut established the [Qullit Nunavut Status of Women Council](#), and it is still operating in 2025.
- 2011: The [New Brunswick Advisory Council on the Status of Women](#) was **defunded**, and the *New Brunswick Advisory Council on the Status of Women Act* was **repealed**.
- 2014: The Government of New Brunswick established the Voices of New Brunswick Women Consensus-Building Forum.

**NOTE:** In the [2018-2021 Business Plan for the Status of Women](#), the Government of Alberta publicly announced in Key Strategy 2.6 that it would "Explore the establishment of an advisory council to ensure that perspectives from Alberta women and girls are reflected in government policies, programs, and services."

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In the year following the strike, the Government of Iceland passed the country's first *Gender Equality Act, 1976* and established the Gender Equality Council.

When one examines the legal and policy frameworks of the last fifty years, it becomes clear that Iceland and the fourteen (14) FPT jurisdictions in Canada chose very different paths. In Canada, the stories of the FPT Advisory Councils on the Status of Women are complex because councils, secretariats, and directorates were frequently established, changed, and dismantled. In contrast, Iceland decisively enacted legislation to legally establish a gender equality directorate and a gender equality advisory council. The Icelandic government has never merged the two or disbanded either of them; instead, it has empowered each of them in ways that have not been seen or experienced in Canada.

In contrast with the fourteen (14) FPT jurisdictions in Canada, the Icelandic Minister of Equality has a legal obligation, as outlined in the *Act on the Equal Status and Equal Rights Irrespective of Gender, 2020* (see Article 24), to meet with the Gender Equality Council (which is the gender equality consultation platform) once a year. Additionally, the Government of Iceland has a legal obligation to convene a gender equality forum every two years, which is open to all members of the public.

In Canada, when Advisory Councils on the Status of Women did exist, they attempted to influence government policies that directly affected women in their daily lives (such as income support, subsidized housing, educational opportunities, employment standards, minimum wages, and gender-based violence). However, they have never been empowered to the degree witnessed in Iceland and other European countries.

**Recommendation #55:** That the Government of Canada and the five remaining provinces (BC, AB, SK, ON, NB) enact legislation to establish and empower a (Women and) Gender Equality Advisory Council that has duties and powers similar to Iceland's Gender Equality Advisory Council.

**Recommendation #56:** That the five remaining provinces (MB, PQ, NS, PEI, NL) and three territories (YK, NT, NU) amend their legislation to rename and empower their Advisory Councils on the Status of Women so they have duties and powers similar to Iceland's Gender Equality Advisory Council.

**Recommendation #57:** That each of the fourteen (14) FPT jurisdictions in Canada review the legislation that exists in Iceland and other European countries, with the intent of drafting and enacting one piece of new legislation that:

- ❖ Formally establishes the jurisdiction's gender equality advisory council and the gender equality directorate,
- ❖ States each of their functions, duties, and powers and how they relate to each other and the Minister responsible for the Status of Women (and Gender Equity).

In 2018, Canada established the Gender Equality Advisory Council (GEAC) during its presidency of the Group of Seven (G7), an intergovernmental political and economic forum comprising Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United

States. The G7 GEAC is an independent advisory body that makes recommendations to the G7 leaders and ministers. From 2018 to 2025, the GEAC met six times. In 2021, it issued [14 calls to action and made 67 recommendations](#) to advance gender equality and empower women. However, it does not appear that the G7 GEAC has conducted an in-depth analysis of the steps taken by Iceland and other highly ranked countries (which are not members of the G7) to close the gender equality gap. There are numerous calls to action and recommendations that extend beyond the G7 with the intent of promoting gender equality in developing countries.

**Recommendation #58:** That the G7 Gender Equality Advisory Council (G7 GEAC) increase its transparency and accessibility by creating a single centralized website (knowledge hub) on which it posts the [calls for thematic working papers](#), [background papers from the W7 working group](#),<sup>xxvi</sup> [documents](#), and [G7 leaders' statements](#), so that all these documents are not scattered across the websites of seven different countries.

**Recommendation #59:** That the [recommendations](#) regarding best practices for achieving gender equality contained in [W7 communiqués](#) be integrated into Canada's national strategic plan and the associated action plan(s) to achieve gender equality in this country.

In Europe, a cornerstone of success has been the development of groups (networks) of experts on specific topic areas, which focus on evaluating the current legislation, implementing frameworks, and strategic planning of many jurisdictions. The European Commission depends on the expertise and insight of a [European Network of Experts in Gender Equality](#).

The Scientific Analysis and Advice on Gender Equality (SAAGE) network of experts provides external, independent, and rigorous analysis and advice to the European Commission in the field of gender equality policy. The network includes experts in statistics, econometrics, social protection, social inclusion and labour markets. Their analysis encompasses all 27 countries in the European Union, providing up-to-date insights into the current state of affairs in every EU member state. The SAAGE network prepares thematic reports, ad-hoc and country-specific papers, and also organizes seminars featuring key experts on specific topics related to gender equality.

SAAGE's wide network of experts monitors EU countries. It collects information at the country level, enabling them to conduct studies and prepare research reports that contain thematic insights and detailed knowledge on very specific topics, which are then discussed in seminars with EU officials who can develop more effective policy initiatives to advance gender equality in the EU.

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<sup>xxvi</sup> The Women's 7 (W7) unites feminist activists, organizations, and experts from all the G7 countries and the Global South to advocate for gender justice and women's rights. Each year, the W7 makes urgent recommendations and holds the G7 governments accountable.

**Recommendation #60:** That the Government of Canada formally establish a national Network of Experts in Gender Equality (that performs similar functions as its sister organization in the European Union) to:

- ❖ Research best practices from around the world.
- ❖ Monitor the achievement of gender equality by the Government of Canada and the thirteen (13) provinces and territories.
- ❖ Evaluate the legislative, implementation, and strategic planning measures taken by each of the fourteen (14) FPT jurisdictions in Canada.
- ❖ Publish an annual assessment of the progress being made toward achieving gender equality by each FPT jurisdiction in Canada and recommend next steps.

**Recommendation #61:** That the GEAC involve/invite more stakeholders to participate in the W7 organizing committees to provide input on key issues being presented to the G7 leaders at their annual meetings.

## **Gender Equality Tribunals**

In a meeting now lost in the annals of history, all the Attorneys General and many officials from the Departments of Justice from across Canada gathered in 1992 in Yellowknife, NWT, for their annual FPT meeting. Their focus was on how to eliminate gender inequality and gender bias<sup>xxvii</sup>, and other gender-based inequities and barriers from the Canadian justice system<sup>120</sup> that women face in their “pursuit of dispute resolution, redress of injury and enforcement of their rights.”<sup>121</sup> The Attorneys General discussed how women are disadvantaged when trying to use the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and the court system, or when they turn to human rights legislation, and suggested the need for an alternate dispute resolution process regarding issues of gender inequality.

### ***Issues using the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the court system***

Although some of the dilemmas that women faced in 1992 have been marginally improved,<sup>xxviii</sup> a significant number of the identified difficulties continue to exist over three decades later. As pointed out by the Attorneys General, these include “the complexity and inefficiency of present court structures; the unavailability of related services (such as legal aid and counselling) in proximity to the court; inordinate delays; [and] the formality of court

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<sup>xxvii</sup> In 1992, the issue of gender bias in Canadian courtrooms had recently been recognized with unprecedented profile and legitimacy by Madam Justice Bertha Wilson, who stated that there is overwhelming evidence that “gender-based myths, biases and stereotypes are deeply embedded in the attitude of many male judges, as well as in the law itself” (Page 17).

<sup>xxviii</sup> For example, geographical distance from court facilities has been resolved by the development of the Internet and the ability to participate in court proceedings by video.

procedures..."<sup>122</sup> In addition, Acts and regulations, as well as other legal documents, continue to be very complex and difficult for many women to understand, especially if English or French is not their first language.<sup>xxix</sup> Finally, the lack of financial resources continues to prevent many women from hiring legal counsel to interpret the law and other legal documents on their behalf.

The Attorneys General acknowledged that many women do not know about or understand their rights under the law, do not understand the legal system, and are unable to afford the cost of going to court. Compounding these challenges, courts have historically required individuals to prove individual, separate grounds of discrimination under Section 15(1) of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and have only recently begun grappling with applying an intersectional analysis<sup>xxx</sup> to the *Charter*. Essentially, this means that trying to pursue justice and resolve disputes regarding gender inequality by using the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and the mainstream judicial system is effectively closed to most women.<sup>123</sup>

Furthermore, the following dilemma remains just as true today as it did in 1992, when the Attorneys General explained, "Women require independent funding to enable them to exercise the equality rights guaranteed to them under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and other federal, provincial and territorial legislation by challenging governments' legislation, policies and practices through test case litigation."<sup>124</sup> The Canadian court system remains financially inaccessible to many women.<sup>xxxi</sup>

### ***Issues with Human Rights Legislation***

Although the Attorneys General were quite aware that there were several alternative methods of dispute resolution available, there was "considerable uncertainty as to whether these methods are better able to ensure equal access to justice for women."<sup>125</sup> For example, they discussed the "limitations of existing human rights legislation to deal with systemic discrimination because of its individual complaint-driven mechanisms, to allow for

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<sup>xxix</sup> It should be added that, for many Indigenous women, the Canadian court system is a colonial imposition that systematically criminalizes Indigenous women and fails to protect them. This can be seen in criminal law and child protection proceedings. For example, in 2023-2024, Indigenous women were 41.6% of the federal women offender population despite comprising approximately 4% of the total female population of Canada

<https://www.canada.ca/en/parole-board/corporate/transparency/reporting-to-canadians/performance-monitoring-report/2023-2024.html>

<sup>xxx</sup> When Indigenous women are the victims of crime, the system frequently does not take their concerns seriously and often falls back on racist and sexist stereotypes. (Read the case of *R. v. Barton*, 2019 SCC 33 <https://canlii.ca/t/j0fqj> for an account of how pervasive these stereotypes are in the legal system.)

<sup>xxxi</sup> While there have been efforts to improve access through the Court Challenges Program, which provides financial support to Canadians bringing cases involving constitutional and quasi-constitutional issues related to official language and human rights, the program has limitations. It was previously defunded in 2006 and only officially reinstated in 2017. Even now, its impact remains limited due to strict eligibility requirements and funding caps. (<https://pcj-ccp.ca/>)

appropriate assessment and awards of damages for sexual harassment, and the restricted categories of discrimination.”<sup>126</sup>

These top judiciary officials acknowledged “a general dissatisfaction with adjudication as the most preferable method of dispute resolution for all disputes” and expressed concern about “the ability of the adjudicative process to address the particular needs and concerns of women.”<sup>127</sup> They discussed *the necessity for an alternative process for dispute resolution* and concluded: “It is essential to further examine the various alternatives and to ensure that women always have the right to choose the method of dispute resolution which best meets their particular needs.”<sup>128</sup> A resolution was made that all the Attorneys General, “Explore and compare the experiences of women in adjudicative and *alternative dispute resolution processes with regard to gender equality concerns*.”<sup>129</sup>

**Recommendation #62:** That the Attorneys General of all FPT governments in Canada seek national input from judicial officials, human rights adjudicators, professors of law, and gender equality experts to assess the issues that women and gender-diverse individuals have been experiencing using the regular court system, human rights tribunal system, and Employment Standards Boards, to explore the value of establishing gender equality tribunals, as Iceland and other European countries have done.

## KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

There is a general lack of robust strategic planning in Canada (with the exception of Quebec) to achieve gender equality. This becomes very apparent when comparing Canada’s strategic planning outputs to those of many European countries.

In addition, a lack of intellectual honesty too frequently underpins the little planning that exists. For example, a few paragraphs of information on a Government of Canada webpage do not comprise a so-called “Canadian Apprenticeship Strategy.” Also, a “funding program” is not the equivalent of a strategic plan. The Government of Canada clearly states in the opening sentence on its [website](#) that, “The Canadian Apprenticeship Strategy is a funding program ...”<sup>130</sup> A funding program could be a component of a strategic plan or an action plan if such a plan were to actually exist. However, it is intellectually dishonest to claim that it is the entire strategic plan. In 2022, upon CCWESTT’s request, the Canadian government was unable to provide a copy of the alleged strategy. In contrast, CCWESTT was able to easily find online a PDF copy of Australia’s strategic plan and action plan for Women in STEM, as well as Ireland’s exceptionally well-developed Apprenticeship Action Plans, in which stakeholder responsibilities and quarterly target dates were clearly stated.

Finally, when a province or territory signs a funding agreement (e.g., a “[transfer payment agreement](#)” to implement the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence*) with the Government of Canada, it does not automatically mean it now has an action plan for its area of jurisdiction. The province or territory still needs to develop a strategic plan and

action plan *for its jurisdiction*, which explains how the departments (Ministries) of the provincial or territorial government will work with government agencies, educational institutions, labour organizations, law enforcement, non-governmental organizations (e.g., shelter providers), the private sector, etc., to reduce and eventually eliminate gender-based violence within its jurisdiction.

It is the government's responsibility to demonstrate leadership and to facilitate public consultation and key stakeholder discussions so that strategic plans (containing long-term objectives) and action plans (containing achievable short-term goals) can be properly developed for its jurisdiction. There are numerous instances of an FPT government's failure to lead strategic planning for the country, province, or territory, and the obligation that NGOs and universities feel to step in and try to fill the void. Some examples include:

- ❖ **Canada:** In 2020, Women in Tech World, a non-governmental organization (NGO), published the following action plan: "[\*Advancing Women in STEM: Feedback from Women in Tech World -- Action Plan for the Government of Canada\*](#)," which the Government of Canada posted on its [website](#) as its own.
- ❖ **Alberta:** In March 2023, experts at the University of Calgary's Faculty of Social Work released a 37-page action plan entitled [\*Advancing Gender Equality in Alberta: A Critical Strategy to Prevent Gender-Based Violence\*](#). This draft strategic action plan contains 15 objectives (called "strategies") and **84 actions** for the Government of Alberta to implement.<sup>131</sup> The plan was developed by the "research action hub," [\*Shift: The Project to End Domestic Violence\*](#), which issued a call for public discussions, especially with women, equity-deserving groups, and Indigenous Peoples, to prioritize and fine-tune the recommendations. The action plan was designed to help the Government of Alberta by identifying collective strategies and actions focused on the primary prevention of domestic and sexual violence.
- ❖ **Alberta:** The Action Coalition on Human Trafficking (ACT) Alberta, a non-governmental organization, published its [\*2023-2026 Action Coalition on Human Trafficking Strategic Plan\*](#) (19 pages), which contains three (3) strategic priorities and nine (9) initiatives, which serves as an example of how the Government of Alberta could develop a strategic plan to coordinate the efforts of government ministries, NGOs, and community organizations across the province.
- ❖ **Saskatchewan:** On May 13, 2019, Sexual Assault Services Saskatchewan SASS [announced](#) the release of a 5-year (22-point) action plan entitled [\*Working Together—Your Voice, Your Story, Your Action: Saskatchewan Sexual Violence Action Plan \(2019-2024\)\*](#) because of the need to develop a provincial action plan.
- ❖ **Ontario:** After organizing focus groups, conducting surveys, and holding 53 workshops during the 2018-2019 school year, YWCA Hamilton developed a [\*Strategic Action Plan: Equitable Pathways to Technical Fields and Skilled Trades\*](#), containing eleven (11) key strategies, during a project funded by Wage and Gender Equality (WAGE) Canada.

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## Gender Equality Policies

In the previous century, some FPT jurisdictions in Canada created gender equality policies. This was an accepted practice before the transition, at the turn of the century, to developing strategic plans. For example, in 1993, the Quebec government published a new 10-year “policy” on the status of women, which gave rise to the adoption and implementation of three consecutive action plans, the first of which contained 135 commitments by the Government to be implemented over the next three years.<sup>132</sup>

On May 28, 1985, the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) issued a public policy entitled *Equality of Men and Women in the Northwest Territories*, which remains in effect today. This policy states that the GNWT supports international conventions on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women to which the Government of Canada is a party. The policy also states that the Minister responsible for the Status of Women may recommend strategies and action plans concerning the equality of women to the NWT Cabinet and may recommend legislation concerning the equality of women and men.<sup>133</sup> The intent of the policy was certainly honourable. Forty (40) years have passed since the creation of that GNWT policy. There was, and continues to be, *no obligation* to create strategic plans and action plans for achieving gender equality. It remains optional. As a result, the policy has been ineffective in achieving the goal of gender equality in the territory.

The creation of a gender equality policy, as issued by the Quebec government and the GNWT, was an accepted practice during the 1980s and 1990s. However, creating “policies” tends to be a “last-century approach” to achieving the goal of gender equality. The Government of Quebec evolved from creating gender equality policies to developing gender equality strategic plans and action plans.

The country of Iceland (and other European countries) has proven that the “best practice” is to enact gender equality *legislation* that contains the legal obligation for the government to develop a strategic plan, and the necessary action plan(s), and budget plan(s) every four years for the approval of the legislature.

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**Recommendation #63:** That the Government of the Northwest Territories rescind its Equality of Men and Women policy and replace it with gender equality legislation that creates a legal obligation for the GNWT to:

- ❖ Create strategic plans, action plans, and budget plans for the approval of the NWT legislature.
- ❖ Implement GBA Plus Analysis (GBA+) or what Europe calls “gender mainstreaming.”

## Public Consultation

*“Experiences should inform policies.”*  
2024 Task Force Review of Canada’s *Employment Equity Act*

Stakeholder (public) consultation plays a crucial role in the development of public policies and the strategic planning process. Many people and organizations want to be heard on the matter of gender equality, as it directly affects their livelihoods. Stakeholders should be invited to share their experiences and insights regarding how to solve the problem.

The Government of Québec held public hearings in 2005 as part of a consultation on the brief of the Conseil du statut de la femme entitled *For a New Social Contract of Equality Between Women and Men*, which shows proof that it values public consultation as part of its strategic planning process regarding gender equality, anti-human trafficking, and gender-based violence.

Unfortunately, there are too many FPT jurisdictions where there is minimal or no public consultation on issues essential to achieving gender equality.

The Government of Ontario has developed a best practice regarding public engagement, specifically the creation of a “[Consultations Directory](#),” a central location that contains information about current public consultations and archives information about previous consultations.

**Recommendation #64:** That all fourteen (14) FPT jurisdictions develop a new (or amend a current) centralized “Public Consultations Directory” for their jurisdiction that:

- ❖ posts all consultation papers,
- ❖ announces all calls for submissions,
- ❖ announces the start and end dates of upcoming public consultations,
- ❖ provides the status of consultations that are currently open, and
- ❖ archives information about past public consultations.

In developing its action plans to increase the number of apprentices in Ireland, the Irish government has made publicly available all submissions received during public consultations held before developing its [2016-2020 Action Plan to Expand Apprenticeship and Traineeship](#) and [all submissions received](#) during public consultations held before developing its [2021-2025 Action Plan for Apprenticeship](#). All submissions are made publicly available under Ireland’s Freedom of Information Acts and are published on the government’s website following the publication of the Action Plan, although personal details are redacted.

**Recommendation #65:** That all fourteen (14) FPT governments be completely transparent and implement the best practice, as modelled by the Government of Ireland, of making publicly available all submissions received during public consultations, by posting (on their respective FPT government website) all the submissions and feedback received during all the public consultations that take place before the development of all strategic plans and action plans to achieve gender equality.

## Strategic Plans and Action Plans for Achieving Gender Equality

Back in 1995, the Government of Canada issued a strategic plan for gender equality. In the introduction to the plan, Sheila Finestone, then-Secretary of State for the Status of Women Canada, assured Canadians by stating:

“Canada and its people remain committed not only to the principle of gender equality but also to action that makes equality reality — even in these uncertain times. That means adapting our strategies for the times. In this report, *Setting the Stage for the Next Century: The Federal Plan for Gender Equality*, the government outlines its contributions to solutions. The Federal Plan strengthens the government’s commitments to equality and sets a course to accelerate that progress.”<sup>134</sup>

Secretary of State Sheila Finestone went on to promise the public that the Government of Canada would hold the necessary public consultations to ensure that gender equality would be achieved:

“Still, there is no one answer, no one action, no one player that can make equality happen. Gender equality is everybody’s business. This Plan confirms the Government’s role as part of a broad-based partnership in society, consulting and acting in concert with individuals and with public, para-public and private institutions.”<sup>135</sup>

*The Canadian government's inaction is a direct consequence of the lack of gender equality legislation and the lack of a legal obligation for the federal government to always maintain a national strategic plan and associated action plans for achieving gender equality in Canada.* For the Government of Canada, taking the necessary action to achieve gender equality remains optional, which is certainly not the case for Iceland and other European countries that are making significantly more progress in closing the gender equality gap.

As of September 2025, the Government of Canada has still not implemented the OECD’s top recommendation, made seven years ago in 2018, to develop a national strategy for achieving gender equality.<sup>136</sup> On Dec 04, 2019, after the annual FPT meeting of the Ministers responsible for the Status of Women, the Government of Canada announced: “Moving forward, the Ministers agreed to develop a three-year strategic plan to inform their collective action to advance gender equality across Canada.”<sup>137</sup> The plan did not materialize.

Stakeholders attempt to be supportive of this important initiative. For example, in 2020, the Gender Equality Network Canada received funding from the Government of Canada to develop its [\*Discussion Document for a Pan-Canadian Strategy to Advance Gender Equality\*](#).<sup>138</sup>

However, six years after the announcement was made, in 2025, a national strategic plan to achieve gender equality has yet to be issued by the Government of Canada.

Surprisingly enough, this is one area in which the United States was ahead of Canada. In October 2021, the United States government launched its first-ever [\*National Strategy on Gender Equity and Equality\*](#)<sup>139</sup> (42 pages), developed by the White House Gender Policy Council.

**Recommendation #66:** That the Government of Canada consistently develop and maintain national strategic plans and the necessary action plan(s) to coordinate the efforts of all FPT governments in Canada to achieve the nationwide goal of gender equality.

**Recommendation #67:** That the Government of Canada amend the [\*Department of Women and Gender Equality Act, 2018\*](#) (current to Sep 1, 2025) to implement the best practice of creating a legal obligation for the Government of Canada always to maintain a national strategic plan, the associated action plan(s), and budget plans to achieve gender equality in Canada, and to carry out the necessary public consultation in advance of developing new plans, to issue annual progress reports, and to do a final evaluation of all expiring plans.

Every four years, Iceland's Minister of Equality submits a motion for a parliamentary resolution to approve the four-year gender equality action plan. This plan must be developed following the submission of proposals from government ministries, consultation with the Directorate of Equality, and feedback from the Gender Equality Forum. The Gender Equality Action Plan must include projects aimed at achieving the goal of securing equal status and rights for all genders in Icelandic society. The Action Plan must also clearly specify which parties are responsible for each project, the estimated cost of each project, and the method to be used for evaluating the results of the actions taken.<sup>140</sup>

It is highly noteworthy that in 2010, the Government of Iceland passed the [\*Planning Act, 2010\*](#) for the Ministry of Social Affairs and Housing, which states in Articles 2(3) and 2(16) that the lifespan of a strategic plan is fifteen (15) years and that of an action plan is five (5) years. According to Article 4, there is a legal obligation to establish "a consultation portal." Article 11 states that "the public shall be given the opportunity to express their views and comments in an open consultation process." To fulfill its legal obligation under Article 11 to compile a description of the planned activities, the Ministry presents a green and white paper on the government's consultation portal, allowing the public and stakeholders to submit comments and suggestions during the process. Once the 15-year strategic plan and 5-year action plan have been finalized, the Minister reviews them and presents a draft parliamentary resolution to the Icelandic parliament (Alþingi) for approval.

The GNWT's policy regarding the [\*Equality of Men and Women in the Northwest Territories\*](#), defines an action plan as "a plan outlining actions to be taken with respect to the equality of women and men, the reasons for each action, how the actions will be implemented, by whom, when, and a method for review and evaluation,"<sup>141</sup> which is a very helpful definition for the other FPT governments in Canada.

The Government of Australia has developed an [action plan template](#) and a [guidebook](#) to assist governments, businesses, and community organizations in developing gender equality action plans. This type of initiative could also be replicated in Canada.

**Recommendation #68:** That the Government of Canada enact gender equality legislation that contains the legal obligation for the federal government, regardless of which political party is in power, to always maintain a national strategic plan and the necessary action plans to achieve gender equality in Canada, and which states the time period covered by the strategic plan and action plan(s), and which contain the necessary components of each type of plan.

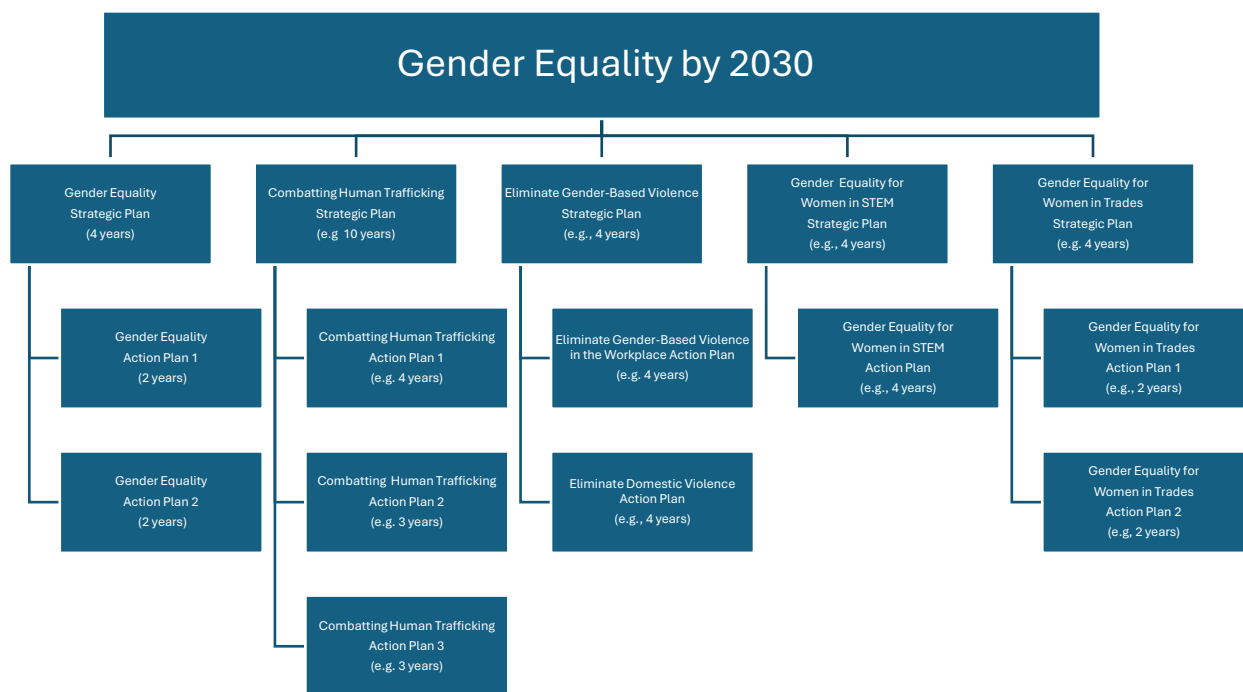
**Recommendation #69:** That the Minister of Women and Gender Equality (WAGE) Canada convene a national meeting of all the FPT Ministers responsible for the Status of Women to discuss the drafting of a *Canadian Convention on Achieving Gender Equality*, for the signature of all fourteen (14) FPT jurisdictions, which contains the commitment to carry out legislative reform, and to improve the implementation of laws, FPT strategic planning, gender-based analysis, and collection of data, to achieve the objective of gender equality in Canada.

Achieving gender equality requires a multi-pronged approach. FPT governments must develop multiple, concurrent, and complementary strategic plans under the umbrella of an overarching strategic plan with concurrent, coordinated, and complementary action plans. The same must be done for the necessary accompanying action plans (see visual on next page).

For over four decades, the Government of Quebec has consistently conducted public consultations and developed strategic and action plans to achieve gender equality for women in the province. Quebec's *2022-2027 Government Strategy for Gender Equality* is also complementary to its *Integrated Government Strategy to Counteract Sexual Violence, Domestic Violence and to Rebuild Trust 2022-2027*, and its *Concerted Action Plan to Prevent and Counter Bullying and Cyberbullying 2020-2025*, and other ongoing action plans against violence, which are coordinated by the Quebec government's Secretariat for the Status of Women.

Unfortunately, little evidence can be found to confirm that any of the other provinces and territories have developed gender-equality strategic plans and action plans. There was a one-off in the province of Saskatchewan in 2003, when the provincial government published an *Action Plan for Saskatchewan Women: Moving Forward*.<sup>142</sup> On November 22, 2024, the Government of Manitoba announced the launch of a new \$20 million provincial strategy,<sup>143</sup> entitled *Mino'Ayaawag Ikwewag: All Women Doing Well*, to help fulfill the "government's commitment to prioritize the safety, protection, and empowerment of Indigenous women, girls, two-spirit, and gender-diverse relatives."<sup>144</sup>

**Recommendation #70:** That the governments of the remaining twelve (12) provinces and territories (except Quebec, which is already doing so) develop and maintain a strategic plan and the necessary action plan(s) for achieving gender equality in their respective jurisdiction.



## Strategic Plans and Action Plans to Combat and Eliminate Human Trafficking

In 2024, the Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking (CCET) raised the alarm that the federal government had done very little to renew the expiring [National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking 2019-2024](#) and to ensure that critical projects could continue without disruption to funding. In May and June 2023, well in advance of the plan’s expiry date of December 31, 2024, many advocacy organizations sent letters to the Prime Minister of Canada and top Ministers calling upon the Canadian government to immediately begin public consultations to update the strategy and prevent the loss of momentum<sup>xxxii</sup> and “to undertake a meaningful consultation process that prioritizes survivors, front-line agencies, and other levels of government from across Canada.”<sup>145</sup> Hearing from those most impacted will give the federal government the insight it needs to develop an effective nationwide strategy and make meaningful progress. In order to develop policies, programs, and interventions that effectively address root causes, the government’s responses must be directly informed by lived experiences.

The federal government has not provided a timeline for drafting an updated strategy or for holding public consultations. A spokesperson for the Government of Canada stated that things are “in the early planning stages.”<sup>146</sup>

<sup>xxxii</sup> Losing momentum can occur, for example, when staff must be laid off due to lack of funding and successful programs must be shut down. These programs include supporting survivors to find desperately needed housing to escape their traffickers and receive counselling to help them manage the complex trauma this crime inflicts.

In contrast, in 2021, the Government of Ontario enacted the *Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy Act, 2021* (current to Aug 15, 2025). In Canada, this legislation is a ground-breaking example of best practices. The Act contains many legal obligations,<sup>xxxiii</sup> which include:

- 1) The Government of Ontario must maintain an anti-human trafficking strategy that aims to end human trafficking in Ontario and support people who have experienced human trafficking.
- 2) The strategic plan must contain initiatives to achieve these aims.
- 3) The Minister is legally obliged to periodically publish reports on the actions taken.
- 4) The plan must also be reviewed at least every five (5) years, and the Minister must advise the public that the strategy is being reviewed and solicit their viewpoints.
- 5) Public consultations must include community organizations, individuals, other levels of government, persons who have experienced human trafficking, members and representatives of communities that are most adversely impacted by human trafficking (as listed in the Act), and other appropriate stakeholders.
- 6) After public consultations are concluded and the review has taken place, the Government of Ontario must either amend the strategy, replace the strategy with a new one, or continue the existing strategy.
- 7) The anti-human trafficking strategy must be published on the Government of Ontario website, the current version of which is [Ontario's Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy 2020-2025](#).

**Recommendation #71:** The Government of Canada must enact legislation to combat human trafficking, which:

- ❖ Contains the legal obligation for the Government of Canada to **maintain** a strategic plan, the (concurrent) associated action plan(s), and budget plans to prevent and eliminate human trafficking.
- ❖ Formally assigns the lead responsibility of developing the necessary national strategic plans and action plans to the appropriate federal government Ministry.
- ❖ Contains the legal obligations for the lead Ministry to:
  - Carry out public consultation every two years for strategic planning purposes.
  - Collect the necessary data regarding human trafficking.
  - Evaluate the Canadian government's strategic plans, action plans, budget plans, implementation plans, communications plans, evaluation plans, etc., to combat human trafficking.
  - Work in partnership with each provincial and territorial government to coordinate efforts across the country..

**Recommendation #72:** That the governments of the remaining twelve (12) provincial and territorial governments (except for Ontario, which has already done so) enact legislation to combat human trafficking, which:

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<sup>xxxiii</sup> See Articles 2-6 of the Ontario *Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy Act, 2021*.

- ❖ Contains the legal obligation for the provincial/territorial government to **maintain** a 4-year strategic plan and the associated action plan(s) to combat human trafficking in their respective jurisdiction.
- ❖ Formally identifies the Minister and the lead department (Ministry) tasked with the responsibility of developing the necessary strategic plans and action plans.
- ❖ Contains the legal obligations for the Minister to:
  - Carry out public consultation every two years for strategic planning purposes.
  - Collect the necessary data regarding human trafficking.
  - Evaluate their provincial/territorial government’s strategic plans, action plans, budget plans, implementation plans, communications plans, evaluation plans, etc., to combat human trafficking.

**Recommendation #73:** That the Government of Ontario amend its *Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy Act, 2021* (current to Sep 12, 2025) to contain the legal obligations of Ontario’s Women and Gender Equity Directorate to:

- Carry out public consultation every two years for strategic planning purposes.
- Collect the necessary data regarding human trafficking.
- Carry out a formal final evaluation of the Ontario government’s strategic plans, action plans, budget plans, implementation plans, communications plans, evaluation plans, etc., to combat human trafficking.

**Recommendation #74:** That the Government of Canada and the remaining nine provinces (BC, AB, SK, MB, PQ, NB, NS, PEI, NL) and three territories (YK, NT, NU) carry out public consultations in order to develop the necessary strategic plan, action plan(s), and budget plan(s) to combat and eliminate human trafficking in their respective jurisdiction.

It is important to note that the limited policy and legislative responses in addressing human trafficking in Canada have overwhelmingly focused on sex trafficking, despite labour trafficking also being a prevalent issue across numerous industries. Labour trafficking remains largely unacknowledged and is often relegated to the margins of public discourse and policy response.

For example, while the Government of Ontario has a [webpage](#) specifically acknowledging labour trafficking and outlining its indicators, this language is not reflected in its *Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy 2025-2030*. The term “labour trafficking” is entirely absent from the Strategy, which overwhelmingly focuses on sex trafficking. Without explicitly naming and addressing labour trafficking in policy responses like strategic frameworks, government responses remain partial and inadequate, failing to protect the full spectrum of trafficking survivors.

Labour trafficking must be recognized not as a secondary issue, but as a central human rights and labour justice concern. The already lacking anti-trafficking frameworks in Canada fail to adequately address the unique vulnerabilities faced most often by migrant workers, undocumented individuals, and low-income communities, many of whom are exploited in coercive labour conditions under threat of deportation or economic instability.

On Jun 17, 2019, Canada [ratified](#) the [Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention, 1930](#), which contains the following commitments:

- ❖ Take effective measures to prevent and eliminate forced or compulsory labour and to provide protection to victims and access to appropriate and effective remedies and to sanction the perpetrators (see Article 1.1).
- ❖ **Develop a national policy and plan of action, in consultation with** employers' and workers' organizations, to coordinate the efforts of all stakeholders (see Article 1.2) and to take measures and specific actions against trafficking for forced or compulsory labour (see Article 1.3), which include:
  - ❖ Educating and informing people, especially the particularly vulnerable, to prevent them from becoming victims of forced or compulsory labour. (see Article 2.a)
  - ❖ Educating and informing employers to prevent them from becoming involved in forced or compulsory labour practices. (see Article 2.b)
    - **Enact and enforce legislation** to prevent forced or compulsory labour, including labour law, which applies to all workers and all sectors of the economy. (see Article 2.c.i)
    - **Strengthen labour inspection services and the implementation of legislation.** (see Article 2.c.ii)
  - ❖ Protect people, especially migrant workers, from abusive and fraudulent practices during the recruitment and placement process. (see Article 2.d)
  - ❖ Support the due diligence of both the public and private sectors to prevent and respond to risks of forced or compulsory labour. (see Article 2.e)
  - ❖ Address the root causes and factors that increase the risk of forced or compulsory labour. (see Article 2.f)
  - ❖ Take effective measures to identify, release, protect, recover, and rehabilitate all victims of forced or compulsory labour, as well as provide other forms of assistance and support. (see Article 3)
  - ❖ Ensure all victims of forced or compulsory labour, regardless of their legal status in the country, to have access to appropriate and effective remedies, such as compensation. (see Article 4.1)
  - ❖ Ensure that authorities do not prosecute or impose penalties on victims of forced or compulsory labour for being involved in unlawful activities, which they have been compelled to take the necessary measures to commit. (see Article 4.2)
  - ❖ Cooperate with other members (countries) to prevent and eliminate all forms of forced or compulsory labour. (see Article 5)

**Recommendation #75:** That the governments of all fourteen (14) FPT jurisdictions incorporate the commitments of the [Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention, 1930](#), into their strategic plans and action plans to combat and eliminate human trafficking in their respective jurisdiction.

The Government of Australia developed a national strategic plan entitled [\*Human Trafficking and Slavery Strategic Plan, 2023-2026\*](#), which focuses not only on human trafficking but also on labour trafficking (slavery). The Australian government points out the difference between human trafficking and “slavery”:

“Human trafficking offences involve the physical movement of people across or within borders by coercing, threatening or deceiving them for the purpose of exploiting them when they reach their destination. Slavery and slavery-like offences involve the ownership of a person or exploitation of a person in circumstances similar to slavery.”<sup>147</sup>

There is much that all fourteen (14) FPT jurisdictions can learn from the Government of Ireland, which is implementing its third action plan to combat human trafficking. In June 2009, the Irish government issued its first 4-year (236-page) [\*National Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Trafficking of Human Beings in Ireland 2009-2012\*](#). In 2016, the Irish government issued its (91-page) [\*Second National Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking in Ireland\*](#), which contained 65 actions designed to crack down on individuals and gangs involved in the crime, support victims, raise public awareness, and enhance training for people likely to encounter victims. In 2023, the government issued its third (40-page) [\*National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking 2023-2027\*](#).

In addition, Ireland’s Minister for Justice and Equality explained that since the publication of the first action plan, steps were taken to develop and put in place “a strong legislative and administrative framework... to combat the phenomenon of human trafficking,” which included the enactment of the [\*Criminal Law \(Human Trafficking\) Act 2008\*](#) and the [\*Criminal Law \(Human Trafficking\) \(Amendment\) Act 2013\*](#), as well as the implementation of international legislation such as [\*Directive 2011/36/EU\*](#) on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims.<sup>148</sup>

**Recommendation #76:** That all fourteen (14) FPT governments in Canada carry out interjurisdictional research to investigate the work that has been done by other countries (especially Australia and Ireland) to discover best practices from around the world to combat and eliminate human trafficking and to incorporate these best practices into a national strategic plan and action plan(s) to combat and eradicate sex trafficking and labour trafficking in Canada.

## **Strategic Plans and Action Plans to End Gender-Based Violence Against Women**

In 1993, Canada backed the adoption by the United Nations General Assembly of the [\*Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women\*](#). Although Canada’s intentions were honourable at the international level, back at home, there was a lack of implementation of the commitments contained in the Declaration, especially the development of a national plan of action (see Article 4e). In 1995, Canada published a national strategic plan entitled [\*Setting\*](#)

*the Stage For the Next Century: The Federal Plan for Gender Equality*, which contained Objective 4: Reduce violence in society, particularly violence against women and children. Unfortunately, there was no accompanying national action plan.

Over twenty (20) years later, in 2017, the Government of Canada released its (3-page) national strategic plan entitled *It's Time: Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence*. The "strategy" was based on the following three pillars: (1) prevention, (2) support for survivors and their families, and (3) promoting responsive legal and justice systems. The strategy embraced a whole-of-government approach to ending gender-based violence by coordinating the efforts of federal government departments (Ministries) and agencies and complementing the work of provincial and territorial governments. Unfortunately, the Government of Canada limited its efforts in the "strategy" to taking action "to ensure that Parliament and federal institutions are workplaces free from harassment and sexual violence" (see page 2) and gender-based violence in *all* workplaces across the country was not one of the objectives of the national strategic plan.

Dubravka Šimonović, the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, Its Causes and Consequences, visited Canada from April 13 to 23, 2018. In her report, she examined the gaps and challenges in Canada's fulfillment of its obligations, as a member state of the United Nations, to eliminate violence against women. The special rapporteur also identified the causes and consequences and recommended measures for preventing and combating violence against women in Canada. While presenting her preliminary findings, she concluded that violence against women in Canada remains a "serious, pervasive, and systematic problem," and that Canada has "unfinished business that requires urgent actions."<sup>149</sup> In her written report, she noted that "women's lives in Canada are still marked by systemic gender-based violence, especially concerning indigenous and other women who encounter multiple forms of discrimination."<sup>150</sup> And exhorted Canada "to address the root causes that lead to disproportionate levels of violence against Indigenous women and girls."<sup>151</sup>

Across Canada, Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people are going missing and being murdered. They have a critical need for violence prevention. The systemic racism, abuse, and violence that they are experiencing have created a crisis that requires action. Fulfilling the 231 "Calls for Justice" issued by the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (National Inquiry) in its [final report](#) will require long-term, government-wide action.

The Government of Quebec has pointed out that in its province:

**"Although most of these forms of violence can be experienced by individuals other than women, the fact remains that women are the main victims.** In 2019 in Québec, 76% of the victims of domestic violence, 88% of the victims of sexual assault, and 95% of the victims of crimes related to pimping and human trafficking were female."<sup>152</sup>

The Quebec government has also expressed concern about gender-based violence that occurs in cyberspace and “the impact of online hostility toward women, especially those who speak out in public spaces, and on the legal recourse available to victims.”<sup>153</sup>

**Recommendation #77:** That all fourteen (14) FPT governments develop *and maintain* comprehensive and multi-sectoral strategic plans and action plans to bring about the necessary systemic and structural changes that will result in all Indigenous women, children, and two-spirit+ people being able to live in safety and security, free from violence and exploitation.

*“It remains unclear if and how  
the National Action Plan and the  
federal Gender-Based Violence Strategy  
connect to one another.”*

*Reflections on the First Year of the National Action Plan  
to End Gender-Based Violence*  
Nov 09, 2023

In November 2022, five years *after* the launch of the national strategy to end gender-based violence, the Government of Canada launched its *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence*. As part of the roll-out, all thirteen (13) provinces and territories signed transfer agreements to receive four years of funding from the Government of Canada to implement the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence*, which has the following five pillars:

- (1) support for survivors and their families,
- (2) prevention,
- (3) responsive justice system,
- (4) implementing Indigenous-led approaches, and
- (5) social infrastructure and enabling environment

As part of the launch of the national action plan, the Government of Canada developed bilateral agreements with each of the provinces and territories to provide multi-year funding for the period from April 1, 2023, to March 30, 2027. Each province and territory is required to develop an Implementation Plan to support the achievement of the National Action Plan's goals.

A review of the actions provided by all jurisdictions reveals that gender-based violence in the workplace is minimally addressed. Only in a few provinces did the actions in Years 1 and 2 include an action related to reducing and eliminating gender-based violence in the workplace. The failure to include actions across all FPT jurisdictions is highly problematic, as it ignores an entire group of victims-survivors, continues to relegate gender-based violence to the private sphere, and prevents increased recognition that gender-based violence is also a work-related concern.

Furthermore, in the majority of cases, there is no province-wide or territorial-wide strategic plan and the necessary action plan(s) to prevent and eliminate gender-based violence within their jurisdiction. Residents of Yukon Territory have called out this precise problem: “In the Yukon, the only existing strategy to address elements of gender-based violence is the MMIWG2s+ Strategy (2020). There is currently no Yukon government strategy to end gender-based violence in the territory as a whole...”<sup>154</sup> With the hundreds of millions of dollars being distributed to the provinces and territories, advocates in Yukon have called for a commitment from the territorial government to “[j]ointly develop a Yukon strategy to implement the National Action Plan to end Gender Based Violence in equal partnership with Yukon’s equity-seeking organizations.”<sup>155</sup>

Even more precisely, they have asked the Yukon government to establish a joint governing body comprising key partners and stakeholders, including representatives from the Yukon government, First Nations, and equity-seeking organizations, to implement the 646 recommendations collected by WAGE Canada into a strategic plan for Yukon to eliminate gender-based violence. When it comes to implementing the strategic plan, they seek long-term core funding agreements for advocacy organizations and frontline shelter organizations, as well as the necessary data collection. Additionally, they require strong transparency and accountability, along with regular progress reports published by the Yukon government on each item in the strategic plan.<sup>156</sup>

**Recommendation #78:** That the remaining four provinces (SK, NB, NS, NL) and the territory of (NU) develop a strategic plan to coordinate the efforts of government departments (Ministries), emergency and transitional shelter providers, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community organizations, law enforcement, etc., to eliminate gender-based violence within their respective jurisdiction, as (BC, AB, MB, ON, PQ, PEI, YK, NT) have already done.

**Recommendation #79:** That the remaining six provinces (AB, SK, MB, NS, PEI, NL) and the territory of (NU) develop an action plan to prevent and eliminate gender-based violence within their respective jurisdiction, as the Government of Canada (CDA) and the provinces of (BC, ON, PQ, NB) and territories of (YK, NT) have done.

In 2025, concern has also been expressed by the Peel Institute of Research and Training about the problems that arise when there is a lack of consistency in the strategic planning process:

“The lack of recent action plans to prevent and address gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH) is highly problematic, given the high prevalence rates across Canada. Further, the inconsistency between action plans demonstrates a lack of planning as a plan comes to an end. This likely results in the breakdown of the sustainability of GBVH initiatives, programs, and services due to changes in funding and government support.”<sup>157</sup>

## Strategic Plans and Action Plans to Achieve Gender Equality for Women in STEM

*"In order to achieve gender equity in STEM, a concentrated, long-term strategy is needed to support female engagement and success in the field."<sup>158</sup>*

*University of Ontario Institute of Technology*

According to Ontario Tech University, "For women pursuing post-secondary education and professions in science, engineering, technology, and math (STEM), there remains a sizable gender disparity, despite notable advancements in recent years. Even though women make up the bulk of Canadian university graduates, they are still underrepresented in STEM fields."<sup>159</sup> Consequently, in 2019, the university's Women for STEM Council launched its Women for STEM initiative to address gender inequality in Canada and empower the upcoming generation of women in STEM. The program aims to award 600 in-course scholarships and 200 entry scholarships over the next ten years, providing opportunities for networking and mentorship.

*However, despite all its efforts at the university level, Ontario Tech University has called for a long-term strategy to achieve gender equity in STEM. Of course, a strategic plan must include programs to capture the interest of young girls as they progress through the Kindergarten to Grade 12 (K-12) school system, and financial assistance to attend a college, university, and/or technical institute, upon graduation. Even more importantly, strategies must "include mentorship for post-secondary students to help them succeed in their studies, and assistance for graduates as they enter the workforce."<sup>160</sup>*

No evidence can be found that any of the fourteen (14) FPT jurisdictions in Canada have developed strategic or action plans specifically to help Women in STEM. Although the Government of Canada has specific [initiatives](#) to encourage more people to pursue a career in STEM, there is no overall national strategic plan with the necessary accompanying action plan(s) to coordinate and integrate efforts across the country.

In contrast to Canada, the Australian government developed its 2020-2030 [Advancing Women in STEM Strategy](#). It is accompanied by the [Women in STEM Decadal Plan](#), led by the Australian Academy of Science and the Australian Academy of Technology and Engineering. According to the Australian government, these two frameworks "set out the government and sector's respective commitments to improving gender equity in STEM in Australia."<sup>161</sup>

Australia's two frameworks for achieving gender equity for women in STEM are supported by the [2020 Action Plan](#), which "identifies early priorities arising from the Strategy

### The Leading Countries for Women in STEM

(2023)

1. Lithuania (49%)
2. Iceland (45%)
3. Norway (39%)
4. Ireland (38%)
5. Poland (37%)
6. Switzerland (36%)
7. Italy (35%)
8. Denmark (35%)
9. United States (34%)
10. Belgium (33%)
11. Sweden (33%)
12. Netherlands (29%)
13. France (27%)
14. Luxembourg (27%)
15. United Kingdom (26%)

and Decadal Plan, which will set the foundations for a national, coordinated approach to achieving sustained increases in gender equity in STEM. A focus on government practices, data and evaluation as key drivers will help us work towards our 2030 outcomes and achieve real improvements in our action areas.”<sup>162</sup>

**Recommendation #80:** THAT the Government of Canada follow the best practice demonstrated by the Government of Australia, and develop and maintain a national strategic plan, and the accompanying national action plan(s), and budget plan(s) to achieve gender equality for Women in STEM. The strategic plan must include the publication of annual progress reports and a final evaluation of the strategic plan, action plan(s), and budget plan(s).

**Recommendation #81:** THAT the provincial or territorial government of each of the thirteen (13) provinces and territories develop a strategic plan, and the accompanying action plan(s), and budget plan(s) for their respective province or territory to achieve gender equality for Women in STEM. The strategic plan must include the publication of annual progress reports and a final evaluation of the strategic plan, action plan(s), and budget plan(s).

### **Strategic Plans and Action Plans to Achieve Gender Equality for Women in the Trades**

In a “snapshot” of labour shortages, the Government of Canada stated, “700,000 skilled trades workers are set to retire between 2019 and 2028. Low participation rate among younger workers in trades is contributing to labour shortages.”<sup>163</sup> Without a doubt, the participation rate among *younger women* is drastically lower than among younger men.

Women represent less than ten percent (10%) of certified journeypersons in Canada. According to the Labour Market Information Council (LMIC), the overwhelming majority of women with their Red Seal trade certification are concentrated in the three following trades: hairstylist, cook, and baker. Those three trades account for more than eighty percent (80+%) of all female journeypersons.<sup>164</sup>

Every year, news stories are published about provinces and territories that are being adversely affected by a shortage of tradespeople. For example, in April 2025, there was yet another news story about Nova Scotia’s need for tradespeople:

“Nova Scotia, like most provinces, is looking at ways to tackle the ongoing housing crisis, but a construction group says a lack of skilled workers is a major hurdle that needs to be addressed. Duncan Williams, president of the Construction Association of Nova Scotia, said recent data shows there is a shortage of 15,000 skilled workers in the next decade. ‘Some of those trades right now are critical. We’re not seeing that ease for at least three to four years, and that is going to have a direct impact on our ability to build those houses, schools, and hospitals.’”<sup>165</sup>

Women are greatly underemployed in the trades. There is an **urgent need** for each FPT jurisdiction to develop strategic plans and action plans to help achieve gender equality for women in the trades and to specifically address the following problems:

#### Lack of Awareness of Career Opportunities in the Trades

One of the primary barriers for women entering the trades is a lack of awareness about career opportunities. Young women need reliable and detailed information at the right time to make decisions for their education and career paths. Unfortunately, many young women in junior high and high school (Grades 7-12) are often unaware of their career options and have limited exposure to the trades. One young woman admitted that she was “clueless” about the trades and further explained:

“At the end of high school, I had to decide what I was going to do next. The only options I thought I had were to attend university or find a job straight after graduation. Entering an apprenticeship program to become a skilled tradesperson was nowhere on my radar. I had no idea about the career paths and benefits of joining the skilled trades, such as job security and the high earning potential that can be obtained (sometimes in much less time) at a lower cost compared with a standard four-year university degree program. The decisions I faced several years ago are the same ones that young Canadians, particularly young women, face today...”<sup>166</sup>

#### Pay Inequity in the Trades

Unfortunately, women are overrepresented in the lowest-earning trades, and in those trades, women consistently earn less than their male counterparts. The LMIC examined the earnings of Canadian trade certificate holders (journeypersons) and found that, on average, women earn less than half (46%) of what men earn eight years after receiving their certification<sup>167</sup> and less than 2% in the highest-earning trades.<sup>168</sup>

#### Workplace discrimination

Unfortunately, women commonly perceive the trades as a male-dominated industry that is unwelcoming and unsupportive. Workplace discrimination also makes the trades less attractive to women. Women entering trades workplaces:

... typically find themselves in a male-dominated work environment that can be unwelcoming and unsupportive..., are often not provided opportunities on the job to learn or are given basic jobs that don't lead to career growth. Despite an increasing demand for more tradespeople, many skilled trades work sites are still not equipped to accommodate women. From a lack of appropriate

washrooms and changing room facilities to ill-fitting safety harnesses, worksites are often just not accessible.<sup>169</sup>

To increase the number of women who choose to pursue a career in the trades, policymakers and employers must take the necessary steps to establish safe and inclusive workplace cultures, so that when women join the skilled trades workforce, they are more likely to stay and thrive. While many employers are supportive of hiring more women, they struggle with where to start when it comes to creating a welcoming and inclusive workplace.

The country of Iceland and member states of the European Union have demonstrated that governments need to enact legislation that creates a legal obligation for employers, unions, organizations, and municipal governments to develop gender equality strategies and action plans. Changing workplace culture takes time and dedication. Employers need to establish a process comprising step-by-step initiatives that guide workplace change.

After a nationwide search, no evidence could be found that any of the fourteen (14) FPT jurisdictions in Canada have developed and maintained a strategic plan accompanied by the necessary action plans to achieve gender equality for Women in the Trades.

In 2015, the Government of the Northwest Territories published [\*Skills 4 Success: 10-Year Strategic Framework\*](#), which discusses the critical need for tradespeople and contains a forecast of labour demand in the NWT over the next 5, 10, and 15 years. The strategic framework expresses concern about addressing the recruitment and retention challenges that employers face and contains four (4) general goals. However, the words “woman” or “women” cannot be found in the document. There is a lack of focus on removing systemic barriers to recruiting, retaining, and promoting NWT women in the trades, who continue to remain underemployed in the trades. One of the greatest barriers to the *retention* of women in the trades is the lack of protection for women from discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, and violence in the territory’s occupational health and safety legislation that governs the construction, mining, and onshore oil and gas industry.

Although the Government of Canada has its [\*“Women in the Skilled Trades Initiative,”\*](#) which it claims falls under the so-called “Canadian Apprenticeship Strategy,” the federal government cannot produce a copy of a long-term strategic plan or any associated shorter-term action plans. Therefore, it is highly questionable whether the Canadian government will see much success in its stated goal of encouraging women “to explore, prepare for, and succeed in apprenticeships and careers in the skilled trades,”<sup>170</sup> especially since the Government of Canada has not included the “Canadian Apprenticeship Strategy” on the list of funding programs to be evaluated in the Department of Employment and Social Development Canada, due to it not meeting the criteria of being an “ongoing” funding program, even though hundreds of millions of dollars have been distributed through the “funding program.”<sup>171</sup>

CCWESTT found one example of a strategic action plan to help young women in high schools in Hamilton, Ontario, launch into careers in the trades or tech sector. After organizing focus groups, conducting surveys, and holding 53 workshops during the 2018-2019 school year, YWCA Hamilton developed its [\*Strategic Action Plan: Equitable Pathways to Technical Fields\*](#)

*and Skilled Trades*, containing eleven (11) key strategies, during a project funded by Wage and Gender Equality (WAGE) Canada.

YWCA Hamilton has modelled an excellent example of what all FPT governments *should* be doing. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can research, make recommendations, and even demonstrate best practices; however, little progress will be made nationwide as long as FPT governments abdicate their responsibility to lead, facilitate, and fund the work that must be done by the government departments (Ministries) in partnership with stakeholders to achieve gender equality for women in the trades.

The Canadian Apprentice Forum (CAF-FCA) has called for a national strategy to support women in the trades. In 2019, CAF led a [national task force](#) of more than sixty (60) stakeholders in the skilled trades to discuss how to develop a [National Strategy for Supporting Women in Trades](#) (2020) that would result in a measurable increase in the percentage of women working in the skilled trades as apprentices, journeypersons, and supervisors and create respectful and welcoming workplaces—free of discrimination, harassment, bullying, and violence.

**Recommendation #82:** That the Government of Canada (CDA):

- ❖ Conduct the necessary nationwide public consultations regarding how to achieve gender equality for women in the trades.
- ❖ Develop and maintain consecutive national strategic plans and the accompanying national action plan(s) and budget plan(s) to achieve gender equality for women in the trades.
- ❖ Ensure that these strategic plans and their accompanying action plans focus not only on recruitment but, even more importantly, on retention and promotion, and the removal of systemic barriers for women in the trades (e.g., modernizing FPT occupational health and safety legislation and improving its enforcement).
- ❖ Provide an appropriate level of funding to accompany the new national strategic plan and national action plan to achieve gender equality for women in the trades.
- ❖ Direct the departments (Ministries) of the Government of Canada to include in their 4-year departmental (implementation) plans all the necessary actions they must take to implement their responsibilities under the future national strategies and action plans for women in the trades.
- ❖ Issue annual progress reports and a final evaluation of every national strategic plan and action plan.
- ❖ Commence public consultations at a minimum of 1.5 years (18 months) before the expiry date of the current national strategic plan and/or action plan.

**Recommendation #83:** That the Government of Canada (CDA) immediately evaluate the effectiveness of the so-called “Canadian Apprenticeship Strategy” to determine if the distribution of hundreds of millions of dollars through the funding program increased the percentage of women who:

- ❖ were recruited into apprenticeship programs in each province and territory,
- ❖ graduated with a Red Seal Certification as a journeyperson, and

- ❖ were retained and promoted in the trades workforce in all FPT jurisdictions.

**Recommendation #84:** The governments of all thirteen (13) provinces and territories must:

- ❖ Conduct the necessary public consultation in their province or territory regarding how to achieve gender equality for women in the trades.
- ❖ Develop and maintain consecutive provincial or territorial strategic plans and the accompanying action plans to achieve gender equality for women in the trades in their jurisdiction.
- ❖ Ensure that these strategic plans and their accompanying action plans focus not only on recruitment but, even more importantly, on retention and promotion, and the removal of systemic barriers for women in the trades (e.g., modernizing FPT occupational health and safety legislation and improving its enforcement).
- ❖ Provide an appropriate level of funding to accompany the provincial or territorial strategic plan and action plan to achieve gender equality for women in the trades in their respective jurisdictions.
- ❖ Direct the departments or ministries of the provincial or territorial government to always include in their 4-year departmental (business) plan all the necessary actions they must take to implement their responsibilities under the provincial or territorial strategic plan and action plan for women in the trades.
- ❖ Issue annual progress reports and a final evaluation of the provincial or territorial strategic plan and action plan(s).
- ❖ Commence public consultations at a minimum of 1.5 years (18 months) before the expiry date of the current provincial or territorial strategic plan and/or action plan.

**Recommendation #85:** That the Government of Canada (CDA) and the governments of all thirteen (13) provinces and territories collaborate to conduct the necessary interjurisdictional research (both within and outside Canada), along with nationwide public consultations, to discover the best practices for:

- ❖ engaging men as allies and
- ❖ changing workplace culture

so that trades workplaces are safe, inclusive, and free from gender-based discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, and violence.

## **Budget Plans**

There are occasions when an FPT government announces that it will invest a significant amount of money to address a major problem or need. For example, on April 22, 2025, the Government of Ontario issued a [news release](#) stating that it would be investing \$750 million to prepare thousands of college and university students for careers in STEM. The announcement stated:

“As part of the government’s plan to protect our workers, industries and economy from the impact of President Trump’s tariffs, this historic investment in STEM education will strengthen the province’s key sectors, such as advanced manufacturing, life sciences and technology, ensuring businesses have the highly skilled workers to retain and grow Ontario’s economic advantage for decades to come.”<sup>172</sup>

As much as Canadians welcome a government’s resolve to solve a problem, it is essential that substantial amounts of funding (especially in the hundreds of millions) are accompanied by a well-thought-out strategic plan and action plan, as well as an evaluation plan to determine whether the investment was/is effective in accomplishing the plan’s goals and objectives. It is not good when the court of public opinion judges that a government is “just throwing money at the problem,” without having a proper plan.

**Recommendation #86:** That all fourteen (14) FPT governments ensure that substantial amounts of funding are accompanied by a proper strategic plan that outlines the long-term objectives and an action plan that explains what portion of the funding will be allocated to which initiative, and which government department (Ministries) and stakeholders will be implementing the given initiative, and by what date.

## Implementation Plans

Unfortunately, in Canada’s history, there has often been a significant disconnect between the international agreements signed by the Government of Canada on behalf of the *entire country* and the implementation of the commitments contained therein. For example, those commitments do not always appear in the “to-do” list given by the Prime Minister of Canada or the Premier of a province or territory in the mandate letters addressed to the Minister responsible for the Status of Women in their jurisdiction.

In addition, strategic plans often fail to list exactly which government departments (Ministries) will be collaborating to implement the strategic plan and its associated action plan(s). As a result, it can be a herculean task to review the “strategies” and the annual 4-year departmental (business) plans issued by numerous government departments (Ministries) to clarify the role they are supposed to play in implementing a strategic plan and action plan and verify that tasks have been incorporated into their regular business operations.

An example of the challenge in understanding a government’s implementation plan is the case of *Goal 5: Gender Equality* in the United Nations’ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which Canada adopted in 2015. The [2024-2025 Departmental Plan](#) for Women and Gender Equality (WAGE) Canada states that “WAGE is the federal lead on SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.”

The [2023 to 2027 Departmental Sustainable Development Strategy: Employment and Social Development Canada](#) states that ESDC is the lead department responsible for coordinating Canada’s efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

and that the [Federal Sustainable Development Strategy 2022 to 2026](#) (published by the Ministry of Environment and Climate Canada) is helping to accelerate Canada’s progress towards the SDGs.<sup>173</sup> In addition, in 2019, Director Ugo Thérien explained that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Unit within Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) “is mandated with coordinating the development of a **whole-society national strategy** for the implementation of the United Nations’ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Canada.<sup>174</sup>

However, the 4-year (2022-2026) federal sustainable development strategy contains **only two targets** for achieving gender equality in Canada, one of which has been assigned to Women and Gender Equality Canada (see next page for the table found on page 213 of the strategy), which can be viewed as further evidence of how under-empowered WAGE Canada continues to be in its role as a national gender equality directorate.

Despite searching for clarification, it remains unclear how Canada, as a country, will achieve the “whole-society” goal of gender equality by 2030 by assigning WAGE Canada this sole task—this *one* “to do” item—in the federal “strategy.” It is also unclear how the Government of Canada intends to collaborate with provincial and territorial governments to achieve gender equality in their respective jurisdictions by 2030.

GOAL 5: CHAMPION GENDER EQUALITY

INDICATOR TYPE	TARGET	INDICATOR	SOURCE	UPDATE CYCLE
TARGET	By 2026, at least 37% of employees in the environmental and clean technology sector are women	<a href="#">Percentage of women working in the environmental and clean technology sector</a>	Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada	Annual
TARGET	By 2026, reduce self-reported rates of intimate partner violence by up to 5%	<a href="#">Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence</a> ⊗	Women and Gender Equality Canada	Occasional
CONTEXTUAL		<a href="#">Persistence and representation of women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) programs</a>	Statistics Canada	Occasional
		<a href="#">Proportion of leadership roles held by women</a> ⊗	Statistics Canada	Occasional

**Recommendation #87:** That every mandate letter from the Prime Minister/Premier to the Minister responsible for the Status of Women contain instructions on how the Minister is to implement the commitments contained within international agreements that have been adopted and ratified by Canada. The Minister should be directed to:

- ❖ Carry out jurisdiction-wide public consultations, develop the necessary strategic plans, action plans and budget plans, implementation plans, and issue annual progress reports, and perform a final evaluation of all expiring plans.
- ❖ Work with other departments (Ministries) to both amend specific pieces of legislation and improve the enforcement of legislation to achieve the goal of raising the status of women in both their private and public lives.

**Recommendation #88:** That the Government of Ontario improve transparency and publish the mandate letters from the Premier of Ontario to the Minister responsible for the status of women.

## Communications Plans

During each strategic planning cycle, there are many vital pieces of information that FPT governments should communicate in a properly timed schedule to stakeholders and the general public. This includes, for example, the transmittal of consultation papers, calls for submissions, announcements of the dates for upcoming public consultations, descriptions of the types of public consultation (e.g., surveys, written submissions, focus groups, in-person sessions, town halls), the posting of submissions received, the distribution of draft plans for review, and the publication of progress reports and final evaluations.

Although communications plans are internal documents produced by a government department (Ministry), the quality and comprehensiveness of those plans can be assessed by the outputs found in the public sphere and the ease of accessing the information. One of the most important outputs is the publication of annual progress reports.

In 2023, nineteen (19) stakeholders from across Canada published their feedback on the first year of the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence*. Their criticisms included the lack of monitoring and evaluation plans, as well as the lack of connection between the Government of Canada's strategic plan and its action plan.<sup>175</sup>

The Government of Canada is to be commended for demonstrating its commitment to publishing progress reports on many of its strategic plans and action plans. These include:

### ***National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking (2012-2016)***

- (2013): [\*National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking: 2012-2013 Annual Report on Progress\*](#) (32 pages)
- (2014): [\*National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking 2013-2014 Annual Report on Progress\*](#) (34 pages)
- (2015) [\*National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking 2014-2015 Annual Report on Progress\*](#) (28 pages)

- (2016) [National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking 2015-2016 Annual Report on Progress](#) (33 pages)
- (2017): N/A (National Action Plan expired in 2016, no new plan)
- (2018): N/A (National Action Plan expired in 2016, no new plan)

**National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking (2019-2024)**

- (2019-2020 Progress Report) [National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking – Annual Report 2019-2020](#)
- (2021-2023 Progress Report) [National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking 2021-2023 Report](#)
- (2024) (see the final evaluation report)
- **NOTE: The national strategic plan expired on December 31, 2024, and there is no new plan to replace it.**

**It's Time: Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence**

- (2017) [It's Time to Act](#) (2 pages) outlined recent federal actions.
- [2017-2018 A Year in Review: Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence](#) (20 pages)
- [2018-2019 It's Time: Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence](#) (44 pages)
- [2019-2020 and 2020-2021 Progress Report: Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence](#)
- [2021-2022 Progress Report: Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence](#)
- [Federal Progress Report 2022-2024: The Federal Gender-Based Violence Strategy](#)

**Federal Pathway to Address Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQIA+ People:**

- [2020-2021 Federal Pathway Annual Progress Report](#) (first annual)
- [2021-2022 Federal Pathway Annual Progress Report](#)
- [2022-2023 Federal Pathway Annual Progress Report](#)
- [2023-2024 Federal Pathway Annual Progress Report](#)
- [2024-2025 Federal Pathway Annual Progress Report](#)

**National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence (2022-2032):**

- [2022-2023 Annual Progress Report on the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence](#)
- [2023-2024 Annual Progress Report on the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence](#)
- [2024-2025 Annual Progress Report on the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence \(not yet published online\)](#)

## **2SLGBTQI+ Action Plan** (achieving gender equality):

- (English version) [Canada's First Federal 2SLGBTQI+ Action Plan Progress Report: August 28, 2022–March 31, 2024](#)
- (French version) [Premier Plan d'Action Fédéral 2ELGBTQI+ du Canada Rapport d'Étape: 28 Août 2022 – 31 Mars 2024](#)

**Recommendation #89:** That all fourteen (14) FPT jurisdictions make it standard business practice to publish annual progress reports for ongoing strategic plans and action plans, and the final evaluation of all expiring strategic plans and action plans.

## **Evaluation Plans**

In Canada, very few of the fourteen (14) FPT jurisdictions conduct and publish a final evaluation of the effectiveness of strategic plans and action plans, and the funding expended. In the strategic planning cycle, there is a significant need to enhance the quality and achieve a level of excellence in the final step, namely, conducting an evaluation.

In Europe, there are impressive examples of best practices to which FPT jurisdictions in Canada can aspire. One practice is that of creating an independent “Group of Experts” that evaluates each jurisdiction’s efforts in achieving gender equality, combatting human trafficking, and ending gender-based violence.

The efforts being made by the Government of Iceland to resolve the following issues are also evaluated by the following groups of experts:

- ❖ **Evaluation of Actions Taken to Achieve Gender Equality:** In 2020, the European Network of Legal Experts on Gender Equality and Non-Discrimination published an evaluation report entitled [Country Report Gender Equality: Iceland 2020](#) (80 pages).
- ❖ **Evaluation of Actions Taken to Eliminate Gender-Based Violence:** In 2022, the Group of Experts on Action Against Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) published its first [GREVIO Baseline Evaluation Report: Iceland](#) (90 pages).
- ❖ **Evaluation of Actions Taken Against Human Trafficking:** Iceland’s progress in combatting and eliminating human trafficking is regularly evaluated by the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA), an independent body that monitors the way European countries implement the [Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings](#) (see Articles 36.1 - Article 36.4). GRETA evaluates Iceland’s Action Plans to combat human trafficking and has published the following evaluation reports:
  - [First evaluation report](#) by GRETA, 23 Sep 2014
  - [Second evaluation report](#) by GRETA, 15 Mar 2019
  - [Third evaluation report](#) by GRETA, 26 Oct 2023

In 2023, nineteen (19) organizations from across Canada issued the call for an oversight role for experts in ending gender-based violence and violence against women and for consistency across and within jurisdictions in both the policies and legislation that address gender-based violence, as well as consistent approaches to the prevention of and responses to gender-based violence.<sup>176</sup> Now is an opportune time to establish the necessary “Groups of Experts” within Canada to evaluate the efforts of FPT governments to date and recommend insightful solutions to addressing these national problems.

**Recommendation #90:** That the Government of Canada (CDA) establish five (5) independent National Groups of Experts to evaluate the efforts being made across the country by all fourteen (14) FPT jurisdictions to:

- 1) Achieve gender equality
- 2) Combat and eliminate human trafficking
- 3) Prevent and end domestic and family violence and intimate partner violence
- 4) Harmonize occupational health and safety legislation across Canada to:
  - Protect the *psychological health and safety* of workers by preventing and eliminating discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, and violence in the workplace; in particular, by improving workplace policies, prevention plans, and training.
  - Protect the *physical health and safety of workers*.
  - Improve the *enforcement* of occupational health and safety legislation.
- 5) Achieve gender parity for women, girls, and gender-diverse individuals in STEM and in the trades.

The Government of Canada is to be commended for conducting and publishing the final evaluation reports for its two most recent national strategies to combat human trafficking.

- ❖ (Summary)(2017) [2016-2017 Horizontal Evaluation of the National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking Evaluation Report \(NAP-HT\) \(Summary\)](#)  
(Full Report)(2017) [2016-2017 Horizontal Evaluation of the National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking Evaluation Report \(NAP-HT\) \(Full report\)](#)
- ❖ (Summary)(2024) [Summary: Horizontal Evaluation of the National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking](#)  
(Full Report)(2024) [Horizontal Evaluation of the National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking Evaluation Report: June 2024](#)

The Government of Canada has also issued a mid-term evaluation of its current 10-year (2018-2028) national strategy to prevent and eliminate gender-based violence.

- ❖ (2021) [Mid-Term Evaluation: Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence](#). This mid-term evaluation focused on the period from fiscal years 2017-18 to 2020-21.

There are a few provinces where evidence can be found that a strategic plan or action plan has undergone a mid-term or final evaluation. These include Ontario, Quebec, and Nova Scotia.

On February 21, 2020, the Government of Ontario [announced](#) that it would be conducting a final evaluation of its *2020-2025 Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy* to evaluate its effectiveness and consider what changes could be made to improve how the government combats human trafficking and supports victim-survivors. The government received feedback during a consultation held from May 23 to August 30, 2024.

On December 9, 2022, the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women published a mid-term evaluation report entitled [\*Standing Together: A Provincial Action Plan to Prevent Domestic Violence -- Learning About What It Will Take to Prevent Domestic Violence in Nova Scotia: Evaluation and Learning Summary\*](#) (28 pages), which describes key insights about the action plan's first four years submitted by many contributors, including academics, researchers, and community members. The Advisory Council did not want to wait until the action plan expired to produce or receive a final evaluation report, to discover the results and what was learned. The mid-term evaluation led to the implementation of improvements as the plan progressed, providing a better understanding of the content to inform future planning decisions.

The Government of Quebec has published final evaluation reports on some of its strategic plans and action plans. In 2021, the Status of Women Secretariat (Secrétariat à la condition féminine) of the Government of Quebec published [\*Rebâtir la confiance - Rapport du comité d'experts sur l'accompagnement des victimes d'agressions sexuelles et de violence conjugale : Chapter 4 – Address Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence in an Indigenous Context\*](#). In 2023, the Secrétariat à la condition féminine (Status of Women Secretariat) published a 30-page final evaluation of the Government of Quebec's 5-year action plan on domestic violence entitled [\*Plan d'Action Gouvernemental en Matière de Violence Conjugale 2018-2023 SUIVI DE LA MISE EN ŒUVRE DES ACTIONS BILAN FINAL\*](#) (English title) *Government Action Plan on Domestic Violence 2018 – 2023: Final Report – Government Strategy for Equality Between Women and Men*. In March of 2024, the University of Sherbrooke's Faculty of Education published the [\*Evaluation of Action 26 of the Government Strategy to Prevent and Counter Sexual Violence 2016-2021\*](#).

**Recommendation #91:** That it becomes standard practice for all FPT governments in Canada to create an evaluation plan as part of the development of strategic plans, action plans, and budget plans for achieving gender equality. Once a strategic plan or action plan expires, the evaluation plan should be implemented immediately and published, allowing all stakeholders to reflect on the findings as they prepare their submissions for the next round of public consultations.

**Recommendation #92:** That the Government of Canada (CDA) conduct a final evaluation of the “Canadian Apprenticeship Strategy”, especially to determine whether:

- more women were recruited into the trades,

- more women completed their 4-year apprenticeship and received their Red Seal certification,
- women were retained in the trades or whether they ended up leaving the profession,
- the funding invested achieved the goals and objectives of the “strategy,” and
- all the projects funded by the strategy succeeded in recruiting, certifying, and retaining women in the trades.

**Recommendation #93:** That all FPT governments in Canada invite stakeholders to submit suggestions for Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and to discuss proposed KPIs for inclusion in strategic, action, and evaluation plans.

**KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS  
RE: PROGRAMS TO SUPPORT GENDER EQUALITY**

**Employment Equity Hiring: Government Contracts (Public Funding)**

*“Provincial governments and cities right across the country – Quebec, Manitoba, Alberta and BC – are implementing community benefit policies as a measure to protect jobs and provide opportunities for their residents. With all the developments and work planned in our province; it is time for our government to follow suit, ensuring our residents are the primary beneficiaries.”<sup>177</sup>*

*Building Trades of Newfoundland and Labrador*

The [Building Trades of Newfoundland and Labrador](#) have been advocating for the provincial government to implement a “Newfoundland and Labrador Benefits Agreement (NLBA) Policy” so that Community Benefits Agreements (CBAs) can be negotiated to benefit local residents and businesses before the government signs a contract with a private contractor to build a public infrastructure project in the province. NLBAs would contain provisions requiring contractors to hire qualified local workers, apprentices, women, and indigenous workers as part of the workforce necessary to build publicly funded infrastructure projects, and to pay fair wages and benefits. The Building Trades of Newfoundland and Labrador argues that, as taxpayers and owners of public infrastructure projects, residents of the province deserve to be given first consideration when the workforce is being hired for these projects.

[Canada’s Building Trades Union](#) (CBTU) argues that when the Government of Canada spends taxpayers’ money on infrastructure projects or creates tax incentives for private companies, “Canadians expect that the government will do more than simply cut a cheque.”<sup>178</sup> CBTU is advocating for the Government of Canada to require strong labour conditions and community benefits whenever the government is either fully or partially

funding major infrastructure projects, creating tax breaks, or providing subsidies to the private sector. CBTU believes that when taxpayers' money is spent on infrastructure projects, Community Benefits Agreements (CBAs) ensure that they are not only receiving more value but also supporting high-quality jobs, good wages, and accessible training opportunities for local workers. CBTU further argues that all contracts to build public infrastructure should contain provisions that require all contractors to pay workers the "prevailing wage," which is the basic hourly rate of wages and benefits paid to a number of similarly employed workers in a given geographical area.<sup>xxxiv</sup> CBTU points out that since 1931, when the [\*Davis-Bacon Act\*](#) was first enacted, the United States federal government has required contractors on federal projects to pay the prevailing wage to all their workers.

CBTU is strongly advocating that the Government of Canada include CBAs as a fundamental component of the federal government's infrastructure procurement process and gives an excellent explanation of the value of negotiating CBAs in advance of building much-needed infrastructure across Canada:

"CBAs enable the value of a project to extend far beyond the building of infrastructure. They create pathways to apprenticeship for those in the communities where infrastructure is built, including opportunities for underrepresented groups, and building the skilled trades workforce. The federal government has the opportunity to mandate the inclusion of CBAs to ensure every public dollar spent sees the greatest return on investment for workers and communities. CBAs often contain provisions that enable apprenticeships, establish grounds for workplace development initiatives, provide funding and economic support for impacted communities, and set forth goals for minorities, **women**, and local job hiring, leaving a legacy of experience, skills training and employability."<sup>179</sup>

At the provincial level, for example, CBAs have been successfully negotiated in both British Columbia and Ontario to leverage infrastructure dollars not only to build much-needed infrastructure in their respective province but also to achieve social benefits and workforce development in the communities and regions where a project takes place. For example, in British Columbia, the [\*Fort St. Jean Community Benefits Agreement\*](#) and the [\*Regional and Community Benefits Agreement\*](#) (for multiple communities and regional districts) were negotiated in connection with the construction and operation of the Site C hydroelectric dam.

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<sup>xxxiv</sup> In 2024, the Government of Canada passed the strongest definition of prevailing wage in Canadian labour history, when it created a [legal obligation](#) for employers to pay the prevailing wage (or median wage) to temporary foreign workers working particular jobs in particular regions. The job in question must be compared to the job definitions set under the National Occupational Classification (NOC) code. NOC code descriptions can be searched at <https://noc.esdc.gc.ca/>. The new prevailing wage for each job can be searched at <https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/trend-analysis/search-wages>.

The Government of Ontario enshrined the principle of “community benefits” in Section 13 of Ontario’s [Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act, 2015](#), which states:

“Infrastructure planning and investment should promote community benefits, being the supplementary social and economic benefits arising from an infrastructure project that are intended to improve the well-being of a community affected by the project, such as local job creation and training opportunities (including for apprentices, within the meaning of section 9), improvement of public space within the community, and any specific benefits identified by the community.”

The [Community Benefits and Apprenticeship Plan](#) (2016) was negotiated prior to the construction of the Eglinton Crosstown Light Rapid Transit (LRT) project. This was the first large-scale infrastructure project in Ontario to include a Community Benefits Program.

In 2018, the Government of British Columbia took the negotiation of community benefits agreements to a higher level when it established the [British Columbia Infrastructure Benefits](#) (BCIB), a Crown corporation responsible for implementing the Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) on select public infrastructure projects. One of BCIB’s main purposes is to successfully deliver projects while mobilizing and growing a diverse and skilled workforce. As the employer of all employees on CBA projects specified by the Government of British Columbia, BCIB is mandated to supply the workforce for all contractors and to ensure priority hiring of qualified local residents, Indigenous people, **women**, and other underrepresented groups. Furthermore, BCIB is responsible for recruiting, training, and supporting workers to ensure a safe and respectful workplace.

In the fulfillment of its mandate, BCIB negotiated the [Community Benefits Agreement: A Collective Agreement](#) (440 pages) with the Allied Infrastructure and Related Construction Council of British Columbia (and its affiliated unions). The collective agreement deals with workforce development and contains the wages and benefits to be paid to trades workers employed during the construction of the four following publicly funded infrastructure projects:

- 1) Pattullo Bridge Replacement Project
- 2) Trans Canada Highway #1 – Kamloops to Alberta Border 4-Laning Project
- 3) Broadway Subway Project
- 4) Cowichan District Hospital Replacement Project

The Government of Quebec took a step further than the Government of British Columbia when, in 1993, it amended the [Act Respecting Labour Relations, Vocational Training, and Workforce Management in the Construction Industry, 1986](#), and divided Quebec’s entire construction industry into four sectors for the purpose of negotiating collective agreements and essentially establishing the “prevailing wage” for each construction job in specific regions of the province. Negotiations take place at the provincial level for the entire labour force and all construction firms, between the Commission de la Construction du Québec (CCQ) and the

four sector-based employer associations. Employers are obliged to pay employees according to the collective agreements in force in the construction industry. The working conditions agreed upon by the parties apply to the entire industry throughout the province. The CCQ has negotiated the following four (4) collective agreements that cover the whole construction industry in Quebec:

- ❖ Residential Sector
- ❖ Industrial Sector
- ❖ Institutional and Commercial Sector
- ❖ Civil Engineering and Roadworks Sector

**Recommendation #94:** That the Government of Canada negotiate Community Benefit Agreements in advance of all:

- ❖ major public infrastructure projects
- ❖ joint investments, e.g., Public-Private Partnerships (P3s)
- ❖ funding agreements with provincial, territorial, and municipal governments

**Recommendation #95:** That the Government of Canada and the remaining eleven (11) provinces and territories (other than Quebec and British Columbia, who have already done so) create government policies and legal obligations that contractors receiving public funding must pay the “prevailing wage” to people working on all government-procured construction projects to ensure that workers are paid fair wages whenever an FPT government invests in building public infrastructure.

**Recommendation #96:** That the Government of Canada expand apprenticeship requirements to all federally procured infrastructure projects, as well as any tax incentives for private-sector construction.

**Recommendation #97:** That the remaining twelve (12) provinces and territories implement the best practice demonstrated by the Government of British Columbia and create a corporation of the same nature as the British Columbia Infrastructure Benefit (BCIB), which conducts the employment equity hiring of the workforce needed for government-funded public infrastructure projects (e.g., the building of schools and hospitals, and the expansion of highway systems and public transit systems, etc.).

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**Study #1:** This paper provides a comprehensive overview of trauma-induced alterations across the hippocampus, amygdala, and PFC. The study uses MRI and fMRI meta-analysis to show that psychological trauma leaves long-term neurobiological footprints.  
Omiyefa, S. and Jimoh, O. (2025, Mar). *Neuroscientific mechanisms of trauma-induced brain alterations and their long-term impacts on psychiatric disorders*. International Journal of Science and Research Archive.

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Deliv, I. and Țapeș, V. (2024, Nov 8). *Neurobiology and neuroimaging of PTSD*.

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