



Safety Changes Everything

2021 Federal and Provincial Budgets Revealed Amid the Third Wave of COVID-19

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Vancouver, BC –The budget takes important steps towards addressing gender based violence. The pandemic has exposed and amplified long-standing inequities, disproportionately impacting women and people of marginalized genders. We are hopeful that the 2021 federal budget will help those most vulnerable in our communities, as BWSS continues to work on the frontline to end gender-based violence.

“We recognize that economic recovery requires addressing systemic inequities and gender-based violence from a feminist, intersectional perspective”, said Angela Marie MacDougall, Executive Director at BWSS, “And we have called for action to support Black, racialized and Indigenous women and people marginalized by their gender who face oppression in different forms”.

\$600 million anti-violence initiatives through the National Action Plan -\$400 million earmarked for gender-based violence organizations, which BWSS called for through our work with Women’s Shelters Canada.

This includes:

- \$55 million for anti-violence programs for Indigenous people and LGBTQ2S
- \$30 million for crisis lines
- \$2 million for anti-violence programs for immigrant and refugee women
- \$85 million for legal advice and representation for victims of sexual assault
- \$11 million for better disaggregated data for research projects
- \$14 million for a National Action Plan Secretariat

Budget 2021 proposes to invest an additional \$2.2 billion over five years to address the ongoing crisis of Missing and Murder of Indigenous women and girls in Canada. With the release of the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls almost two year ago in June 2019, Indigenous women, girls and Two-Spirit people continue to go missing and/or be murdered. Immediate action and implementation of the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls needs to be made.

The 2021 budget also pledges \$30 billion over 5 years for affordable child care. Locally, the BC Child Coalition has been hard at work, advocating for affordable child care. It’s encouraging to see their success on this front, with the goal of \$10 a day child care becoming a reality by 2026. For women who access BWSS services and programs, lack of access to affordable child care is one of the main factors that traps women in abusive relationships.

\$250 million to create 560 spaces in shelters and transitional houses -up to 43 new spaces in each province and territory. This investment is so important for women and their children's safety when feeling violence.

\$45 million to fund community-based organizations that help make sexual and reproductive health care information and services more accessible for vulnerable populations; dedicated funding to support better data collection on sexual and reproductive health.

Announced today, BC 2021 budget leaves much to be desired when it comes to gender based violence and gender equity for the province. This budget being released in the third wave of the pandemic is a reminder of how important it was to see the current government's commitment to gender equity and ending gender based violence.

"BWSS has seen a drastic spike in requests for services during the pandemic", says Rosa Elena Arteaga, Director of Direct Services and Clinical Practice at BWSS. "We know that this pandemic has further isolated and put women in danger through stay at home orders and other measures to reduce the spread of COVID 19. It was our hope that this years' BC budget would address these issues that impede women's safety and equity in BC".

We applaud the attention the government has finally paid to address women and people of marginalized safety in rural regions with the commitment of \$4.5 million to improve cellular service on Highway 16 from Prince Rupert to Prince George. "This will help make the highway safer for many Indigenous women, girls and Two Spirit people", says Summer-Rain, Manager of the Indigenous Women's Program at BWSS, "However, it is disappointing that there is not a stronger focus in the budget supporting Indigenous women and human rights"

There has also been a pledge to support women, single parents, refugees, Indigenous peoples, LGBTQ2S and people with low incomes with access to legal systems by committing \$132 million for equitable access to justice. However, we note that it is unclear how the investment will particularly support women who are self-representing in family law situations.

Unlike the strong commitment towards affordable childcare in the Federal budget, the province has allocated \$233 million over three years towards childcare, less than the \$250 million they committed to at election time.

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About Battered Women's Support Services (BWSS)

Established in 1979, Battered Women's Support Services (BWSS) is on the front-line in the effort to end gender violence, including domestic and sexual violence. Every day, the BWSS team takes action through the delivery of direct services, training, legal, institutional and systemic advocacy and social enterprise responding to over 18,000 requests for service annually – with COVID-19 requests have increased to over 30,000. Forty-one years later and BWSS continues as a committed member of the decolonizing and anti-oppression feminist movement emphasizing the necessity of community-based approaches and

interventions into what are some of the most pressing social problems of our time. For more information:
www.bwss.org