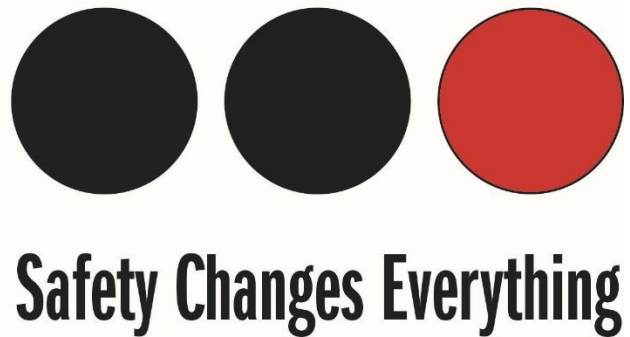


**Written Submission for the  
Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of the 2024 Budget**

**By: Battered Women's Support Services (BWSS)**

**August 1, 2023**



## **BWSS List of Recommendations**

**Recommendation 1:** That the government immediately implement the Calls for Justice in *Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*.<sup>i</sup>

**Recommendation 2:** That the government immediately implement the recommendations in *Turning the Tide Together: Final Report of the Mass Casualty Commission*.<sup>ii</sup>

**Recommendation 3:** That, as part of the it's 10-year National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence, the government immediately implement the *Roadmap for the National Action Plan for Violence Against Women and Gender-Based Violence: A Report to Guide the Implementation of a National Action Plan on Violence Against Women and Gender-Based Violence*.<sup>iii</sup>

**Recommendation 4:** That the government declare gender-based, intimate partner, and family violence to be an epidemic that warrants a meaningful and sustained society-wide response, including federal, provincial, territorial, municipal, and Indigenous governments; the health sector and the legal system; the non-governmental and community-based social services sector; businesses, and workplaces; media; schools and educational institutions; communities; and individuals. A whole of society response respects and values the expertise and experience of survivors and the gender-based violence advocacy and support sector.

**Recommendation 5:** That the government provide epidemic-level funding for gender-based violence prevention and intervention services. These are front-line public services, and ongoing adequate and stable core funding should be provided that is commensurate with the scale of the problem and that prioritizes gender-based violence prevention and pathways to safety.

**Recommendation 6:** The government provide funding in the amount of at least \$2 billion over 10 years for the development and implementation of the federal commitments, actions, and responsibilities for Canada's National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence. This includes, but is not limited to, ongoing adequate and stable core funding for:

- Social infrastructure and public services, including, but not limited to, free, secure, and safe services such as housing, transition homes, transportation, childcare, healthcare, dental care, mental health supports, internet access, healthy school food program in the K-12 school system, employment programs, and livable incomes and pensions.
- Full, wrap-around, timely, reliable, culturally-safe, and inclusive anti-violence supports for survivors and their children, as well as non-policing, community-based systems for reporting gender-based violence.

- Prevention and education work based on an intersectional feminist analysis of violence, including national public health campaigns to promote consent culture and healthy masculinities.
- A fully funded, independent oversight body, including an independent and impartial gender-based violence Commissioner, to act as an accountability mechanism and with effective powers to monitor and report on the implementation of the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence and to make annual reports to Parliament.

## **Background**

Battered Women’s Support Services (BWSS)<sup>iv</sup> provides education, advocacy, and support services to assist survivors of gender-based violence in B.C.

We work from an intersectional, anti-racist, decolonial and feminist perspective to eliminate gender-based violence and promote gender equity. For over forty years, we have been working towards ending violence against women, girls, femmes, LGBTQ2S and non-binary survivors of violence. We provide specialized services to meet survivors’ complex needs, as well as GBV prevention, GBV intervention, community education, and GBV training programs to end gender-based violence.

Our recommendations are focused on the dire and urgent need for immediate and comprehensive action to end gender-based violence. Gender-based violence has reached epidemic proportions around the world, leading to what the United Nations has called “a shadow pandemic.”<sup>v</sup>

Femicide is the most extreme form of gender-based violence and is defined as the intentional killing of women, girls, and non-binary people explicitly motivated by and because of gender. Femicide is on the rise across Canada. In 2022, 184 women and girls were violently killed in Canada due to their gender.<sup>vi</sup> According to the Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability, this represents an alarming 27 percent increase when compared to 2019.<sup>vii</sup>

Over the past five years, over 850 women and girls were killed in Canada.<sup>viii</sup> That means, on average, at least one person every two days in Canada is killed due to their gender.<sup>ix</sup>

Additional statistics are equally alarming:

- At least 19 percent of femicides in Canada in 2022 were of Indigenous women, despite Indigenous women comprising only 5 percent of the female population in Canada.<sup>x</sup> In 2021, the rate of gender-related homicide was more than 2.5 times greater in rural areas compared to urban areas.<sup>xi</sup>

- Women are over-represented as victims of gender-based violence, with women in Canada being six times more likely than men to have been sexually assaulted by an intimate partner in their lifetime.<sup>xii</sup> One-third (33 percent) of women in Canada have been sexually assaulted at some point since age 15, and 45 percent of women in Canada have been physically or sexually assaulted in their lifetime.<sup>xiii</sup>
- Home is often the most dangerous place for women, with 87 percent of gender-related homicides of women and girls occurring at a residence.<sup>xiv</sup> Between 2011 and 2021, the largest proportion of gender-related attempted murders of women and girls occurred at residential locations, involved the presence of a weapon, and resulted in physical injury.<sup>xv</sup>
- For five consecutive years, rates of reported family violence and intimate partner violence have been increasing across Canada.<sup>xvi</sup> In the past 11 years, two-thirds of gender-related homicides were perpetrated by an intimate partner, 28 percent by a family member, 5 percent by a friend or acquaintance, and 1 percent by a stranger.<sup>xvii</sup>

Gender-based violence is not a uniform experience. Indigenous women, Black women, racialized women, newcomer immigrant/refugee women, low-income women, women with disabilities, rural women, and trans and two spirit people are:

- structurally made the most vulnerable to gender-based violence due to interlocking systems of oppression,
- endure gender-based violence at a quantitatively higher rate,
- and face the greatest barriers to accessing safety and justice after experiencing gender-based violence.

Gender-based violence is especially pronounced for Indigenous women, girls, trans and two spirit people resisting gendered settler-colonial violence. “Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls” emphatically states that “The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls finds that this amounts to genocide.”<sup>xviii</sup>

Disturbingly, the federal government has yet to implement action on the Calls for Justice formulated by the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. A recent CBC analysis shows that, as of June 2023, only two of the 231 calls have been completed — and more than half haven’t even been started.<sup>xix</sup>

More recently, the Mass Casualty Commission, a joint public inquiry between the Governments of Canada and Nova Scotia created to examine the April 2020 mass casualty in Nova Scotia, released its final report. This mass casualty was one of the largest mass murders in Canadian history, in which a sole perpetrator, Gabriel Wortman, killed 22 people throughout rural Nova Scotia over a 13-hour period while dressed as an RCMP officer and driving a mocked up RCMP cruiser.

A key theme throughout the final report is gender-based violence, and the Commissioners call for immediate, comprehensive action on gender-based violence in Canada. The *Final Report of the Mass Casualty Commission, Turning the Tide Together*, states “Redressing our collective failure to keep women safe will mean shifting public funding toward prevention – toward addressing the upstream problems, including the causes of male violence and the social and economic conditions that perpetuate women’s vulnerability to violence.”<sup>xx</sup>

The Commissioners make over 130 recommendations to governments, with many recommendations calling on the federal government to treat gender-based violence as an epidemic and to prioritize prevention and paths to safety for survivors.

In our own list of recommendations above, we echo some of the specific recommendations of the Commission:

- All levels of government must declare gender-based, intimate partner, and family violence to be an epidemic that warrants a meaningful and sustained society-wide response. Recognizing and addressing root causes that contribute to vulnerability to violence includes addressing gender inequality, marginalization, and precarious status.
- A whole of society response includes a range of actors contributing to ending the epidemic of gender-based violence, including federal, provincial, territorial, municipal, and Indigenous governments; the health sector and the justice system; the non-governmental and community-based social services sector; businesses, and workplaces; media; schools and educational institutions; communities; and individuals, including survivors and perpetrators. A whole of society response respects and values the expertise and experience of survivors and the gender-based violence advocacy sector.
- Epidemic-level funding for gender-based violence prevention and interventions is needed. Community-based services, and in particular services provided by the GBV advocacy and support sector, are front-line public services and are not discretionary, and funding should be commensurate with the scale of the problem.
- The federal government should develop and implement a national public health education and awareness campaign to promote healthy masculinities. There should also be promotion of bystander intervention as a daily practice, including campaigns, GBV education and bystander intervention in school curriculum, starting in Kindergarten to Grade 12; in workplaces, colleges and universities.
- The federal government should establish by statute an independent and impartial gender-based violence commissioner with adequate, stable funding, and effective powers, including the responsibility to make an annual report to Parliament.

Declaring gender-based violence to be “one of the most pervasive, deadly, and deeply rooted human rights violations of our time,” federal, provincial, and territorial governments in Canada

announced the endorsement of a 10-year National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence in November 2022.

As one of the organizations involved in the national, collaborative effort to develop a *Roadmap for the National Action Plan for Violence Against Women and Gender-Based Violence: A Report to Guide the Implementation of a National Action Plan on Violence Against Women and Gender-Based Violence*, we urge the federal government to make a large multi-billion-dollar commitment for the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence.

This includes, but is not limited to, ongoing adequate and stable core funding for:

- Social infrastructure and public services, including, but not limited to, free, secure, and safe services such as housing, transition homes, transportation, childcare, healthcare, dental care, mental health supports, internet access, healthy school food program in the K-12 school system, employment programs, and livable incomes and pensions.
- Full, wrap-around, timely, reliable, culturally-safe, and inclusive anti-violence supports for survivors and their children, as well as non-policing, community-based systems for reporting gender-based violence.
- Prevention and education work based on an intersectional feminist analysis of violence, including national public health campaigns to promote consent culture and healthy masculinities.

Gender-based violence is an absolute emergency in every community in this country, and we need immediate, effective, and concrete action to end gender-based violence across these lands. The lives of far too many survivors depends on it.

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<sup>i</sup> Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, June 3, 2019: <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/>

<sup>ii</sup> Turning the Tide Together: Final Report of the Mass Casualty Commission, March 30, 2023: <https://masscasualtycommission.ca/final-report/>

<sup>iii</sup> Roadmap for the National Action Plan for Violence Against Women and Gender-Based Violence, April 30, 2021: <https://nationalactionplan.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/NAP-Final-Report.pdf>

<sup>iv</sup> <https://www.bwss.org/>

<sup>v</sup> UN Women, “Measuring the shadow pandemic: Violence against women during COVID-19,” November 24, 2021, <https://data.unwomen.org/publications/vaw-rga>

<sup>vi</sup> Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability, “#CallItFemicide: Understanding Sex/Gender Related Killings of Women and Girls in Canada, 2018-2022,” 2023, <https://femicideincanada.ca/callitfemicide2018-2022.pdf>

<sup>vii</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>viii</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>ix</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>x</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>xi</sup> Danielle Sutton, “Gender-related homicide of women and girls in Canada,” April 5, 2023, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2023001/article/00003-eng.htm>

<sup>xii</sup> Statistics Canada, “Intimate partner violence in Canada, 2018,” April 26, 2021, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/210426/dq210426b-eng.htm>

<sup>xiii</sup> Adam Cotter, Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics, “Intimate partner violence in Canada, 2018: An overview,” April 26, 2021, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2021001/article/00003-eng.htm>

<sup>xiv</sup> *Supra*, note xi.

<sup>xv</sup> *Supra*, note xi.

<sup>xvi</sup> Statistics Canada, “Victims of police-reported family and intimate partner violence in Canada, 2021” October 19, 2022, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/221019/dq221019c-eng.htm>

<sup>xvii</sup> *Supra*, note xi.

<sup>xviii</sup> *Supra*, note i.

<sup>xix</sup> CBC News, “A report card on the MMIWG inquiry's calls for justice,” June 5, 2023, <https://www.cbc.ca/newsinteractives/features/cfi-report-cards>

<sup>xx</sup> *Supra*, note ii.