



Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action (FAFIA)
251 Bank Street, 2nd Floor
Ottawa, ON K1P 1X3

January 25, 2017

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada

The Honourable Chrystia Freeland
Minister of Foreign Affairs

The Honourable Mélanie Joly
Minister of Canadian Heritage

The Honourable Maryam Monsef
Minister of the Status of Women

cc:

Hon. Carolyn Bennett, Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs
Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development
Hon. Patty Hajdu, Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour
Hon. Bill Morneau, Minister of Finance
Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould, Minister of Justice, Attorney General of Canada
Hon. Jane Philpott, Minister of Health

House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau and Ministers Freeland, Joly, and Monsef,

We are writing to ask you to implement, fully and without delay, the recommendations of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. The [recommendations](#) were issued on November 18th after the Committee's review of Canada's compliance with the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW) at its 65th session.

We cannot stress enough the importance of implementing these recommendations. Women's equality in Canada has regressed over the last two decades. In 1995,

Canada held 1st place on the United Nations Gender Equality Index; Canada is now at 25th. Recently, the World Economic Forum ranked Canada 35th on gender equality out of 144 countries. We know that Canada can do better.

The Government raised the spirits of Canadian women by declaring itself feminist and embracing equality for women as a core value. This changed tone has also raised expectations. We now look to you to begin the hard and detailed work of improving Canada's record and introducing concrete measures that will make equality for women a reality.

In addition to a changed attitude towards women's equality, the Government declared that "Canada is back" and signaled that it will demonstrate a strong commitment to human rights both internationally and domestically. We are proud of Canada's record of ratifying key UN human rights treaties, engaging with the UN human rights system during regular reviews of Canada's compliance, endorsing some Optional Protocols that permit Canadians to have access to UN complaint procedures, and extending an open invitation to UN special rapporteurs and mandate holders to visit Canada.

However, Canada has a serious implementation gap. For years, Canada has ignored UN treaty body advice and recommendations, to the detriment of Canada's most disadvantaged and vulnerable residents and to the detriment of Canadians as a whole. Canada has no mechanism for monitoring and facilitating implementation of treaty body recommendations, and for working with provinces and territories on implementation where co-ordination among all levels of government is critical. Because of this, treaty body recommendations tend to be ignored, rather than realized in a substantive way through government planning, policy, and programs.

Canada could take a huge step forward for women and for human rights by immediately beginning to plan for implementation of the CEDAW Committee's most recent recommendations. As the attached summary of recommendations indicates, the CEDAW recommendations cover a wide range of issues crucial to women's advancement: access to legal aid; the gender wage gap and pay equity; housing and poverty reduction; child care; political participation; violence; the socio-economic conditions of Indigenous women; the needs of women with disabilities; imprisonment of women with mental health issues; access to abortion; trafficking and prostitution; harm reduction strategies; the extra-territorial conduct of Canadian mining companies; and much more.

The CEDAW Committee recommends two mechanisms for implementation of the *Convention* rights and treaty body recommendations:

- an effective mechanism for ensuring accountability and the transparent, coherent and consistent implementation of the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* throughout all jurisdictions (at para 11); and

- a comprehensive national gender strategy, policy and action plan that addresses the structural factors causing persistent inequalities for women and girls, including those who are Indigenous, Afro-Canadian, racialized, disabled, immigrant, refugee and LGBTQ (at para 21).

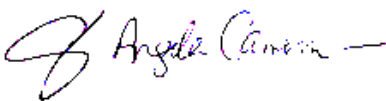
Given the legal responsibility and leadership role of the Government of Canada, we ask that you establish an accountability mechanism* and, with the provinces and territories, develop a national gender equality plan so that Canada can move forward in a coordinated and strategic way to fully implement women's human rights and advance women's equality.

Coordinated, robust work to advance women's equality is particularly timely and needed in light of Canada's upcoming 150th anniversary, and in light of burgeoning attacks on women's rights and dignity globally. Canada can be a leader once more and a model for the world if the Government of Canada, working with provincial and territorial governments, takes progressive, determined action to move women forward. We need action now that demonstrates Canada's genuine commitment to fulfilling women's human rights.

The CEDAW Committee has provided detailed and concrete recommendations, which can be incorporated into a national gender equality plan. To begin the identification of priority areas for investigation and strategic work, we ask you to meet with a delegation of representatives of the signers of this letter no later than March 3, 2017, to plan first steps.

We look forward to your response and to working with you on a new plan for women's equality in Canada and for the realization of women's human rights.

Sincerely,



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* An oversight mechanism for implementation of treaty body recommendations has been called for by other United Nations Committees, including the Human Rights Committee, and consistently by Canadian NGOs (see *Empty Words and Double Standards: Canada's Failure to Respect and Uphold International Human Rights - Joint Submission to the United Nations Human Rights Council in relation to the May 2013 Universal Periodic Review of Canada, October 2012*, available online: <http://socialrightscura.ca/documents/international/UPR%202013%20NGO%20Coalition%20submission.pdf>).

Supported and endorsed by:

Organizations:

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Canadian Network of Shelters and Transition Houses
Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAOW)
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Design for a New Tomorrow
DisAbled Women's Network Canada (DAWN)
Family Services Toronto

Fédération des femmes du Québec (FFQ)
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International Women’s Rights Project (IWRP)
Interval House of Ottawa/ Maison Interval d’Ottawa
Inter pares
Justice For Girls
Kirsten French Child Centre for Advocacy
MATCH International Women’s Fund
Mission Services of Hamilton
National Association of Women and the Law/Association nationale Femmes et Droit (NAWL)
Native Women’s Association of Canada (NWAC)
Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour
Northumberland Domestic Abuse Monitoring Committee
Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (OAITH)
Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women (OCTEVAW)
Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres (OCRCC)
Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association (OECTA)
Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL)
Ottawa Rape Crisis Centre (ORCC)
Ottawa Victim Services
Oxfam Canada
Oxfam Québec
Plan Canada International
The Poverty and Human Rights Centre
Public Service Alliance of Canada / Alliance de la Fonction public du Canada (PSAC-AFAC)
Rainy River District Women’s Shelter of Hope
Regroupement québécois des CALACS
Sexual Health Centre Saskatoon
Single Mothers’ Alliance BC
Temiskaming Native Women’s Support Group
Together Against Poverty Society (TAPS)
Toronto Women’s City Alliance (TWCA)
Tri-County Women’s Centre
Vancouver Rape Relief
Vancouver Women’s Health Collective (VWHC)
Voices-Voix Coalition
West Coast Domestic Workers’ Association
West Coast Legal Education and Action Fund (West Coast LEAF)
Women Against Violence Against Women Rape Crisis Centre (WAVAW)
Women’s Community House / Sexual Assault Centre London
Women’s Habitat of Etobicoke

Women's Human Rights Institute
Women's Initiatives for Safer Environments (WISE)
Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada (WICC)
Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF)
Women's Place of South Niagara
Women Transforming Cities (WTC)
Yellowknife Women's Society
Yukon Federation of Labour
Yukon Status of Women Council
Yukon Women's Transition Home Society
YWCA Canada
YWCA Halifax
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