



**FAFIA-AFAI**

Feminist Alliance for  
International Action

L'Alliance Féministe pour  
l'Action Internationale

**CANADA**

## **Throne Speech and Ending Sex Discrimination in the *Indian Act***

*For immediate release*

**(Ottawa, September 22, 2020)** – In partnership with Indigenous women leaders and Indigenous organizations, the Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action (FAFIA), is requesting that the Government of Canada include in its Throne Speech on September 23, 2020 a statement acknowledging the historic importance of the final elimination of sex discrimination from the *Indian Act*, and a commitment to fully and urgently implement the changes to the status registration provisions so that First Nations women and their descendants can enjoy the status, and the benefits of status, that they have been denied for so long.

After 143 years of sex discrimination in the *Indian Act*, on August 15, 2019, the Government of Canada brought into force the “6(1)(a) all the way” amendment to Bill S-3, which finally entitles First Nations women and their descendants to the same treatment with respect to Indian status registration and the transmission of Indian status as their male counterparts. But until the women and their descendants are actually registered, the discrimination continues.

Unfortunately, during the COVID-19 period, *Indian Act* registration, always a slow and difficult process, has been even further delayed, if not stopped completely. This means that during this crisis, First Nations women and their descendants cannot access essential services and First Nation-specific COVID-19 specific assistance to which they are entitled. This must be addressed immediately by declaring *Indian Act* registration an essential service.

To demonstrate its commitment to the equality of First Nations women, the Government needs to state its explicit commitment to ensuring that all First Nations women and their descendants who are now finally entitled to status will be registered expeditiously to meet or exceed application time frames and service standards as with any other federal service standards like the time frame for issuance of passports. The Government also needs to ensure that Ministers Miller and Bennett have the mandate and resources to fully and swiftly implement Bill S-3.

Sharon McIvor said: “We are gravely concerned that the rights of First Nations women and their descendants to the equal protection of the law and the equal enjoyment of their culture continues to be violated by the Government of Canada. This is because, though the law was changed, the Government of Canada is not taking effective and prompt steps to ensure that those who are now entitled can actually get registered quickly and efficiently and enjoy the benefits of status.”

Shelagh Day, Chair of the Human Rights Committee of FAFIA said: "We understand Prime Minister Trudeau is committed to the removal of systemic race discrimination from Canadian institutions and practices. We ask for a statement of commitment that the systemic race and sex discrimination against First Nations women, that has been an integral part of the *Indian Act* for 143 years, will not just be removed on paper, but will be eliminated from the lives of First Nations women through, as a first step, ensuring that, in fact, they can be registered immediately and enjoy the same status and benefits as their male counterparts."

Dr. Pamela Palmater, Chair in Indigenous Governance, Ryerson University said: "Eliminating this discrimination and addressing its effects has been recommended repeatedly by those expert human rights bodies that have inquired into the murders and disappearances of Indigenous women and girls in Canada, including the United Nations Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, and, most recently, the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Women. Actively remedying this long-standing *Indian Act* discrimination is a crucial first response to addressing the human rights crisis of murders and disappearances."

Hawa Mire, Executive Director of FAFIA, said: "Today, with COVID-19's devastating impacts on the lives of women in Canada, more women than ever are struggling with increased poverty, precarious living situations, lack of child care, unemployment, and escalating violence. It is important that in the Throne Speech the Government of Canada demonstrates its commitment to measures and programs that will dismantle long-standing discrimination against women, including the deeply rooted discrimination against Indigenous women, Black women, racialized women, and women with disabilities."

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For more information:

Hawa Mire, Executive Director, FAFIA

[director@fafia-afai.org](mailto:director@fafia-afai.org)