



# Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Distr.: General  
11 February 2010

Original: English

---

**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination  
against Women**  
Forty-sixth session  
12-30 July 2010

## **Information provided in follow-up to the concluding observations of the Committee**

### **Canada**

### **Response by Canada to the recommendations contained in the concluding observations of the Committee following the examination of the combined sixth and seventh periodic report of Canada on 22 October 2008**

#### **Introduction**

1. On 22 October 2008, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women considered the combined sixth and seventh periodic report of Canada (CEDAW/C/CAN/7). In its concluding observations, the Committee requested Canada to provide, within one year, written information on the steps undertaken to implement the recommendations contained in paragraphs 14 and 32 (CEDAW/C/CAN/CO/7). Additional information can be found in the combined sixth and seventh periodic report, available at [www.pch.gc.ca/pgm/pdp-hrp/docs/cedaw-eng.cfm](http://www.pch.gc.ca/pgm/pdp-hrp/docs/cedaw-eng.cfm).

#### **Paragraph 14**

The Committee calls upon the State party to establish minimum standards for the provision of funding to social assistance programmes, applicable at the federal, provincial and territorial levels, and a monitoring mechanism to ensure the accountability of provincial and territorial governments for the use of such funds so as to ensure that funding decisions meet the needs of the most vulnerable groups of women and do not result in discrimination against women. The Committee also calls upon the State party to carry out an impact assessment of social programmes related to women's rights.



**Social assistance programmes and services**

2. In Canada, the Constitution confers legislative and executive powers on two levels of government, each of them sovereign in its own sphere. The Canadian federation includes a central Government for all of Canada and a government for each of the provinces and territories. The Constitution of Canada assigns a range of exclusive legislative powers to the federal and provincial orders of government. It also explicitly provides for joint federal and provincial jurisdiction in such areas as immigration, pensions and agriculture.<sup>1</sup>

3. Social assistance and social services are areas in which provincial governments have exclusive legislative authority. The Government of Canada provides financial support to provinces and territories for the provision of these services, through the Canada Social Transfer, a block cash transfer that also provides support for post-secondary education and programmes for children. The Canada Social Transfer has one condition, namely that recipient jurisdictions not have a minimum residency requirement whereby a person can be refused social assistance by a province or territory because she or he has not lived a sufficient amount of time in the province or territory.

4. The Government of Canada does not set national minimum standards for the provision of funding to social assistance programmes as a condition of this block transfer. This gives provincial and territorial governments greater flexibility in designing and administering their social assistance and social services according to the needs of their citizens.

5. However, in order to reflect the Government's commitment to ensure that general-purpose transfers provide equal support for all Canadians, the Canada Social Transfer is calculated on an equal per capita cash basis. The Government has also increased the transparency of support provided through the Transfer by providing information on the notional allocation of federal support among the three priority areas, based on provincial and territorial spending patterns and existing childcare agreements as well as further investments from recent budgets.

6. To facilitate the functioning of a multilevel system of governance, ad hoc and standing federal-provincial/territorial forums meet on a myriad of topics to discuss and cooperate on a variety of areas of mutual interest, such as social services, key issues for seniors and for aboriginal women including violence against aboriginal women and women's economic security.<sup>2</sup> For example, the Federal, Provincial, Territorial Ministers responsible for the Status of Women meet annually to examine ways to improve the situation of women and to exchange information on issues affecting women in Canada, specifically in the areas of economic security, violence and human rights. In 2007, they agreed to promote women's economic

---

<sup>1</sup> Unlike the provinces, which are allocated very specific areas of responsibility by the Constitution, the territories are the creation of the Parliament of Canada, which has delegated to them responsibilities similar to those of the provinces. For a list of the federal Government's and provinces' respective legislative responsibilities, see the fourth periodic report of Canada on the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (E/C.12/4/Add.15, paras. 11 and 12.

<sup>2</sup> Section 35 (2) of the Constitution Act, 1982 defines "aboriginal peoples of Canada" as the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada. The term First Nations is the preferred term when referencing "status" Indians. In the present report, the term aboriginal refers to all three groups.

self-sufficiency, safety and security and to work towards improving the situation of Inuit, First Nations and Métis women in Canada.<sup>3</sup>

### **Accountability**

7. Provincial and territorial governments are accountable to their own provincial and territorial legislative assemblies, their citizens and their stakeholders on expenditure of public funds, including federal transfers. The use of public funds by provincial and territorial governments may be subject to audit by their respective auditors, who assist in holding the governments and their administrators accountable for the quality of stewardship over public funds and for the achievement of value for money in government operations.<sup>4</sup> Provinces and territories do not account to the federal Government on how they spend the funds received through the Canada Social Transfer.

### **Assessment of social assistance programmes**

8. In Canada, social assistance programmes and services are reviewed and assessed regularly. The social and economic impact on women and on vulnerable groups of women is taken into consideration through various assessments and other forms of analysis, such as research, statistical analysis, client surveys, stakeholder reviews and feedback, province-wide public consultations, meta-analysis and gender-based analysis. Examples of measures undertaken by federal, provincial and territorial governments are outlined below.

9. The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador conducts regular, ongoing evaluations of the effectiveness of social assistance programmes and services in responding to economic conditions. The social and economic impact on women and vulnerable groups of women are taken into account, as a matter of course, in the ongoing reviews of the sufficiency of social assistance programmes and services. The province has a Women's Policy Office that provides guidance on specific gender-based issues that may affect the establishment of benefits under social assistance programmes and services. These ongoing reviews have led to an increase in the province's minimum wage and increases in social assistance contributions, in particular to defray living and rental expenses.

10. In the province of Prince Edward Island, the social assistance rate structure is reviewed annually and the Government's service delivery model is reviewed informally, as part of the ongoing management process, to ensure that it meets the needs of clients. Programmes and services are also improved through research, the use of promising practices and work with community partners representing vulnerable groups, such as the Prince Edward Island Newcomers to Canada Association, the Prince Edward Island Council for People with Disabilities and the Mi'kmaq Confederacy of Prince Edward Island. As a result of such initiatives, persons with disabilities do not have to be recipients of social assistance to qualify for the Disability Support.

---

<sup>3</sup> For more information see: [www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/med/news-nouvelles/2007/0711-eng.html](http://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/med/news-nouvelles/2007/0711-eng.html).

<sup>4</sup> Canada, Office of the Auditor General of Canada, *Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the House of Commons: Chapter 1: A Study of Federal Transfers to Provinces and Territories*, 2008. Available from [www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/docs/parl\\_oag\\_200812\\_01\\_e.pdf](http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/docs/parl_oag_200812_01_e.pdf).

11. In the province of Quebec, an evaluation service was established in 1984 in the Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale, which is in charge of social assistance programmes. Over the course of the last few decades, employment and social assistance services have been evaluated numerous times, to facilitate decision-making. Programme evaluation is an integral part of the development and monitoring of social assistance policies and programmes in Quebec and plays an important role in accountability and reporting. Each year, nearly 30 evaluations are conducted on a large number of measures, programmes and initiatives, using qualitative and quantitative methodologies.

12. Several of the evaluations and research exercises undertaken on social assistance programmes took into consideration the impacts on women or specific groups of women. For example, in measuring the impact of assistance programmes for unemployed people in Quebec, consideration was given to the different effects on men and women. The impact on women was also taken into account in several studies on programmes for persons with disabilities, older workers, immigrants and single-parent families.

13. Section 7 of the Act to combat poverty and social exclusion states that actions in that regard “must [...] in their conception and implementation, take into account realities specific to women and men, in particular through gender-based analysis”. The Quebec ministries and agencies in charge of developing measures as part of the Government Action Plan to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion must comply with that provision.

14. Certain evaluations conducted in Quebec confirm that social assistance programmes affect men and women differently. Two studies on the impact of the work premium (a refundable tax credit to improve the situation of low-income workers) reveal that the premium encourages women to seek employment and that it has contributed to an increase in women's participation in the labour market. The premium has had a more significant impact on single mothers, compared to other types of households. Combined with other fiscal measures, it has also led to an increase in the income of families with children, especially single-parent families, thereby reducing their poverty level.

15. The Government of Quebec conducted two studies on self-employment support and wage subsidy programmes, using gender-based analysis; certain adjustments were made to the programmes, based on the results of those studies. According to the study on the Self-Employment Support Measure, which helps individuals become independent in the labour market by creating or developing their own business, women are, slightly less likely to create a business than men. Women businessowners are also less likely to employ other people and the survival rate of their businesses tends to be slightly lower. The study also revealed that women and men have different needs with respect to project development. While men are more in need of support measures for the development of a business plan, women are more in need of simple financial assistance.

16. The results of social assistance programme evaluations are shared with the people responsible for those programmes, to enable discussions on follow-up measures. For example, the Government of Quebec implemented a programme designed specifically for young single mothers called “Ma place au soleil”, which provides training to help them obtain a diploma and access day-care and transportation services.

17. Other follow-up measures included the collection of statistical data to identify the characteristics of the clients reached by the programmes, and to monitor the programmes' evolution, in particular by differentiating between the situations of men and women. In the past ten years, changes in the structure of the households benefiting from the social assistance programmes were observed in Quebec, including a significant decrease in the number of single-parent families, the vast majority of which are headed by women.

18. The Government of Ontario regularly reviews social assistance programmes to assess and improve their effectiveness in helping the province's most vulnerable people, including persons with disabilities. When doing so, it looks at the differential impact of its policies and programmes on different categories of people and family groups, including sole support families generally headed by women, persons with disabilities and children.

19. Reviews and assessments of Ontario's social assistance programmes have helped to improve the province's response to the needs of women recipients. For example, a review of the Ontario Works' programme and the Learning, Earning and Parenting Programme led to improvements that benefit the participants, many of whom are single mothers. The province of Ontario has also made changes to streamline and enhance access to social assistance for victims of domestic violence, so that their safety is not at risk.

20. Policy changes stemming from the Government of Ontario's poverty reduction strategy have also addressed the needs of women by exempting the earnings of full-time post-secondary students and increasing the flexibility of childcare benefits.

21. The Government of Manitoba's Employment and Income Assistance Programme is reviewed as part of the province's annual report, budget and estimates process, in compliance with the province's Treasury Board guidelines on fiscal management and performance reporting. Manitoba social assistance programmes and services are also regularly reviewed by non-governmental organizations and research centres, such as the National Council of Welfare, the Canadian Council on Social Development, the Caledon Institute of Social Policy, the Fraser Institute and the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg.

22. The province of Manitoba also has a Status of Women Division that partners with other government departments to ensure that women continue to achieve and participate fully in all aspects of Manitoba life.<sup>5</sup> For example, it sits on the interdepartmental working group for "AllAboard: Manitoba's Poverty Reduction Strategy", bringing a gender perspective to the ongoing work of the strategy, which includes initiatives to reduce poverty for all Manitobans.<sup>6</sup> The Government of Manitoba Seniors Directorate and the Manitoba Disabilities Issues Office play a role similar to that of the Manitoba Status of Women Division, with respect to the poverty issues of women in such groups.

23. In the province of Manitoba, 95 per cent of single-parent low-income families are headed by women and Manitoba has targeted a number of initiatives to improve their income security. For example, the Manitoba Child Benefit was created and the provincial clawback of the federal Child Tax Benefit was ended. A range of

---

<sup>5</sup> For more information on Manitoba Status of Women, see: [www.gov.mb.ca/msw/index.html](http://www.gov.mb.ca/msw/index.html).

<sup>6</sup> For information on the initiative, see paragraph 76 of the present report and [www.gov.mb.ca/fs/misc/pubs/all\\_around\\_report.pdf](http://www.gov.mb.ca/fs/misc/pubs/all_around_report.pdf).

government interventions targeting poverty in general and single-parent families in particular are also aimed at improving the income security of vulnerable groups of women. Based on the Market Basket Measure, the incidence of poverty in female-headed single-parent families fell from 43.8 per cent to 26.3 per cent between 1999 and 2006.

24. The Government of Manitoba recently conducted province-wide public consultations on women's health. Participants provided feedback on the impact of poverty on women's health, which is being used to guide the direction of a renewed Women's Health Strategy for Manitoba.

25. The Government of Saskatchewan reviews and evaluates its income assistance programmes on an ongoing basis to ensure that quality service and accountability is maintained or increased. Regulatory and policy amendments are made on a regular basis in response to changing social and economic conditions, concerns raised by clients, community stakeholders and appeal tribunals and in support of provincial and federal government initiatives. The province takes the circumstances of all vulnerable groups into consideration during these reviews and regularly assesses client groups, including those with characteristics defined by constitutional status (First Nations and Métis), disability, employment and employability, and length of time on assistance and those defined by family constitution, such as single clients, single-parent families and two-parent families. Since most single-parent families are headed by women, the social and economic circumstances of this group of vulnerable women clients are reviewed frequently.

26. For example, after concerns arose about the adequacy of Saskatchewan's Transitional Employment Allowance<sup>7</sup> and the appropriateness of employment services for expectant women and parents responsible for the care of newborns, the Government of Saskatchewan consulted with key stakeholders, using focus groups to assess services and income support processes for this client group. Following its review, the Government approved a new service statement and contact centre assessment criteria, and services changes were expanded to include two-parent families.

27. An ongoing review of programme service delivery also identified a gap in employment services provided to low-income parents. As a result, in 2008 and 2009, the Government of Saskatchewan developed the Accelerated Employment Service for Parents Initiative. In May 2009, the impact of the initiative, which targets the unique needs of low-income parents to support successful and durable transitions to employment, was assessed by two focus groups. Their recommendations resulted in some changes in service delivery.

28. In the province of British Columbia, evaluations of the situation of women are undertaken by various ministries. In 2009, the Government of British Columbia completed an analysis of women in the workforce using data from social assistance programmes and services and from other provincial ministries that have an impact on women and vulnerable groups of women. The report examines women and the

---

<sup>7</sup> The Transitional Employment Allowance provides financial support for employable clients who are participating in employment programmes or services, are planning for a transition to independence or have a known date of self-sufficiency.

economy, women in higher education, employment trends for women and support for childcare.<sup>8</sup>

29. Lessons learned and best practices research, including valuable stakeholder feedback, have been used to improve such social programmes and services as the Bridging Employment Programme. This programme was launched in 2003 to help abused women and former sex trade workers overcome barriers to employment and make a successful transition to independence. The revised programme, which started in January 2009, was expanded province-wide and its capacity was increased to help an additional 418 women per year. A “healing” component was also added to complement the employment-related services. The programme also switched to continuous participant enrolment with flexible and individualized services. Other modifications included the development of a personal plan for each individual and the inclusion of suitable participants who do not receive income assistance.<sup>9</sup>

30. The Women’s Directorate of the Government of Yukon provides gender-inclusive analysis of government policies, programmes and services through interdepartmental work, training in gender-inclusive analysis and input to such bodies as the government’s Policy Review Committee. All cabinet submissions contain a “differential impact on women” section. The Government of Yukon has made, and continues to make, changes in its programmes and services through ongoing reviews, to ensure that it delivers the best product possible to all its clients.

31. Provinces and territories participate in a national social assistance statistical report, which provides detailed statistics on income-support programmes, including the number of recipients and cases, as well as a breakdown of cases by family type, number of children on assistance, reason for assistance, duration of assistance, and sources and levels of income.

32. Through Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, the Government of Canada strives to provide First Nations in reserves with access to a range of such services as education, social development and community infrastructure that are reasonably comparable to those accessible to Canadians who do not live in reserves. As a matter of policy, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada provides funding to support social programmes similar to those offered by the provincial governments in First Nations communities. These include, inter alia, education, housing, child and family services, family violence prevention, help for persons with disabilities and income assistance. First Nations organizations, provinces, territories and other federal departments are partners in funding and delivering these services.

33. A preliminary gender-based analysis of the social programmes provided by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, including its income assistance programme and its First Nations National Child Benefit Reinvestment Initiative, was completed in 2006. Although there was insufficient data to enable a substantial assessment of the programmes’ impact on women, improvements in data collection and more detailed research into the characteristics of income assistance recipients are planned, which may facilitate future assessments. For example, new application and annual report forms have been developed for the National Child Benefit Reinvestment Initiative; the new forms include data fields to capture sex-specific information on project

---

<sup>8</sup> Report available from [www.gov.bc.ca/fortherecord/workforce/wf\\_women.html?src=/women/wf\\_women.html](http://www.gov.bc.ca/fortherecord/workforce/wf_women.html?src=/women/wf_women.html).

<sup>9</sup> Information on the initiative is available from [www.eia.gov.bc.ca/factsheets/2004/Bridging.htm](http://www.eia.gov.bc.ca/factsheets/2004/Bridging.htm).

participants and are designed to facilitate the systematic collection and production of sex-disaggregated data.

34. Government officials at Indian and Northern Affairs Canada have increasingly taken sex and gender consideration into account in policy and programme development and have determined that policy options and programming responses in future policy renewal activities must take into account gender-based analysis. In addition, future changes to social development programme manuals will reflect the requirements of gender-based analysis.

35. Gender-based analysis is a requirement of all full-scale projects of the Government of Canada's Aboriginal Health Transition Fund, which provides short-term proposal-based funding for partners who wish to undertake projects aimed at better integrating federally, provincially and territorially funded health services and adapting existing provincial and territorial health services. Project evaluations are expected by 31 March 2011. A meta-analysis synthesizing project results is planned in 2011 and should provide information to determine whether and how the gender-based analysis was or will be used to develop or amend health services.

36. The Government of Canada's Homelessness Partnering Strategy is a community-based programme that relies on communities to determine their own needs and to develop appropriate projects. Many communities have recognized growing numbers of women and girls among their homeless population and have chosen to target women and the challenges they face, such as mental, physical and sexual abuse and marginalization, in their homelessness community plans. Many Homelessness Partnering Strategy projects specifically aim to ensure that homeless women have access to housing options and appropriate support services that address such challenges as single parenthood and mental, physical and sexual abuse.

### **Paragraph 32**

The Committee urges the State party to examine the reasons for the failure to investigate the cases of missing or murdered aboriginal women and to take the necessary steps to remedy the deficiencies in the system. The Committee calls upon the State party to urgently carry out thorough investigations of the cases of aboriginal women who have gone missing or been murdered in recent decades. It also urges the State party to carry out an analysis of those cases in order to determine whether there is a racialized pattern to the disappearances and take measures to address the problem if that is the case.

37. Canada takes the issue of missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls very seriously and continues to take action to improve the safety and well-being of all aboriginal women and girls. It is a pressing concern that cuts across many different sectors including aboriginal affairs, the justice system, public safety and policing, gender issues and women's rights.

38. Aboriginal women and girls are among the most vulnerable members of Canadian society. They experience violence at a rate more than three times higher than other Canadian women and are five times more likely to die as a result. Aboriginal women in Canada experience numerous challenges and disadvantages that make them more vulnerable to exploitation and violence. The economic



outcomes of aboriginal women continue to fall behind those of aboriginal men and non-aboriginal Canadians.<sup>10</sup>

39. Addressing the underlying issues that contribute to violence against aboriginal women and girls requires coordinated attention from all levels of government. The federal, provincial and territorial governments are working in partnership with aboriginal people and other stakeholders to develop more effective and appropriate solutions to prevent such violence and to strengthen cross-sectoral responses, including improving criminal justice and social service responses.

40. Efforts undertaken include the development of standards that provide clear direction and support to police forces, so that they are able to conduct effective investigations into missing persons, establish sensitive relations with the affected families and communicate effectively with the public.

41. Through Status of Women Canada, the Government of Canada is funding the Native Women's Association of Canada Sisters in Spirit initiative, providing \$5 million over five years (2005 to 2010). This research, education and policy initiative addresses the underlying factors contributing to gendered racism and violence against aboriginal women, in particular missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls. The initiative aims to improve the safety and well-being of aboriginal women by conducting research, raising awareness and influencing policy related to violence against aboriginal women and girls.

42. In addition to these research and policy activities, the Government's communications and education activities continue to advance awareness of missing and murdered aboriginal women through community engagement workshops, Sisters in Spirit community presentations, Sisters in Spirit vigils across the country, annual family gatherings, media outreach, including increased coverage and a more sensitive portrayal of the victims, and overall effective promotion and dissemination of activities, publications and events.

43. The Native Women's Association of Canada and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) are continuing an information-sharing arrangement related to missing and murdered aboriginal women. The Native Women's Association of Canada is also working with the federal Department of Justice to develop a protocol for service providers who work with aboriginal victims of crime, to improve the treatment of aboriginal women by police and justice officials.

#### **Investigation of cases**

44. A number of initiatives have been undertaken in recent years, in relation to the investigation of missing and murdered aboriginal women. The results of these initiatives will ensure a better understanding of the causes and risk factors involved and the options for a way forward.

45. Canada's national police force, the RCMP, works with other Canadian police forces to investigate and resolve cases of missing or murdered women. For example, Project E-PANA, established in 2006, has a dedicated team of investigators who continue to review files involving missing and murdered women in the North District and Central Region of British Columbia, which includes Highway 16,

---

<sup>10</sup> Juristat — Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada, catalogue No. 85-002-XIE, vol. 26, No. 3.

sometimes referred to as the “Highway of Tears”. The RCMP also established Project Even-Handed with the Vancouver Police Department in 2001 and Project KARE with the Edmonton Police Service in 2003 to strengthen investigations of missing and murdered women. In August 2009, the province of Manitoba, the RCMP and the Winnipeg Police Service formally established a task force to review cases involving missing and murdered women. In addition to actively investigating all reported cases of missing women, these projects are developing “best practices” relating to information-sharing, file management, file coordination and disclosure that can be shared with other investigative units or implemented in similar initiatives across the country.

46. Through a Provincial Partnership Committee on Missing Persons, the Government of Saskatchewan is collaborating with members of aboriginal, police and non-governmental agencies, to better understand issues around missing persons, including prevention and response. The provincial government is working to implement the recommendations of the Committee’s 2007 final report. Specific actions undertaken include enhanced police resources to address cold case files and new missing persons cases, research on youth runaways and police practice, the publication of a checklist for families on a public website and new provincial legislation. The Missing Persons and Presumption of Death Act proclaimed on 28 September 2009 will make it easier for families to deal with the estates of missing persons and for police to conduct investigations.

47. Members of the Partnership Committee have also undertaken action to implement recommendations on connecting families of missing persons and providing them with support, developing prevention and awareness materials and improving the search and rescue capacity across the province. The Partnership Committee continues to work on implementing all the other recommendations of the 2007 report and to hold meetings with families of long-term missing persons to obtain their views and suggestions for improving the response to missing persons cases.

48. The Government of Canada and the provinces and territories collaborate through the Federal, Provincial and Territorial Working Group on Missing and Murdered Women to examine criminal justice system responses to cases involving serial killers who target vulnerable women, including aboriginal women in high-risk situations.

49. A second federal, provincial and territorial working group, whose mandate is to examine aboriginal justice issues, is also studying the issue of missing and murdered aboriginal women as part of its broader examination of victimization in aboriginal communities resulting from disproportionately high levels of family and interpersonal violence. The ongoing efforts of this working group include a focus on improvements to police response and investigation models. This Working Group and the Missing and Murdered Women Working Group share information on common themes.

50. The RCMP has also contributed to the development of community forums to increase awareness about women who have gone missing along the stretch of Highway 16, which runs between Prince George and Prince Rupert, British Columbia. Through a collaborative partnership with the Native Women’s Association of Canada, the National Aboriginal Policing Services of the RCMP developed a community education toolkit called “Navigating the Missing Persons Process”, which can be used at the community level by friends and family members of people who have gone missing. This guide is a valuable resource that the RCMP promotes

to its members and the communities they serve. The RCMP continues to partner with the Native Women's Association of Canada to ensure both agencies are able to effectively address the issues related to missing and murdered aboriginal women.

51. The Government of Manitoba has established an action group which brings together aboriginal organizations and community agencies, including representatives of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, the Métis Women of Manitoba, the Mother of Red Nations Council and the Native Women's Transition Centre. The group will also review past recommendations from inquests and reports on vulnerable and exploited women and girls and will be available to consult with the Manitoba Integrated Task Force for Missing and Murdered Women.

### **Sexual exploitation**

52. In April 2009, the Native Women's Association of Canada released "Voices of Our Sisters in Spirit: A Report to Families and Communities", which describes the cases of 520 aboriginal women and girls across Canada reported killed or missing over the last 30 years. It sets out to tell their stories, understand the causes of the violence they experienced, determine how the justice system responded and identify needed changes. It shows that while they shared some similarities — most were mothers under 30 in difficult economic circumstances — the women's individual situations varied widely. At the time of disappearance, some were attending school or university, some were seeking work and others were attending a cultural event or visiting family.

53. According to the report, most of the aboriginal women and girls who disappeared or were murdered were not leading lives that made them particularly vulnerable. However, the federal, provincial and territorial governments are taking steps, both individually and collectively, to address the sexual exploitation of aboriginal women and girls.

54. For example, the RCMP recently developed an array of public awareness materials and has coordinated a dedicated tip line with the Canadian Crime Stoppers Association to facilitate the reporting of human trafficking activities, including the domestic trafficking of women and girls for the purposes of sexual exploitation.

55. Manitoba has created a Human Trafficking Response Team comprised of the RCMP and various provincial and community partners, which targets the trafficking of aboriginal women and girls for sexual exploitation.

56. The Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers responsible for the Status of Women continue to explore ways to facilitate women's labour force participation and economic security, implement actions to improve the lives of First Nations, Inuit and Métis women, both on and off reserve, and address violence against women in Canada. They are also focusing on the sexual exploitation of women and have directed officials to develop a best practices document to explore innovative approaches used within Canada and internationally to address human trafficking.

57. Manitoba's Sexual Exploitation Strategy addresses issues relating to high-risk runaways and missing children, many of whom are aboriginal children in care. The Winnipeg Streetreach programme provides a coordinated and integrated effort to help youth escape exploitation, prevent high-risk runaways from becoming exploited and better identify predators, prostitution and drug houses, by coordinating the outreach efforts of more than a dozen organizations including police, agency outreach

workers, child and family services and childcare workers. A new community outreach coordinator in Thompson, Manitoba, will also link stakeholders and the RCMP, focusing on runaways and additional training for RCMP officers on the issue of sexual exploitation among youth.

58. Additional information on Canadian responses to the sexual exploitation of women and girls and human trafficking is available in Canada's combined sixth and seventh periodic report (CEDAW/C/CAN/7).

### **Violence prevention and poverty reduction measures**

59. The Government of Canada recognizes that there is an urgent need to provide First Nations women and their children with a safe place to stay during situations of family violence. The First Nations Family Violence Prevention Programme provides operational funding for a network of 36 shelters and supports approximately 350 community-based prevention projects for First Nations women, children and families resident on reserve. In June 2007, it announced new investments totalling \$55.65 million over five years to support the existing network of shelters and the construction and operation of five new shelters.

60. In 2007, the Government of Canada made a long-term commitment to urban aboriginal issues by investing \$68.5 million over five years to promote self-reliance and increase life choices for aboriginal peoples in key centres across Canada. To accomplish this, the Urban Aboriginal Strategy is focusing investments in three priority areas, including support for aboriginal women, children and families.

61. The Urban Aboriginal Strategy works in partnership with key stakeholders to reduce the number of families living in poverty; provide transitional support to families that have moved into the city, regardless of the reason; and prevent women, children and families from being victims of crime or from entering a life of crime. Examples of activities include counselling services for aboriginal women to rebuild their self-esteem; the promotion of positive life choices through culture, education and life skills training; and healing approaches to eliminate sexual exploitation.

62. Since 1998, the Government of Canada's National Crime Prevention Strategy has provided funding for community-based projects designed to reduce the offence rate among at-risk groups of the population. One of the Strategy's priorities is to support culturally sensitive crime prevention initiatives in aboriginal communities, both on and off reserve, and in the North. Projects funded under the Strategy include a focus on high-risk children and youth who present multiple risk factors for later delinquency, including having been exposed to or having suffered violence in the family. In 2008, the Government of Canada doubled the Strategy's permanent funding base to \$63 million per year to reflect its commitment to effective prevention as a component of public policy in responding to crime and violence.

63. The federal Government, with the assistance of provincial and territorial partners, organized a Northern Responses and Approaches to Victims of Crime conference in September 2009. The objective was to build capacity among those who work with victims of crime, raise awareness about victims' issues, specifically within the context of victimization in the North, and build relationships between and within communities, professions and programmes. The conference highlighted the special needs of victims in the North and the participant feedback will be included as part of the Federal Aboriginal Victims Strategy.

64. In 2006, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador collaborated with the Government of Canada to offer provincial probation officers an intensive aboriginal-specific family violence prevention programme designed to develop the knowledge and skills to work with aboriginal perpetrators of family violence to reduce recidivism and build stability in the home environment. The province continues to provide cultural sensitivity training to new probation officers, particularly those working in Labrador, and reinforces such awareness in its assessment of provincial probation officer performance reviews.

65. The Government of Canada committed \$479,798 to the Native Women's Association of Canada for a 32-month project (October 2007 to May 2010) on a "Violence Prevention Toolkit". The objective is to train 200 youth and youth councils across Canada to give workshops that will sensitize and equip another 1,000 aboriginal youth to deal with all forms of violence suffered by aboriginal girls in their communities. Participants will use the toolkit to address their security concerns with respect to domestic violence and its impact, date violence, sexual assault, emotional abuse and bullying.

66. In 2008 and 2009, additional funding was provided by the Government of Saskatchewan to strengthen services to women victims of sexual assault and domestic violence. Funds were allocated to 29 community-based organizations in 14 communities; services included transition houses for women and their children, services and support for survivors of sexual assault and family violence outreach services. While services are available to all residents, regardless of cultural background, 75 per cent of the participants in the 10 family violence crisis residential services funded through the Saskatchewan government were of aboriginal ancestry.

67. Over the 2007-2008 biennium, a third domestic violence court was opened in the province of Saskatchewan. There are now 18 police-based victims services programmes in the province, two of which were launched in 2007 in northern communities with predominantly aboriginal populations.<sup>11</sup> These programmes provide intensive support to victims and six of them have specific aboriginal resource officer components. Additional funding is provided through an Aboriginal Family Violence Initiative to aboriginal organizations that provide comprehensive and holistic family violence services to urban aboriginal families.

68. Since 2007, the Government of Saskatchewan has provided funding to support the expansion and enhancement of programmes for children exposed to violence. A high proportion of the beneficiaries are aboriginal, especially in two new northern programmes initiated in 2007 and 2009.

69. The Government of British Columbia has contributed over \$100,000 to support the implementation of the recommendations of the March 2006 Highway of Tears Symposium report, which are based on input from 500 local residents who attended the Lheidli T'enneh Nation community symposium. In addition, British Columbia government ministries and the RCMP are working together to support community-based initiatives on violence and crime prevention. These include:

---

<sup>11</sup> For further information on these courts, see para. 247 of the seventeenth and eighteenth periodic reports of Canada on the implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD/C/CAN/18), available from [www.pch.gc.ca/pgm/pdp-hrp/docs/cerd-eng.cfm](http://www.pch.gc.ca/pgm/pdp-hrp/docs/cerd-eng.cfm).

(a) Six aboriginal youth forums in First Nations communities throughout the region, which focused on supporting personal and community safety, in particular with respect to the Highway of Tears;

(b) Workshops at two youth conferences to make rural and urban youth aware of the risks of hitchhiking;

(c) A provincial forum in Prince George with local groups to address the sexual exploitation of children and youth through a series of workshops, to build on the positive preventative action taking place within British Columbia communities.

70. The British Columbia Victim Services and Crime Prevention Division funds many programmes and services in the region surrounding Highway 16, including:

(a) A 24/7 multilingual victim telephone service (VictimLINK) which provides immediate crisis support to victims of family and sexual violence in the aboriginal languages spoken in the region;

(b) Nine victim service programmes implemented in collaboration with the RCMP and six programmes that operate out of non-profit or community organizations; two are delivered by aboriginal victim service workers;

(c) Eight outreach programmes that help women identify and access the services they need by providing supportive counselling, information and referrals, and transportation to other necessary services;

(d) Thirteen Stopping the Violence Programmes that provide individual and group counselling for women who have experienced childhood abuse, sexual assault and violence in their relationships.

71. The issue of violence against aboriginal women was identified as a priority action item at the first National Aboriginal Women's Summit held in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador in June 2007. During the summit, it was recognized that increased financial resources for family violence prevention and abuse prevention initiatives were needed to improve the quality of life and well-being of aboriginal women and families. As a result of the recommendations of the Summit, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador established the Aboriginal Women's Violence Prevention Grants Programme, the goal of which is to create programmes to achieve stability in the lives of aboriginal women and children. This programme supports projects aimed at reducing violence against aboriginal women and children; it is funded through the provincial government's Violence Prevention Initiative and coordinated by the Women's Policy Office.

72. One of the projects recently funded through the above-mentioned programme is the Rigolet Partnership Against Family Violence; in March 2009, the province of Newfoundland and Labrador contributed \$30,000 to renovate a safe house in the community of Rigolet for women and children experiencing family violence. In November 2008, the province provided a \$30,000 grant to the St. John's Native Friendship Centre for a programme to help incarcerated aboriginal women who had been exposed to family violence access community supports and services and reintegrate successfully into the community. The programme also provides individual assessments on which to base referrals to counsellors and other social and legal services.

73. With partial funding from the Aboriginal Women's Violence Prevention Grants Programme, an aboriginal legal interpreter course for criminal law was developed in 2008 to standardize key justice system terminology for aboriginal interpreters. This gives victims of violence the opportunity to tell their stories to the justice system in their first language and reduces the barriers to accessing justice services.

74. In May 2009, the Government of Manitoba announced "AllAboard: Manitoba's Poverty Reduction Strategy". The four pillars of the Strategy include safe, affordable housing in supportive communities; education, jobs and income support; strong healthy families; and accessible, coordinated services. With \$212 million in new investments, the Strategy brings together new and existing programmes to address the social and economic marginalization of aboriginal women. Progress towards poverty reduction will be assessed using a set of key indicators.

75. The "Rewarding Work Strategy" was also launched in Manitoba in 2008 to address barriers to employment encountered by social assistance participants, most of whom are women.

76. In June 2009, the Government of Manitoba released "HOMEWorks! Manitoba's Long-Term Housing Strategy and Policy Framework". The strategy complements "AllAboard: Manitoba's Poverty Reduction Strategy" and aims to provide safe, affordable housing in supportive communities. "AllAboard" and "HOMEWorks!" both include substantial funding for new public housing and extensive renovations.

77. Manitoba's three-year affordable housing strategy is now in its second year. According to Manitoba Housing, approximately 3,200 units of safe and affordable housing have been repaired, rehabilitated or built. The strategy acknowledges that aboriginal women are often single parents and that there is an urgent need to provide services for victims of family violence. Women in Manitoba will benefit from a housing policy that acknowledges the importance of safe and affordable housing for social and economic well-being and strong health.

#### **Aboriginal women and economic development**

78. Over the past 20 years, there have been significant improvements in the economic outcomes of aboriginal Canadians. Notwithstanding such improvements, work is required to close the gap between the economic outcomes of aboriginal women, aboriginal men and their non-aboriginal counterparts. For example, despite the fact that aboriginal women tend to attain higher levels of education compared to aboriginal men, especially post-secondary education, they are less likely to be employed and are more likely to work in such lower-paid occupations as sales or administration. The 2006 census revealed a significant gap between the employment rates of aboriginal and non-aboriginal women in the 15 to 24 age group (35 per cent of aboriginal women compared to 57 per cent of non-aboriginal women). (Statistics Canada, 2006, 2001 and 1996 Census of the Population, 20 per cent sample data, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada tabulations.)

79. There are new opportunities that may lead to an increase in the economic participation of aboriginal women, including a rising interest on the part of the non-aboriginal private sector in working with aboriginal businesses and communities. Growing self-employment among Canadian women and an increasing land base could lead to job creation and provide a significant source of employment for aboriginal women. Moreover, the contributions by aboriginal women to their

communities increase the capacity of all community members to participate in the economy as both employees and entrepreneurs.

80. On 29 June 2009, the Government of Canada launched the new Federal Framework for Aboriginal Economic Development, marking the first step of a fundamental change in how it supports aboriginal economic development. The new Framework provides First Nations, Inuit and Métis women every opportunity to share in Canada's economic opportunities and prosperity. It adopts a modern and comprehensive approach to aboriginal economic development that is opportunity-driven and places emphasis on building strategic partnerships with aboriginal groups, the private sector and the provinces and territories. The Framework increases aboriginal women's self-reliance by strengthening their entrepreneurship, developing their human capital and enhancing the value of aboriginal assets. By focusing on economic opportunities, responding to new and changing conditions, leveraging partnerships and focusing on results, the Framework helps provide aboriginal women with the same opportunities for employment, income and wealth creation as other Canadians.

81. A number of recent federal actions to improve the participation of First Nations, Inuit and Métis women in the Canadian economy are also aligned with the Framework. Through Canada's Economic Action Plan, the federal Government is investing \$200 million in aboriginal skills and training, which will improve labour market outcomes for aboriginal peoples and investments and benefit all Canadians living in the North, including aboriginal women. The Government of Canada is also investing \$75 million in a two-year Aboriginal Skills and Training Strategic Investment Fund.

---