

**CANADA'S RESPONSE to the Questionnaire on Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) and the Outcome of the Twenty-Third Special Session of the General Assembly (2000)**

**For preparation of regional review and appraisals in the context of the 15th anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 2010**

**Women in Canada**

There are many positive stories to note related to women and their place in Canadian society. This includes significant increases in women's labour force participation and educational attainment, and in the dramatic reductions in the rate of poverty among senior women.

The increased participation of women in the paid work force has been one of the most significant trends in Canada in recent decades.

- Employment and labour participation rates for Canadian women are near record highs and are converging toward those of men.<sup>1</sup> In 2007, employment and participation rates for Canadian women (ages 15 to 64) were the highest among G7 countries and were sixth highest among OECD countries. The unemployment rate for Canadian women is close to a thirty-year low and is below the unemployment rate for Canadian men.
- Women have also significantly increased their representation in a wide range of professional fields of work, including among doctors and dentists, as well as business and financial professionals.<sup>2</sup>
- Participation of women in university studies is higher than that of men and is increasing. Women represented almost 60 per cent of students enrolled in undergraduate studies in 2006, and in 2005 almost 46 per cent of graduates of Doctoral studies were women compared to almost 43 per cent the year before.<sup>3</sup>
- Women are also increasing their enrolment in fields of study traditionally dominated by men. In 2003, women represented half of law school graduates and the majority of medical school graduates.<sup>4</sup>
- Canada continues to close the gender gap in earnings. In 2007, women earned 84 cents per hour for every one dollar earned by men.<sup>5</sup> This ratio rose by 2

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<sup>1</sup> Labour Force Survey

<sup>2</sup> Women in Canada: Work Chapter Updates (2006), Statistics Canada, Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division, Catalogue no. 89F0133XIE, released April 2007.

<sup>3</sup> Statistics Canada, 2008. Doctoral Graduates in Canada: Findings from the Survey of Earned Doctorates, 2004/2005. Catalogue no. 81-595-M. <http://www.statcan.ca/english/research/81-595-MIE/81-595-MIE2008067.htm>

<sup>4</sup> Coates and Keen, (2007), "Snail Males: Why are men falling behind in universities while women speed ahead?"

<sup>5</sup> Statistics Canada, 2008. "Labour Force Survey". <http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/71-001-XIE/71-001-XIE2008007.htm>

percentage points between 2002 and 2007.<sup>6</sup>

- The proportion of women living in low income has declined considerably in the past decade: falling from 16.3 per cent in 1997 to 10.9 per cent in 2006. However, the percentage of women in a low income situation remains slightly higher than the percentage of men. Generally, there has been a particularly sharp drop in low-income rates among senior women (aged 65 years and older).
- There has been a gradual increase in women's representation in the House of Commons. Among the current 307 members, 69 are women, the highest proportion of seats to date. Of the current 103 members of the Senate of Canada, 35 are women; two seats are vacant. Among Cabinet Ministers, 11 of the 38 are women, the highest percentage ever.
- The large majority of the female population living at home describe their general health in positive terms. Indeed, 88% of the female population aged 12 and over said their health was either excellent (22%), very good (36%) or good (30%). However, 12% reported their health was either fair or poor.<sup>7</sup>

Canada is proud of these positive stories of women in Canada, but also recognizes that challenges persist. For example,

- Canadian women are still significantly over-represented in low-paid and non-standard jobs and the gap between wages for men and women, across all age and occupation groups, persists: based on hourly wages, women earned on average 84% of men's earnings in 2007.<sup>8</sup> The largest male-female wage gap was in blue-collar occupations (e.g. women earned 68 cents for every dollar earned by men), with greater equity evident within female dominated occupations (e.g. ratio of 98.3% in health occupations).<sup>9</sup>
- Women's lower lifetime earnings translate into lower savings, and women continue to be over-represented (53%) among those living with low incomes in Canada. Certain groups are particularly vulnerable: 36% of Aboriginal women, 23% of immigrant women and 26% of women with disabilities live in low income. In 2003, 38% of families headed by female lone parents had low incomes, representing 43% of children living in low income in Canada.<sup>10</sup>
- Despite declining rates of violence in many areas, women remain more likely than men to be the victims of certain types of violent crime, including the most severe forms of spousal assault, spousal homicide, sexual assault and criminal harassment

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<sup>6</sup> Statistics Canada, 2008. "Labour Force Survey". <http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/71-001-XIE/71-001-XIE2008007.htm>

<sup>7</sup> *Women in Canada 2005: A Gender-Based Statistical Report, Fifth Edition*. Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2006.

<sup>8</sup> *Labour Force Survey 2007*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>10</sup> *Women in Canada 2005: A Gender-Based Statistical Report, Fifth Edition*. Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2006.

(stalking).<sup>11</sup>

- There has been a steady decline in police-reported spousal violence over the most recent nine-year period (1998 to 2006). In 2006, over 38,000 incidents of spousal violence were reported across Canada, representing approximately 15% of all police-reported violent incidents. Women remain the most likely victims of police-reported spousal violence across every province and territory in Canada, accounting for 83% of victims.<sup>12</sup> According to the 2005/2006 Transition Home Survey, admissions of women and children to Canada's shelters for abused women totaled approximately 106,000 between April 1, 2005 and March 31, 2006.<sup>13</sup>
- In 2006, there were 56 women killed by their spouses compared to 22 men, although rates of spousal homicides for both male and female victims have been declining over the last 30 years (1977 to 2006). During that time, the rate of spousal homicide against females has been between three and five times higher than the rate for males. Over the past decade (1997 to 2006), the rate of firearm-related spousal homicides decreased by nearly 50%.<sup>14</sup>
- Young women experience the highest rates of violence. Between 1997 and 2006, young women (aged 15 to 24) were killed at a rate that was nearly three times higher than for all female victims of spousal homicide. Girls (under the age of 18) experienced somewhat higher rates of physical assault by family members than boys, and the rate of sexual assault committed by family members was four times higher for girls compared to boys.<sup>15</sup>
- Rates of sexual assault remained constant between 1999 and 2004, but the number recorded by police has declined since 1993. The most serious types of sexual assaults have declined more dramatically. However, victimization surveys suggest that less than 10% of sexual assaults are reported to the police.<sup>16</sup>
- Some groups of women in Canada are particularly vulnerable. The spousal homicide rate for Aboriginal women is more than eight times the rate for non-Aboriginal women and Aboriginal women are three times more likely to experience spousal violence. Women in Nunavut, the Yukon and the Northwest Territories (both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) have higher rates of spousal violence, sexual assault and homicide than women in the provinces.<sup>17</sup>
- Women in Canada typically have contact with the criminal justice system because they are victims of crime. Only a small proportion of the prison population, approximately five per cent of those admitted to federal penitentiaries, are women. While Aboriginal people comprise only about three per cent of the Canadian

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<sup>11</sup> *Measuring Violence Against Women – Statistical Trends 2006*. Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2006. (Commissioned by Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women.)

<sup>12</sup> *Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile 2008*. Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2008.

<sup>13</sup> *Transition Home Survey 2005-2006*. Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2007.

<sup>14</sup> *Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile 2008*.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>16</sup> *Measuring Violence Against Women – Statistical Trends 2006*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*

population, more than 30 per cent of women serving federal sentences are of Aboriginal ancestry.

- Despite significant advancements in participation, women are largely under-represented at local, national and international levels of power and decision-making in sporting bodies and institutions.

### **Achievements**

Governments in Canada continue to work to improve the lives of Canadian women, for example through targeted programs aimed at increasing labour market participation, reducing the rate of poverty and addressing the important issue of violence against women.

### ***Economic Prosperity***

- In regard to economic prosperity, Canada recognizes that women are key drivers of the economy. Canada has moved forward to address specific gaps in women's economic prosperity. In particular, work has been done to enhance support to families with children, for example: the introduction and progressive enhancement of the Canada Child Tax Benefit system, including the National Child Benefit Supplement for low-income families with children. The National Child Benefit is an initiative of federal, provincial and territorial governments and First Nations, and includes both income and other forms of support. Since the last report, the value of these benefits has continued to increase. The most recent annual joint Federal/Provincial/Territorial *National Benefit Progress Report* in 2006 shows that the National Child Benefit kept 59,000 families with 125,000 children from living in low income in 2004, a reduction of 12.1 per cent. In addition, there was a 9.5 per cent reduction in the number of lone parent families living in low income as a result of the National Child Benefit.<sup>18,19</sup>
- In recent years, Canada has also invested in providing choice in childcare and tax relief for working families, such as the new Working Income Tax Benefit, which is a new refundable tax credit that provides lower-income taxpayers with a financial incentive to enter and/or remain a part of the work force. The investments that Canada has made over the last several years, combined with Canada's strong economic growth, are having an impact: the percentage of children in low income families has fallen from 18.6 per cent in 1996 to 11.3 per cent in 2006.
- Canada is also working to facilitate women's labour market participation through programs such as the Aboriginal Human Resources Development Strategy, the Targeted Initiative for Older Workers, the Youth Employment Strategy and the

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<sup>18</sup> Press Release, June 2008. "Report shows that the National Child Benefit is improving the situation of families with children living in low income". [http://www.nationalchildbenefit.ca/ncb/080613\\_e.shtml](http://www.nationalchildbenefit.ca/ncb/080613_e.shtml)

<sup>19</sup> The National Child Benefit Progress Report, 2006.

[http://www.nationalchildbenefit.ca/ncb/Progress\\_Reports/2006/pdf/ncb\\_progress\\_report\\_2006.pdf](http://www.nationalchildbenefit.ca/ncb/Progress_Reports/2006/pdf/ncb_progress_report_2006.pdf)

Trades and Apprenticeship Strategy. These programs continue to be successful in helping women acquire and maintain employment. For example, women's participation in non-traditional trades has increased by 77 per cent since 2000.

- Efforts are also being made at the provincial and territorial level to combat poverty. The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has invested in a new Poverty Reduction Strategy. One of the five main goals of the Strategy is to improve earned incomes. The Provincial Government is investing in initiatives that enable income support clients, marginalized workers, persons with disabilities, and other low income workers, including women, to make a successful transition to employment, work more hours, increase their skills and earnings, and maintain long-term employment. In Quebec, the third year report on the Government Action Plan to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion, under the legislation adopted in this regard in 2002, indicates that investments, initially estimated at \$2.5 billion in the 2004-2005 budget, will reach more than \$3.3 billion by 2008-2009 for the full five years of the Plan. The measures introduced have helped to significantly improve conditions for several Quebec families living in poverty, and the number of adults receiving benefits under last resort financial assistance programs fell by 6.1 per cent between 2003 and 2007. This was particularly true for beneficiaries without job impediments, young people under 25 years of age, and families with children and women. Quebec intends to include new targets in its second plan, namely for single people who did not benefit to the same degree from the improvements observed in the past few years.

### ***Violence Against Women***

Canada supports a multi-disciplinary, multi-sectoral and harmonized approach to addressing violence against women and children. This approach includes a combination of both legislative and non-legislative responses designed to prevent and reduce the prevalence of violence against women, to assist those affected by it and to hold the perpetrators accountable. Significant contributions to combating violence against women include:

- In 2007, funding of \$52 million over four years for programs, services and financial support for victims of crime, enabling federal, provincial and territorial governments to respond to a variety of emerging issues facing victims of crime across the country;
- In June 2008, the federal government announced \$13 million for a national awareness campaign to help seniors and others recognize the signs and symptoms of elder abuse and to develop information tools to help frontline professionals deal with incidents of elder abuse;<sup>20</sup>
- In 2007, \$7.3 million in funding through the Shelter Enhancement Program (SEP), as part of the Government of Canada's Family Violence Initiative, to support the repair

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<sup>20</sup> HRSDC Press Release, 2008. "Government of Canada taking action to address elder abuse". <http://news.gc.ca/web/view/en/index.jsp?articleid=405179>

and improvement of existing shelters for women, children and youth who are victims of family violence, and the construction of new shelters and second stage housing where needed;

- In 2007, providing additional funding to the New Horizons for Seniors Program, which, among other things, helps non-profit organizations develop national or regional projects that raise awareness of the abuse of older adults.<sup>21</sup>

The Government of Canada has also been actively combating child sexual exploitation and this remains a continuing priority. Over the past three years, numerous *Criminal Code* reforms have been implemented to strengthen our responses to the sexual exploitation of youth and other vulnerable persons. These have included:

- modifying the offence of sexual exploitation to increase protection for young persons by allowing courts discretion in defining exploitative relationships with a young person;
- raising the age of sexual consent to 16 years to better protect youth against adult sexual predators; and
- enhancing penalties for the offence of using the Internet to communicate with a child for the purpose of luring or facilitating the commission of a sexual offence.

The provinces and territories also adopted measures in this regard. Quebec has been combating violence against women for years through a variety of measures, including the adoption and implementation of framework policies and action plans, such as the *Government Action Plan 2004-2009 on Domestic Violence* and, more recently, the *Government Action Plan 2008-2013 on Sexual Assault*. In addition, funding of shelters for women who have been victims of violence increased substantially, from \$30 million in 2002-2003 to \$61 million in 2007-2008.

### ***Trafficking***

Canada is also focused on combating the trafficking of women and girls at the domestic and international level. Amendments to the *Criminal Code* of Canada, which came into force in November 2005, created three new indictable offences that specifically address trafficking in persons. These offences build upon existing *Criminal Code* offences, which have been successfully used to address trafficking-related conduct, as well as the trafficking offence found in the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*. It is worth noting that the first conviction under these new trafficking offences occurred earlier this year.

To support implementation of these new offences and the issues surrounding this crime, including how to effectively respond to the needs of victims, various federal partners, as

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<sup>21</sup> HRSDC Press Release, 2007. "Government of Canada highlights new funding available under the New Horizons for Seniors Program". <http://news.gc.ca/web/view/en/index.jsp?articleid=358709>

well as municipal police forces have been delivering training to front-line law enforcement officials and other justice-system participants. An important aspect of this training is awareness of the special needs of Aboriginal women when coming into contact with law enforcement as victims of trafficking.

In May 2006, Canada introduced measures to strengthen its response to the unique needs of foreign nationals who are victims of trafficking in Canada. The measures provide immigration officers with the authority to issue short-term temporary resident permits (TRP) to trafficking victims. In 2007, the length of the permit was extended from 120 days to 180 days. In addition, victims have access to Interim Federal Health-Care benefits, including medical treatment and counseling services, and those victims who are issued a temporary resident permit are now able to apply for a fee-exempt work permit.

### ***Aboriginal Women***

Canada remains firmly committed to working with Aboriginal women to bring real improvements to the quality of life for Aboriginal peoples – First Nations, Inuit and Métis, and to ensure Aboriginal women, children and families feel safe and empowered. In recent years we have made significant progress because of genuine collaboration between Aboriginal organizations, their governments and the Government of Canada.

In order to work collaboratively to address Aboriginal women's issues, Federal, Provincial and Territorial governments participated in the National Aboriginal Women's Summits in 2007 and 2008. These ground-breaking events brought together Aboriginal women, government leaders and officials to discuss the challenges that exist for Aboriginal women across Canada. Emerging from the Summits were recommendations for government action, which have served as a basis for concrete actions taken over the past year and for the funding of specific initiatives in targeted areas.

The Government of Canada also acted with Aboriginal women and Aboriginal organizations to develop and enhance family violence prevention programs and services on reserve. This resulted in an extensive funding commitment and the creation of five new shelters.

Reconciliation and a renewed partnership with Aboriginal peoples is another important element of this work. On June 11, 2008, the Government of Canada, on behalf of all Canadians, offered an historic formal apology to former students of Indian Residential Schools, including Aboriginal women. It recognized the suffering of students and families from this school system, and the impact it continues to have on Aboriginal culture, heritage and community.

The apology is a positive step in forging a new relationship between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians, as is the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, which includes compensation to former students who resided at government and church-run Indian Residential Schools. To date, 64,000 individuals have received compensation.

The apology, settlement agreement, as well as the creation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, all demonstrate Canada's commitment to deal fairly with obligations arising from the past in order to achieve our mutual goals, today and into the future.

A further example of efforts being made to address the needs of Aboriginal peoples, and especially women, is the recent repeal of Section 67 of the *Canadian Human Rights Act*, which prevented First Nations, living or working on reserves, from making complaints of discrimination arising from actions taken or decisions made pursuant to the *Indian Act*.

The Canadian Human Rights Commission (CHRC) has hailed the repeal of section 67, and has announced its commitment to work closely with First Nations organizations and the Government of Canada to design and build a human rights system that reflects and respects Aboriginal peoples' cultures and traditional laws.

### ***Children and Families***

Canada recognizes the valuable contribution of its unpaid caregivers - the majority of whom are women. In the past two years, the Government of Canada has: extended access to the Employment Insurance Compassionate Care Benefit to more caregivers; helped parents caring for children with disabilities by introducing a Registered Disability Savings Plan; increased the amount of the Child Disability Benefit; and broadened the list of eligible expenses that can be claimed in the Medical Expense Tax Credit.

Canada recognizes that families are the building blocks of a society, and that child care is a priority for Canadian families. In 2006, Canada introduced its Universal Child Care Plan. It consists of two key elements designed to give parents choice in childcare in order to balance work and family life: First is the Universal Child Care Benefit which provides \$100 per month for each child under the age of six; and second are new measures to support the creation of child care spaces, including a \$250 million per year transfer to the provinces and territories.

This is in addition to a series of tax measures and investments designed to recognize the costs of raising children. In total, the Government of Canada will provide \$5.8 billion in 2008-09 in support of early learning and care through transfers to the provinces and territories, direct spending and tax measures for families.

### ***Health and Well-being***

Women's health and well-being are also priorities for Canada. In Canada, women have equal access to health care. Canada's national health insurance program, often referred to as "Medicare", is designed to ensure that all residents, women, men and children, have reasonable access to medically necessary hospital and physician services, on a prepaid basis. Instead of having a single national plan, Canada has a national program that is composed of 13 interlocking provincial and territorial health insurance plans, all of which share certain common features and basic standards of coverage for all Canadians.



The Canada Health Act (CHA), the federal health insurance legislation, provides the framework for the program. Under the universality criterion, all insured residents of a province or territory must be entitled to the insured health services provided by the provincial or territorial health care insurance plan on uniform terms and conditions.

Health Canada also funds certain programs specifically for women. For example, the Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program (CPNP) provides long-term funding to community groups to develop or enhance programs for vulnerable pregnant women. Through a community development approach, the CPNP aims to reduce the incidence of unhealthy birth weights, improve the health of both infant and mother, and encourage breastfeeding.

In Budget 2006, the Government of Canada provided \$300 million until 2010 to provinces/territories to establish human papillomavirus (HPV) immunization programs. The vaccine has been approved for use in Canada for females 9-26 years of age to protect them from infection by 4 of the most common types of HPV.

Since May 2006, Canada has been active in the World Health Organization's Committee for the development of an Action Plan on the Global Strategy for the Prevention and Control of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs). As a participant in the development of the Action Plan and the Strategy, Canada renewed its commitment to promote the mobilization of funds and reallocation of resources in order to expand access to high quality comprehensive Sexually Transmitted Infections management, diagnosis, treatment and support.

In 2006, Canada also participated in the development of the Sexual Health for the Millennium Declaration along with the Pan American Health Organization and the World Health Organization. Through this declaration, Canada renewed its commitment to support the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by: (1) recognizing, promoting, ensuring and protecting sexual rights for all; (2) advancing toward gender quality and equity; (3) providing universal access to comprehensive sexuality education and information; and (4) ensuring that reproductive health programs recognize the centrality of sexual health.

Another key focus has been preventing the acquisition and transmission of new HIV infections, including mother-to-child transmission of HIV. Voluntary HIV testing is now available in all provinces and territories as part of a comprehensive approach to prenatal care. In Canada, the proportion of pregnant women diagnosed with HIV who are receiving antiretroviral treatment to prevent transmission of the disease to their babies has steadily increased – from 60 per cent in 1997 to 89 per cent in 2006. In this same period, the HIV infection rate of perinatally HIV-exposed infants in Canada has decreased significantly from 22 per cent in 1997 to three per cent in 2006. The reduction in mother-to-child transmission could be attributed to Canada's integrated approach to HIV prevention.

### ***Women's Leadership and Democratic Participation***

The Government of Canada has developed a variety of partnerships and projects aimed at encouraging leadership among women and girls. For example, Canada will host the Women's World Forum 2011. A global forum held every three years on a different continent, it connects women through gendered research and inter-disciplinary scholarship. As a lead-up to this event, the Women Build Up to the Forum project will develop regional networks from July 2008 to March 2011. The networks will connect women of diverse backgrounds from across the country and prepare them for leadership.

The Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency is supporting women business leaders by providing funding to the Newfoundland and Labrador Organization of Women Entrepreneurs to deliver the Business Counselling and Community Outreach component of the Women in Business Initiative. This is helping to bring women entrepreneurs from across Atlantic Canada to the point of export readiness.

Status of Women Canada has worked with a wide range of partners in support of initiatives aimed at increasing women's participation in decision-making and leadership roles at all levels. Through training and mentorship, women and girls across the country, including those in marginalized communities, have increased their awareness of leadership opportunities, enhanced their leadership skills and increased their knowledge of municipal, provincial and federal political institutions. Other projects have focused on increasing women's autonomy and financial independence. Through Status of Women Canada's Community Fund and Women's Partnership Fund, initiatives have been funded to build leadership skills. Examples include:

- a multi-year partnership, called the Experiences Program, to promote girls' active citizenship and participation in democratic institutions at all levels;
- the Getting to the Gate program with Equal Voice to promote the participation of Aboriginal women in democratic institutions;
- Vancouver Status of Women's Leadership Empowerment Activism Program (LEAP);
- two New Brunswick projects to facilitate women's financial independence and participation in the development of a global plan of action for the Acadian community;
- the Femmes et démocratie summer school, organized by the Centre for Development of Women in Governance in partnership with the Government of Québec, which trains 40 women each year on municipal, provincial and federal political institutions;
- the Nishnawbe Aski Nation Women's Development Project, a leadership development training project that aims to empower the women of the Nishnawbe Aski Nation to act as agents of positive social change, resulting in healthier and stronger communities;

- the Aboriginal Women's Leadership Initiative of the Aboriginal Leadership Institute, which provides First Nations women with leadership training and knowledge of governance, community development, and politics;
- the Newfoundland Aboriginal Women's Network project, Aboriginal Women on the Verge of Rising (Kiskat-pukuwit): Breaking Barriers, Building Strong Minds, which provides Aboriginal women with an opportunity to develop their community leadership skills;
- a project by L'Association des femmes diplômées des universités - Québec entitled L'équité hommes-femmes en politique, un défi pour les filles [Equality for men and women in politics, a challenge for girls], which brings female students together at Université Laval in Québec to learn about the importance of equitable representation of women in politics.
- the POWER Camp National / Filles d'Action project entitled Skills and Support: Mentorship/Training for Young Women in Marginalized Communities Across Canada.

### **Institutional Developments**

Although each federal department and agency is responsible for gender equality, Status of Women Canada (SWC) is the main co-ordinating agency for the advancement of women at the federal level. SWC advances women's equality through; 1) the provision of policy advice and expertise on issues relevant to women's equality, domestically and internationally; 2) the *Women's Program*, which provides funding for initiatives that support grassroots projects at local, regional and national levels, and collaborative projects with other government departments, other levels of government, the private sector and non-governmental organisations to help eliminate systemic barriers; and 3) promoting the use of Gender-Based Analysis (GBA) and enhancing organizational capacity for gender equality.

Many key departments have focal points and Gender-Based Analysis (GBA) policies (e.g., Health Canada; Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada; the Canadian International Development Agency; Indian and Northern Affairs Canada; and, Citizenship and Immigration Canada) situating Status of Women Canada as the federal cornerstone for the advancement of gender equality.

Another key actor in advancing women's equality is the Human Rights Program of the Department of Canadian Heritage, which is responsible for the provincial and territorial co-ordination of reports under the United Nations *Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)*. The Department of Justice also provides legal advice to federal departments and agencies with respect to the compliance of their programs, policies and legislation with Canada's *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* which constitutionally entrenches gender equality and with respect to the *Canadian Human Rights Act* which prohibits discrimination on the ground of gender in the context of federally regulated service providers or employment.

Provincial and territorial women's bureaux exist in all of Canada's provinces and territories, and all report to a provincial/territorial Minister Responsible for the Status of Women. The Federal/Provincial-Territorial (F/P/T) Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women have provided important leadership in promoting the advancement of women's equality across Canada, and have met annually since 1982.

The Government of Canada's overall approach to gender mainstreaming is Gender-Based Analysis (GBA), a tool that supports Canada's approach to gender mainstreaming. Canada has made extensive progress on the implementation of GBA across government, particularly in terms of using an accountability-based approach. The Government's commitment to gender-based analysis is deemed a shared responsibility between Status of Women Canada playing a capacity-building role and individual departments responsible for implementing gender-based analysis of their respective initiatives.

Status of Women Canada is working in collaboration with the central agencies to integrate GBA within existing Government reporting structures and mechanisms. For example, the Department of Finance is now applying GBA to measures in the national budget, as data permits. Submissions to the Treasury Board of Canada to obtain programming funds, as well as Memoranda to Cabinet, now require evidence of GBA having been conducted throughout the analytical process of the initiative in question.

As a result of a recent audit by the auditor General of Canada on the use of GBA in government processes, Status of Women Canada, with the support of the Privy Council Office and the Treasury Board Secretariat will further enable departments and agencies to meet their commitments on gender-based analysis by clarifying and better communicating expectations about when it is appropriate to perform gender-based analysis. Departments and agencies will be asked to document the analytical process used to identify gender impacts when developing policies, programs and legislation, as well as the implementation of gender-based analysis frameworks, and report findings to Status of Women Canada on a yearly basis.

Taken together, these reporting structures and mechanisms will assist the Government of Canada to track progress between women and men.

## **Conclusion**

These examples of current Canadian policies and programs affecting women and their families are intended to demonstrate Canada's continued commitment to women's human rights.

Not only do we work domestically, as described, to address systemic barriers, we also work with other countries to share best practices (especially on gender-based analysis) and to promote equality for *all* women. Canada remains fully committed to the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* and the Outcome of the Twenty-Third Special Session of the General Assembly (2000). These international standards provide a

constant benchmark for the fulfillment of women's rights. Canada is a staunch supporter of the work of UN Treaty bodies as key mechanisms in the international structure to promote and protect human rights for all.

Canada is an equally strong supporter of the Millennium and Development Goals (MDGs) and a champion of MDG 3, promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women. We view the third goal, which seeks to ``promote gender equality and empower women``, both as a goal in itself and as a fundamental step in achieving all of the MDGs. As part of the Global Call to Action, Canada is renewing its commitment to women around the world.

Canada remains committed to achieving equality between women and men and removing the barriers to women's full participation in the economic, social and democratic life of the country. Canada is proud of its progress in recent years, and will continue to build upon this success.