

September 18, 2020

The Honourable Chrystia Freeland  
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON  
K1A 0A6

**Re: Roundtable with women's rights and equality-seeking organizations for Federal Budget 2021**

Dear Minister Freeland,

In this unprecedented moment in history, federal budget priorities need to be rethought to shape what Canada will look like after COVID-19. The pandemic has had disproportionate economic, health and social impacts on women in Canada, particularly those who belong to Black, Indigenous or racialized communities, (im)migrant and refugees, women living with disabilities or members of the LGBTQ+ communities. It is for this reason that experts are calling the pandemic induced recession a *she-cession*. It is critical that diverse women's voices are front and center in consultations for Budget 2021 to respond to the realities of these inequalities. As a part of your Ministry's pre-budget consultations, we are asking you to host a roundtable with women's rights organizations and feminist leaders from across the country on priorities for the next budget over the coming month.

Under your government's leadership, we have seen steady progress in incorporating gender analysis in the budget process. The Canadian Gender Budgeting Act has been instrumental in ensuring budgets now include a gender analysis and framework to measure progress. Through these actions, important initiatives have been spearheaded to level the playing field for women and other equality-seeking groups in Canada and abroad. However, significant gaps remain and Covid-19 has laid bare and exacerbated existing inequalities. The gender wage gap has hardly narrowed in the last 20 years, and the lowest number of women are currently in the workforce since 1986. School closures and inaccessible child care makes it difficult for women to enter the workforce, and women spend almost double the time than men on unpaid care work.

Women's rights organizations and feminist leaders from across the country are well positioned to provide some concrete actions for you to take in the next budget to further advance gender equality and to lay the ground for a feminist recovery plan for Canada.

Women's rights and feminist organizations have struggled to have their voices heard in fiscal policy discussions. For example, last year the Standing Committee on Finance consulted with close to 300 Canadian organizations and individuals on the priorities for Federal Budget 2020. A mere two per cent of the witnesses were women's rights organizations and only seven per cent of witnesses spoke about gender equality and women's rights. The Federal Budget is an important tool to advance gender equality. To do so, it is important that women's voices are at the heart of the budget process.

COVID-19 has forever changed the world and we know we have a long way to go to address the impacts. But it is also a time to envision and lay the ground for a future that is more equal, sustainable and inclusive for all. The only way we will overcome the COVID-19 crisis is to make the economy work for women. Fiscal

policy is a feminist issue and it is essential that women in all their diversity have a voice in budgeting processes.

Sincerely,

Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights

Advancement of Women Halton

Afghan Women's Organization Refugee and Immigrant Services

Amnesty International Canada

AQOCI

Campaign 2000

Canadian Alliance for Sex Work Law Reform

Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity

Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives

Canadian Council of Muslim Women (CCMW)

Canadian Federation of University Women

Canadian Voice of Women for Peace

Canadian Women's Foundation

CARE Canada

Child Care Now

Chinese & Southeast Asian Legal Clinic

Ending Violence Association of Canada

Equality Fund

FAFIA/AFAI

Friends of the Earth Canada

Immigrant Women Services Ottawa

Institute for International Women's Rights Manitoba

Interim Place

Make DIVERSITY Possible - by SCWIST

National Association of Women and the Law/Association Nationale Femmes et Droit

National Council of Women of Canada  
New Brunswick Coalition for Pay Equity  
Northwestern Ontario Women's Centre  
OCASI- Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants  
OCASI-Women's Caucus-Co-Chair  
Oxfam Canada  
Platform  
SAVIS of Halton  
Schlifer Clinic  
Society for Canadian Women in Science and Technology  
South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario  
South Asian Women's Rights Organization Inc  
WMRCC of Durham  
Women Of Halton Action Movement, WHAM  
Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF)  
Women's Shelters Canada / Hébergement femmes Canada  
YWCA Canada  
YWCA Toronto

CC: Maryam Monsef, Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Development