

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### March 30, 2023 – CFUW Statement on the 2023 Federal Budget

In October 2022, CFUW submitted [a written submission for the pre-budget consultations](#) in advance of the upcoming federal budget. Our recommendations included:

- \$500 million additional per year for a National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence (GBV)
- \$100 million annually of investment into climate initiatives, as well as an end export of Canadian waste, and an increase of momentum and funding for a just transition
- Extend the Canada Health Act to include universal, accessible, regulated and respectful Long Term Care national standards
- \$126.5 million minimum for a National Council for Reconciliation, and to produce a report by end of 2023 on progress and barriers to the calls to action in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Calls for Justice
- Fund and enable the active, ongoing, and meaningful role of women in peacebuilding, and publish the Feminist Foreign Policy in 2023

We are pleased to see a significant investment in the clean economy. We welcome government commitments to ensure that women and Indigenous communities in particular are receiving funding for training and skills development in this sector. We are concerned, however, about the loopholes which exist for the fossil fuel sector, who will continue to enjoy tax subsidies while contributing to our growing greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>1</sup>

Additionally, we note that the government chose to “work to implement a right to repair, with the aim of introducing a targeted framework for home appliances and electronics in 2024.”<sup>2</sup> Public consultation this summer and helping the provinces with this transition are worthy efforts. Supporting the interoperability of farm equipment, so that it can be more easily and less expensively repaired, is also a positive move forward which CFUW supports.

The budget outlines that the gender wage gap faces significant barriers still – one being the low rates of women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) sectors, which are seeing the most investment in this budget. Of women enrolled in bachelor’s degrees in Canada in 2019-2020, women made up only 22% of engineering students, and 38% of mathematics, computer, and information sciences students.<sup>3</sup> In addition, attention to the gender wage gap emphasized the need for more rapid inclusion of women in leadership across all sectors, where their rise is described as steady but slow.

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<sup>1</sup> International Institute of Sustainable Development. March 28 2023.

<https://www.iisd.org/articles/statement/canada-budget-2023>

<sup>2</sup> Department of Finance, Government of Canada. March 28 2023. Budget 2023.

<https://www.budget.canada.ca/2023/home-accueil-en.html>

<sup>3</sup> ibid

We worry that an overemphasis on the 2021 investment into Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care effort detracts from major barriers which face the growth of this sector. This budget touts that implementation and provincial and territorial uptake of the program will boost women's participation in the workforce, however, without a rapid expansion of the childcare workforce, and the wages and benefits to attract them – women and families will continue to struggle to find quality and accessible childcare. Further, the government draws attention to the gender wage gap due to high rates of unpaid labour women perform such as care for children and care-dependent adults, in addition to their higher rates of employment in the underfunded care economy.

We would also like to note that this budget, does not guarantee action. We have long awaited action on the National Action Plan on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, however, an implementation plan still feels far away. We applaud the additional investments meant to “accelerate” action on MMIWG2S+. However, with only 5% of funds allocated for gender-based violence in 2021 actually spent, we hold the government accountable for their promises.<sup>4</sup> Femicide in Canada has increased 26% from 2019.<sup>5</sup> According to the Department of Justice, “intimate partner violence (IPV) costs Canadians \$7.4 billion annually in social services, healthcare, judicial services and lost productivity”.<sup>6</sup> The “shadow pandemic” of gender-based violence should be treated as such, with resources mobilized to fund prevention and potentially save lives.

We see that some of CFUW recommendations align with budget promises, while others were not prioritized. The emphasis on dental care to become part of the Canadian public health funding for low- and middle-income families, is welcomed and we encourage efforts to maintain Canada's health care system publicly funded and of high quality. We expect that Canada's focus on “gender budgeting”, as well as the long awaited Feminist Foreign Policy will contribute to Canada's ability to promote women's crucial role as peacekeepers. Amongst other CFUW policies, the government's cap on payday loans at 35%, from 47% annually, is a good beginning at tackling predatory lenders. CFUW will continue to monitor these financial operations and encourage chartered banks, credit unions and caisse populaires to provide small, short term loans as a viable option to the exorbitant rate still in effect from payday loan operators.

CFUW recognizes the need to utilize financial restraint to manage the budget deficit and the burden of current spending on future generations. We press on to hold the government to past and present funding and policy commitments in hopes that Canadians, and all levels of government can work together to realize our shared priorities.

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<sup>4</sup> McLeod, M. February 10 2023. The Globe and Mail.

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/politics/article-ottawa-has-spent-little-of-7241-million-investment-meant-to-support/>

<sup>5</sup>Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability. 2021. #CallitFemicide 2021 Report.

<https://femicideincanada.ca/2021-Report.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Department of Justice Canada. 2009. [https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/ci-jp/fv-vf/rr12\\_7/p0.html#sum](https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/ci-jp/fv-vf/rr12_7/p0.html#sum)

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