

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CFUW marks International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women by calling for action to prevent and eliminate gender-based violence

Ottawa, 25 November 2021 – Today marks the launch of the *16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence* that begins on the *International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women* and ends on December 10, the *International Human Rights Day*. The *16 Days* campaign has been used as an organizing strategy around the world since 1991 to call for the elimination of all forms of gender-based violence. A number of significant dates are highlighted throughout the 16 days including the December 6 anniversary of the Montreal Massacre – where fourteen women were murdered at the École Polytechnique in 1989 simply for being women.

Violence against women (VAW) and gender-based violence (GBV) are widespread human rights violations that occur in all parts of the world. Violence against women is pervasive in Canadian society and presents a significant barrier to gender equality. This form of violence includes a broad spectrum of acts such as verbal, psychological, and physical harassment and coercion, domestic abuse, sexual assault and harassment, child marriage, torture, and/or femicide.

According to the Canadian Women's Foundation, [67%](#) of Canadians know at least one woman who has experienced a form of gender-based violence. In Canada, gender-based violence disproportionately impacts women, girls, Indigenous Peoples, LGBTQI2S+ and non-binary individuals, racialized women, people living in northern, rural, and remote communities, people with disabilities, newcomers, youth, and seniors. This violence results from the deeply engrained gender inequalities and discrimination that shapes our laws, governance structures and collective and individual attitudes.

In light of the thousands Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada, the culture of sexual violence on Canadian campuses, systemic sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces, and increasing levels of gun violence threatening the safety of women and girls in Canada, CFUW (Canadian Federation of University Women) calls for concerted actions at all levels of government to tackle these multifaceted issues.

In April 2021, the Government of Canada announced historic investments to develop a National Action Plan on Violence against Women and Gender-Based Violence and Secretariat to implement the National Action Plan. Now, we need a whole-of-government approach to develop and implement the strategic timelines and policies necessary for the National Action Plan to be successful. The 100 policy recommendations from civil society organizations outlined by the [Report to Guide the Implementation of a National Action Plan on Violence against Women and Gender-Based Violence](#) provide a ready roadmap for the federal government to begin implementing community-based anti-violence strategies. In order to combat systemic problems, we need systemic solutions – policies that support survivors and their families, promote responsive legal and justice systems, bolster prevention strategies, and cultivate our economic and social infrastructure policies to eliminate barriers to equality and justice are all part of the solution.

During the 16 Days of Activism campaign and beyond, our actions matter. Taking concrete action, however small or large, creates a ripple effect that can lead to the elimination of violence against women and girls in communities around the world. Here are some of the many actions you can take to raise awareness and generate action to end gender-based violence:

1. Spread the word about the 16 Days of Activism campaign: [share these informative posts](#) on social media using the hashtags #16Days #OurActionsMatter #EndVAW
2. Speak up when you hear inappropriate or degrading jokes and language
3. Write a letter to your MP on the urgent need to implement the National Action Plan on Violence against Women & Gender-based Violence
4. [Hang posters](#) in your community with facts about violence against women and the number of your local helpline
5. Light a candle at 5:10PM on December 6 to commemorate the 14 victims of the Montreal Massacre. Say the victims' names. Share your vigil on social media.

About CFUW:

CFUW (Canadian Federation of University Women), a self-funded, non-partisan organization founded in 1919 that works to improve the status of women by promoting human rights, public education, social justice, and peace in Canada and abroad. With nearly 7,000 members in 96 Clubs across Canada, every year, CFUW Clubs and the CFUW Charitable Trust donate well over \$1 million in fellowships and awards for women to pursue post-secondary education. CFUW holds special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council and regularly sends a delegation to the Commission on the Status of Women.

For more information please contact:

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