



LEAF
FAEJ

WOMEN'S LEGAL
EDUCATION & ACTION FUND
FONDS D'ACTION ET D'ÉDUCATION
JURIDIQUE POUR LES FEMMES

Federal Budget 2022

Written Submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance

February 24, 2022

Recommendations

The Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF) makes the following recommendations for sustained and adequate funding of the Canadian movement for women's and gender equality (in order of urgency and utility):

Recommendation 1: Commit \$25 million per year over ten years for sustained core funding to women's and gender equity organizations, including but not limited to those working at a national level on advocacy, research, education, policy analysis, and legal reform to advance the rights of women and gender-diverse people.

Recommendation 2: Commit \$25 million per year over five years for new multi-year capacity-building grant funding for women's and gender equity organizations.

Recommendation 3: If Recommendation 2 is not implemented, commit up to \$25 million for a one-year extension of funding for organizations that received 2019 capacity-building grants through the Women's Program.

This submission is supported by the following women's and gender equity organizations and their allies:

1. [B.W.S.S. \(Battered Women's Support Services Association\)](#)
2. [Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies \(CAEFS\)](#)
3. [Canadian Council of Muslim Women](#)
4. [Canadian Federation of University Women](#)
5. [Canadian Labour Congress](#)
6. [Canadian Women's Foundation](#)
7. [Child Care Now](#)
8. [Chinese Canadian National Council for Social Justice](#)
9. [Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women \(CRIA-W-ICREF\)](#)
10. [DAWN Canada](#)
11. [Disability Justice Network of Ontario](#)
12. [Ending Violence Association of Canada](#)
13. [Feminist Alliance for International Action](#)
14. [Feminists Deliver](#)
15. [Keepers of the Circle](#)
16. [National Association of Women and the Law \(NAWL\)](#)
17. [National Council of Women of Canada](#)
18. [New Brunswick Coalition for Pay Equity](#)
19. [OCASI \(Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants\)](#)
20. [Oxfam Canada](#)
21. [Platform](#)
22. [South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario \(SALCO\)](#)
23. [Unifor](#)
24. [West Coast LEAF](#)
25. [Women's Shelters Canada](#)
26. [YWCA Canada](#)

About LEAF

LEAF works to advance the substantive equality of all women, girls, and people who experience gender-based discrimination through litigation, law reform, and public education. Since 1985, we have intervened in landmark cases that have advanced equality in Canada, helping to prevent violence, eliminate discrimination in the workplace, provide better maternity benefits, ensure a right to pay equity, and allow access to reproductive freedoms.

Like many of the organizations supporting this submission, over the last several years, LEAF has received project-specific funding from this government that has allowed it to take steps towards recovering from the drastic funding cuts of previous governments.

The Case for Adequate and Sustained Funding

The **COVID-19 pandemic** has had a gendered impact on Canadians, giving rise to a “shadow pandemic” of domestic violence and forcing a disproportionate number of women out of the labour force. There is no question that the pandemic has set back efforts to advance the equality of women and gender-diverse people, especially those impacted by multiple intersecting forms of oppression, including trans, Black, Indigenous, and racialized women, as well as women with disabilities. This has created a need that is more urgent than ever for the services and advocacy of women’s and gender equity organizations. At the same time, we have seen the mobilization of regressive movements aimed at derailing women’s rights and gender equality. Adequate and sustained funding is required to meet this moment and strengthen the movement for women’s and gender equality to counter this growing threat as we emerge from the pandemic.

Not only has the pandemic had a disastrous impact on individual women and gender-diverse people, but it has also destabilized many of the organizations in our movement. There is a serious need for **sector stabilization** to support the movement for women’s and gender equality. Many organizations in the sector, including LEAF, have benefitted from generous Capacity Building Grants issued by this government in 2019. These grants were intended to allow our organizations to invest in long-term sustainability by developing strategic, fundraising, and operational plans; to communicate our missions to wider audiences; and to enable partnerships and networking with organizations across the sector.

Important progress has been made as a direct result of this funding. However, the work contemplated by the 2019 grants has in many cases been delayed or its impact reduced. This is because many organizations had to pivot from building their own internal capacity to immediately responding to the impact of COVID-19 on our operations. The pandemic hit just as our organizations were starting to recover from the devastation of funding cuts under the previous government. Adequate and sustained funding would provide women’s and gender equity organizations the support we need not only to get back on our feet, but to eventually

thrive in our collective efforts to achieve gender equality. Without this funding, organizational and sector health will see a significant decline, forcing organizations to allocate scarce resources away from program delivery. Donor engagement and broader audience communication will also likely shrink as organizations are forced to focus on narrow key objectives.

A recent survey found that 90% of Canadians agree – 60% strongly – that more should be done to promote the equality of women.¹ In the same survey, 80% of Canadians said that the women’s movement has made things better for women. These findings demonstrate that there is broad support in Canada for better funding of organizations that advance the equality of women and gender-diverse people. Our organizations form the backbone of the movement to advance women’s and gender equality in this country.

The work to achieve equality for women and gender-diverse people should not be considered a “project” deserving only of project-based funding. This work is central to building and sustaining gender equality in Canada, which is why this sector has repeatedly called for the reinstatement of **core funding** to the organizations carrying out this work.² Core funding allows organizations to take timely, responsive, and nimble action to address emerging priorities impacting women, girls, and gender-diverse people. It also allows our organizations to better work collaboratively with governments, and each other, to advance our shared priority of achieving gender equality – something we are only able to do when we are adequately resourced.³

Until 1998, half of the budget of the Women’s Program was allocated to program/core funding. In its 2005 report, the Standing Committee on the Status of Women recommended that “funding to women’s groups be revised by introducing a mix of core funding and project funding.”⁴

Finally, the proposed funding would fulfill the objective set out in the **mandate letter** for the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth: “to sustain historic Government funding commitments to Canadian women’s organizations and equality-seeking groups, with

¹ Environics Institute Focus Canada, “Women in Canadian Society”, January 4, 2022 (survey of 2,000 Canadians between October 4 and 17, 2021, conducted in partnership with Senator Donna Dasko).

² Policy4Women, “Funding for Women’s Organizations” (2017) (online: <https://www.criaw-icref.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Funding-for-Womens-Organizations.pdf>). A similar rationale applies to other equality-enhancing not-for-profits, which is why we also support The Enchanté Network’s call for \$25 million in annual federal investments in 2SLGBTQ+ organizations (online: <https://enchantenetwork.ca/en/25m/>).

³ Policy4Women, “Amplifying Women’s Voices” (2017) (online: <https://www.criaw-icref.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Amplifying-Womens-Voices.pdf>).

⁴ Standing Committee on the Status of Women, “Funding Through the Women’s Program: Women’s Groups Speak Out” (May 2005) at p. 8 (online: https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/381/FEWO/Reports/RP1861931/FEWO_Rpt03/FEWO_Rpt03-e.pdf).

a particular focus on Indigenous women, women with disabilities, members of the LGBTQ2 communities and newcomer, racialized and migrant women.” Making these funding commitments is also key to giving our organizations the capacity to help the Minister deliver on the further objective of “collaborat[ing] with women’s movements, organizations, experts and advocates on matters of public policy relating to women and gender equality.”

Conclusion

We urge the government to implement the first two recommendations set out in this submission. This is a moment for the government to cement a legacy as one truly dedicated to meaningfully enhancing the equality of women and gender-diverse people.

We note that for the reasons set out above, the implementation of recommendation number three on its own is insufficient to ensure adequate and sustained funding for our sector. Implementing the first two recommendations would represent a historic investment to stabilize women’s and gender equity organizations working at the national level through to the local level, collectively providing direct services, policy analysis, and advocacy for women and gender-diverse people, consistent with this government’s commitment to advance gender equality.

Contact

Pam Hrick
Executive Director & General Counsel
Women’s Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF)
Email: pam.h@leaf.ca
Phone: 416-595-7170 x 2002