

Together for gender equality

Annual Report 2025-26

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

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Our Story

LEAF uses litigation, law reform, and public legal education to protect and advance the rights of women, girls, trans, and non-binary people in Canada.

Since 1985, the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF) has been at the forefront of feminist legal advocacy in Canada. We aim to ensure courts and governments make decisions that are grounded in gender equality – creating lasting, systemic change in the lives of women, girls, trans, and non-binary people across the country.

From influencing precedent-setting legal decisions, to shaping key laws, to supporting communities across Canada in understanding their rights, our work has continued to deliver concrete results year after year.

The law has the power to transform the lives of people, and we aim to harness that power to create a more just society. At the same time, we recognize that the legal system we work within is one that is rooted in settler colonialism and white supremacy, and that we must think critically – as well as expansively, to Indigenous legal traditions – in order to meaningfully advance gender equality for everyone.

LEAF's priorities are set out in our Strategic Plan, which guides our work through 2026. These priorities are:

- Prioritizing reconciliation and working to amplify and affirm Indigenous voices and systems,
- Amplifying the voices of those who experience gender discrimination,
- Pursuing feminist litigation, law reform and public education,
- Deepening and enriching the LEAF network, and
- Cultivating financial and administrative stability.



Message From Our Leadership



RUTH GOBA, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As I reflect on the past year, I am deeply grateful to everyone who has supported LEAF's work and welcomed me into my role as Executive Director.

For more than four decades, LEAF has worked to make equality real in people's lives. Through litigation, law reform, and public legal education, we challenge the laws, policies, and systems that continue to disadvantage women, girls, trans, and non-binary people across Canada.

That work feels especially urgent today. Equality rights are under growing pressure, and many communities that already experience discrimination are facing greater hostility and uncertainty.

In response, LEAF continues to defend hard-won rights, advance substantive equality, and ensure that the voices and experiences of those most affected are reflected in our legal system.

A major focus of our work this past year was the increasing use of the notwithstanding clause. The clause allows governments to keep laws in force even when they violate fundamental Charter rights, including equality rights. This threatens not only the communities at the centre of LEAF's mission, but the rights and freedoms of everyone in Canada. We are working to ensure that this extraordinary power is subject to meaningful constitutional limits, public accountability, and a clear understanding of the harm caused when rights are overridden.

Our interventions before the Supreme Court of Canada in *Attorney General of Quebec v. Luamba* and *Quebec (Attorney General) v. Kanyinda* show why this work matters.

Luamba marked the first time in more than 40 years of equality-rights jurisprudence that the Supreme Court directly confronted anti-Black racism. LEAF argued that racial profiling must be understood as an equality-rights issue and examined through an intersectional lens, including its impact on Black women, children, families, trans, and non-binary people.

In *Kanyinda*, LEAF urged the Court to apply a substantive equality lens to section 15 of the *Charter* and to consider the full context of people's intersecting identities and lived realities. The Court found that excluding refugee claimants from Quebec's subsidized childcare program discriminated against refugee claimant women and affirmed the importance of intersectional analysis in equality rights claims.

These cases build on LEAF's long history of helping shape some of Canada's most important equality rights decisions. Our work has strengthened protections against gender-based violence, defended reproductive rights, advanced pay equity, and expanded the meaning of equality under s. 15 of the *Charter*.

The impact of this work is felt beyond the courtroom. It can be seen in survivors who are better protected by the law, workers who are treated more fairly, parents who can participate more fully in economic and community life, and communities whose realities are increasingly recognized by our legal system.

None of this would be possible without the people who carry this work forward. I am deeply grateful to LEAF's staff for the expertise, care, and determination they bring every day.

I also thank our Board of Directors, volunteers, branches, donors, sponsors, legal partners, labour partners, and community allies across the country. Your support allows LEAF to respond to emerging threats, pursue meaningful legal and policy change, and remain a strong national voice for equality.

This year also marked an important step in LEAF's development as we began our transition to a unionized workplace. As a feminist employer, we believe our commitment to equality must be reflected not only in our public work, but also in how we operate internally.

Progress is not inevitable. It happens because people choose to defend rights, challenge injustice, and stand together. Thank you for your trust, your partnership, and your commitment to building a Canada where equality is not only promised in law, but experienced in everyday life.

Ruth Goba
Executive Director

KOREN LIGHTNING AND ALANA ROBERT, LEAF BOARD CO-CHAIRS



Koren Lightning



Alana Robert

It has been yet another significant year for LEAF, marking 41 years of our historic work to advance gender justice in Canada. The year has been marked by transition, growth, and a strengthened purpose.

LEAF's work to eliminate gender-based discrimination and sexual violence has been a constant in Canadian legal history. Throughout, LEAF has continued to lead with distinction and integrity.

Over the past year, we have maintained our strategic and principled legal work. We welcomed landmark cases that have continued to push the envelope.

This includes LEAF advocating for the creation of a new common law tort of intimate partner violence to benefit survivors of family violence, which the Supreme Court formally recognized in *Ahluwalia v. Ahluwalia*.

It also includes LEAF continuing its precedent-setting work on the equality provision of the Charter in Attorney General of *Québec v. Kanyinda*, where the Supreme Court of Canada clarified the intersectional interpretation required by section 15(1), which includes consideration of poverty, stigma, and social exclusion.

These cases, along with other interventions on racial profiling, encampments, non-consensual distribution of intimate images, and others, reflect LEAF's ongoing commitment to substantive equality, intersectionality, and access to justice.

Outside of the courtroom, LEAF's efforts are similarly critical. We have continued to play a leading role in law reform and public legal education.

This includes work on artificial intelligence and gender-based violence, immigration and refugee rights, criminal law reform, the care economy, restorative and transformative justice

for sexual harm, and public legal education related to LEAF's litigation and advocacy priorities.

While remarkable progress has been made, threats to gender justice continue to prevail in every corner of the country. LEAF will continue to fight to amplify the voices and visions for the future of those experiencing the greatest risks and threats to their equality rights and safety. This includes fighting for the full rights and inclusion of 2SLGBTQIA+, Indigenous, Black, and immigrant and migrant persons and collectives. We will continue to build on the progress of all of those who have been part of LEAF's history, as we work hard and use our voices to create a safer and more equitable country.

This year, we have also focused on building LEAF's future. It has been an important year for organizational development, and LEAF has continued to grow its capacity and invest in the infrastructure required to sustain the organization. The Board has been actively engaged in this work, including through financial oversight, governance renewal, strategic planning, and support for LEAF's transition to a unionized workplace. We remain committed to nurturing a workplace that reflects our feminist values.

In 2025, we also welcomed Ruth Goba as LEAF's new Executive Director. Ruth has led the organization with vision, commitment, and care. We are grateful to have her as our fearless leader as we continue this important work.

We also want to recognize LEAF's remarkable staff team. We are so fortunate to have such gifted and dedicated staff who work tirelessly to support our work.

We are grateful to the entire LEAF community – including our staff, board, branches, volunteers, donors, and supporters – who make this work possible. Our voices are stronger and louder when we come together.

We are honoured to serve as Co-Chairs of LEAF's Board of Directors and look forward to continuing this work with you.

In solidarity and with gratitude,

Koren Lightning
Board Co-Chair

Alana Robert
Board Co-Chair



Our Year in Numbers



14
active interventions



6
new cases approved for intervention



25
cases considered



23
public talks



14
LEAF branches, including 2 new branches



11
submissions, briefs, and committee appearances



54
workshops delivered to approximately 1000 attendees



38
media engagements



88
community partners



302
new donors



906
donors supporting gender equality



468
branch members

FEATURED EVENT

Marked LEAF's 40th anniversary with celebrations and advocacy on Parliament Hill

This year, we took LEAF on the road, with LEAF staff traveling to Ottawa in February 2026 to mark LEAF's 40th anniversary and push for feminist law reform at the federal level.

Co-hosted by one of LEAF's founders, Senator Marilou McPhedran, and MP Lisa Hepfner, "Celebrating 40 Years of Gender Justice" brought together Senators, Parliamentarians, staff, and gender-justice leaders to reflect on four decades of progress, advocacy, and community.

Over two advocacy days, we met with multiple Members of Parliament, Senators, and policy staffers. We urged them to eliminate gender-based discrimination in employment insurance, take steps to address technology-facilitated gender-based violence, and create a federal gender-based violence commissioner.



MP Lisa Hepfner, LEAF Executive Director Ruth Goba, Minister of Women and Gender Equality Rechie Valdez, and Senator Marilou McPhedran at LEAF's 40th anniversary celebration

PRO BONO PROFILE

Matthews Legal and Kastner Ko LLP

Akosua Matthews (Matthews Legal) and Kat Snukal (Kastner Ko LLP) represented LEAF *pro bono* in our intervention in a case about systemic anti-Black racism and racial profiling by police (see page 10 to learn more).



Akosua Matthews
Matthews Legal



Kat Snukal
Kastner Ko LLP

"We were honoured to represent LEAF in its intervention in *Attorney General of Quebec v. Luamba.*

For the first time in more than 40 years of equality rights jurisprudence, the Supreme Court of Canada directly confronted anti-Black racism. On behalf of LEAF, we argued that racial profiling is fundamentally an equality rights issue – one that affects not only Black men, but also Black women, children, families, and communities.

The case presented an important opportunity for the Court to recognize the harms caused by unguided police discretion, including its impact on dignity, self-worth, perceptions of equality, and confidence in the justice system.

Matthews Legal and Kastner Ko LLP are proud to support LEAF's intersectional feminist advocacy before the courts in Canada."

LEGAL ACTIVITIES

Litigation

LEAF intervenes in cases that significantly affect the equality rights of women, girls, trans, and non-binary people in Canada. In 2025-26, your support contributed to the following interventions:

Challenged racial profiling and anti-Black racism

Attorney General of Quebec v. Luamba

Identity-Based Oppression

Racial profiling is an equality rights issue. After being detained by police then released without a ticket three times in just over a year, Mr. Luamba brought a constitutional challenge against a Quebec law allowing for routine motor stops without cause.

This was the first time in over 40 years of equality rights cases that the Supreme Court directly confronted anti-Black racism. We were there to urge the Court to acknowledge that unguided police discretion harms equality rights. Police stop young Black men the most frequently, but they also disproportionately stop Black women, trans, and non-binary people.

The Supreme Court heard this case in January 2025 and reserved its decision.

LEAF was represented by Akosua Matthews (Matthews Legal) and Kat Snukal (Kastner Ko LLP).

Advocated for the dignity and equality rights of sex workers

R v. Kloubakov

Identity-Based Oppression

Socio-economic Rights

Workplace Rights

Laws criminalizing sex work harm sex workers, yet in 2014, Parliament passed the *Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act* (PCEPA), which established Canada's current sex work laws. The applicants in *Kloubakov* were non-sex worker third parties who challenged the constitutionality of certain provisions of PCEPA, alleging that they violate the section 7 (life, liberty, and security) rights of sex workers.

LEAF argued that the analysis of the s.7 rights of sex workers must be informed by the principles of substantive equality, as guaranteed under section 15 of the *Charter*. We also emphasized the importance of taking an intersectional approach in assessing the impact of these provisions on the liberty and security of sex workers.

In July 2025, the Supreme Court of Canada found that the provisions in question do not engage sex workers' security of the person. The Court declined to consider sex workers' right to life and liberty fully.

LEAF was represented by Andrea Gonsalves, Olivia Eng, and Alexandra Heine (Stockwoods LLP).



Fought for the rights of trans and gender-diverse youth in Saskatchewan

UR Pride v. Saskatchewan

Access to Justice

Identity-Based Oppression

In 2023, Saskatchewan passed a law requiring parental consent for school staff to be permitted to refer to a trans or gender-diverse student under the age of 16 by their proper name and pronouns. When UR Pride Centre for Sexuality and Gender Diversity took the Saskatchewan government to court – arguing that the law violates trans and gender-diverse students' *Charter* rights – the government used the notwithstanding clause to shield the law from being struck down.

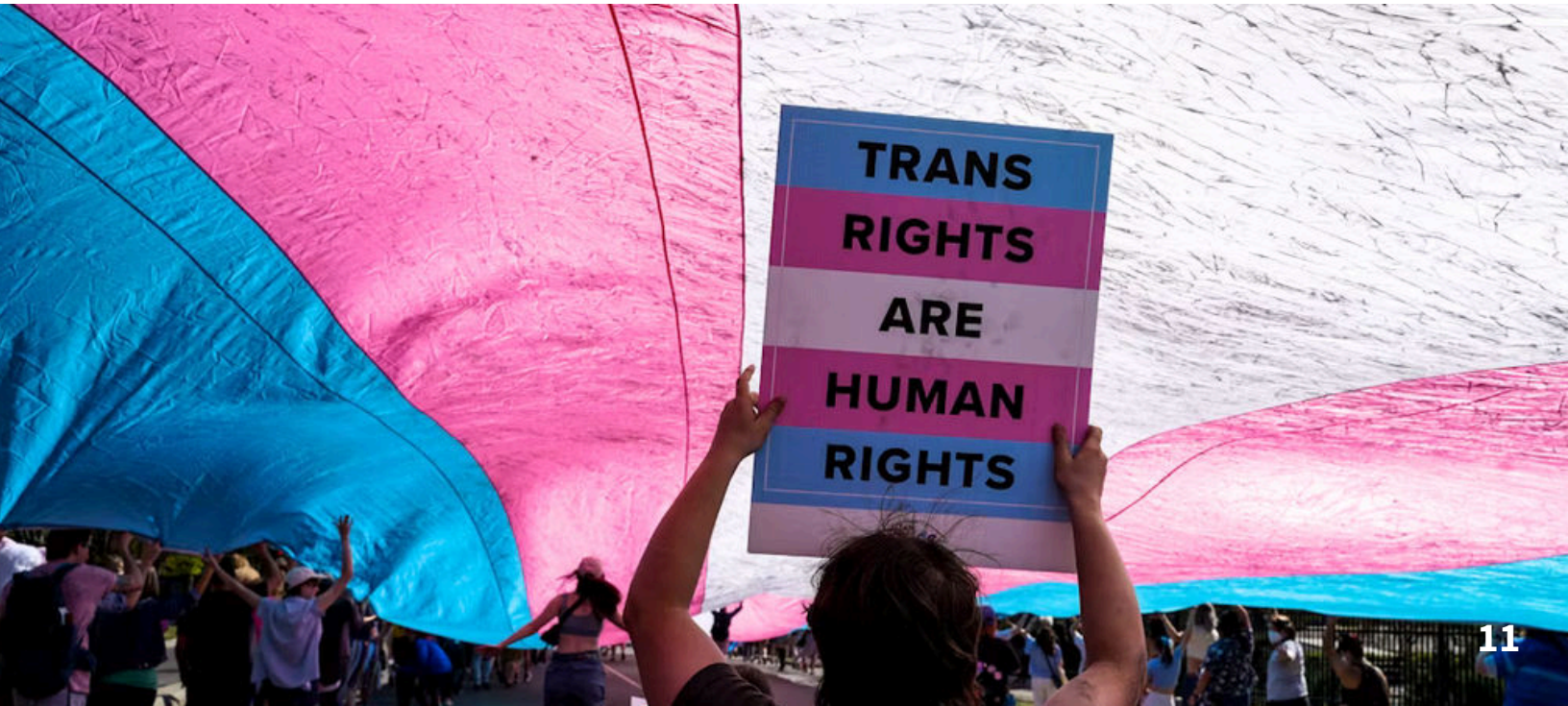
This government action prompted a new issue to arise in the litigation: even if a law passed using the notwithstanding clause cannot be struck down by courts, are courts permitted to assess whether the law violates *Charter* rights and declare as much in a court ruling?

In our intervention before the Court of Appeal for Saskatchewan, LEAF focused on the importance of upholding substantive equality when deciding whether courts can make this type of declaration, arguing that it is crucial that courts publicly recognize the *Charter* violations that trans and gender-diverse youth are experiencing.

In a critical victory for Saskatchewan's trans and gender-diverse youth, the Court of Appeal decided in August 2025 that even if a government uses the notwithstanding clause to pass a law, a court can still declare if the law violates *Charter* rights.

The Court of Appeal for Saskatchewan's decision is now on appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada, where LEAF is also intervening. A date for the hearing has not yet been set.

At the Court of Appeal, LEAF was represented by Morgan Camley and Kay Scorer (Dentons Canada LLP). At the Supreme Court of Canada, LEAF is represented by Morgan Camley, Tom Nichini, Mélanie Power, and Kay Scorer (Dentons Canada LLP).



Challenged sexism in Canada's electoral system

Fair Voting v. Canada (Attorney General)

Access to Justice

Identity-Based Oppression

Canada has a persistent and pervasive problem when it comes to the representation of women in elected office. Fair Voting BC and Springtide Collective for Democracy Society challenged the laws establishing Canada's "first past the post" electoral system, arguing that they violate section 3 (voting rights) and section 15 (equality rights) of the *Charter*.

We argued that when someone alleges a law – such as the law creating Canada's first past the post system – violates their *Charter*-protected equality rights, they should not be required to prove that this law is the only or the dominant cause of underrepresentation. Instead, equality law requires evidence that the law is merely a cause.

In August 2025, the Ontario Court of Appeal unanimously upheld the constitutionality of Canada's electoral system, saying that the expert evidence did not establish that first past the post systems create or contribute to a disproportionate impact on women or racialized people in a discriminatory manner.

LEAF was represented by Tina Lie and Mariam Moktar (Paliare Roland Rosenberg Rothstein LLP)

Calling for the Supreme Court to recognize discrimination against Black women in healthcare

Hemmings v. Padmore

Identity-Based Oppression

Reproductive Justice

Ms. Hemmings, a Black woman in her late twenties who is fat, suffered a severe brain injury after going into cardiac arrest during a caesarean section. She sued several health care practitioners for negligence, including her obstetrician, Dr. Padmore.

LEAF and the Canadian Association of Black Lawyers (CABL) applied for leave to intervene together in this appeal at the Supreme Court of Canada. As joint interveners, we aimed to highlight how systemic racism limits racialized women's ability to give informed consent and exercise autonomy and agency in healthcare.

Unfortunately, the Supreme Court denied LEAF and CABL's motion because in their view, we raised a new issue – anti-Black racism in healthcare – which interveners aren't permitted to do. We disagree: gender and Blackness are integral to understanding how informed consent operates when Black women receive medical care. Despite this setback, LEAF will continue to carefully monitor the Hemmings case and advocate for the consideration of misogynoir in reproductive healthcare.

Atrisha Lewis and Priscilla Amoh (Lewis Litigation) and Annamaria Enenajor (Ruby Shiller Enenajor) represented LEAF and CABL.



Advocating for Indigenous-led justice initiatives to improve safety for Indigenous women

R v. Cope

Gender-Based Violence

Indigenous Rights and Law

We need meaningful alternatives to prisons to achieve safety for Indigenous women. After pleading guilty to the aggravated assault of his intimate partner, Harry Cope requested and attended a sentencing circle facilitated by the Mi'kmaw Legal Support Network. The sentencing circle recommended three years of community supervision and that he should access specific supportive services.

Despite this, the sentencing judge sentenced Mr. Cope to five years in prison for the aggravated assault and eight months in prison for the breaches, emphasizing her concern for public safety. The majority of the Nova Scotia Court of Appeal found that the sentencing judge erred by not giving enough consideration to Mr. Cope's mental illness and addictions, plus their connection to his *Gladue* factors. The Crown appealed the decision to the Supreme Court of Canada.

We challenged the lower court's assumption that incarceration is the most effective way to keep Indigenous women safe. In fact, prison contributes to recidivism, and Indigenous offenders who are incarcerated are more likely to reoffend than non-Indigenous offenders.

The Supreme Court heard this case in December 2025 and reserved its decision.

LEAF was represented by Virginia Lomax and Alisa Lombard (Lombard Law).

Spotlighted gendered experiences of homelessness

Heegsma v. Hamilton (City)

Access to Justice

Gender-Based Violence

Socio-Economic Rights

We need affordable and accessible housing for all. While encampments cannot be a long-term solution to the housing crisis, municipal encampment bans and evictions are not the answer.

When a group of Hamilton encampment residents brought a constitutional challenge to the City's encampment by-law and evictions, LEAF intervened to emphasize the intersectional realities of homelessness for women, trans, and non-binary people. When cities displace women, trans and non-binary people from encampments, they may need to turn to unsafe shelter options, such as returning to an abusive relationship or sleeping unsheltered.

Heegsma is the first case on the constitutionality of sheltering restrictions and encampment evictions to reach the Court of Appeal for Ontario. The Court heard the case in February 2026 and reserved its decision.

LEAF was represented by Alexa Biscaro (McEwan Partners) and Erika Anschuetz (Norton Rose Fulbright).

Everyone should have access to quality, affordable childcare. However, a regulation in Quebec explicitly excluded refugee claimants like Ms. Kanyinda, a mother from Congo, from accessing the province's subsidized daycare program – forcing them to seek out alternative, and often inaccessible, childcare options.

We knew that Quebec's exclusionary regulation was discriminatory – and so did Ms. Kanyinda, who challenged this exclusion as indirect discrimination based on sex as well as immigration status and citizenship.

LEAF argued that a robust intersectional analysis is necessary at both stages of the test for section 15 of the *Charter* in order to realize the full potential of substantive equality. We also emphasized that when governments enact legislation to remedy inequality, they still have a constitutional obligation to ensure that such legislation does not leave behind the most marginalized among its targeted population.

In March 2026, the majority of the Supreme Court of Canada found that Quebec's regulation excluding refugee claimants from accessing subsidized daycare discriminates against refugee claimant women. The majority's decision affirming the propriety and importance of considering intersecting identities at both stages of the s. 15 test reflects the submissions of LEAF and other interveners – an important victory for future claims.

LEAF was represented by Olga Redko and Vanessa Ntaganda (IMK s.e.n.c.r.l./ LLP).

Ensured refugee claimants can access subsidized daycare spots in Quebec

Quebec (Attorney General) v. Kanyinda

Identity-Based Oppression

Socio-Economic Rights



Showed the Supreme Court how to strike down Quebec's discriminatory religious symbols ban

English Montreal District School Board v. Attorney General of Québec

Identity-Based Oppression

Workplace Rights

In 2019, the Quebec government passed Bill 21, a law that bans certain public sector employees from wearing religious symbols at work. The law discriminates on the basis of gender because it disproportionately harms Muslim women who wear head coverings. The law was passed using the notwithstanding clause to shield it from constitutional challenges.

This appeal provided the Supreme Court with the chance to interpret section 28 of the *Charter* for the first time. S. 28 guarantees the equal exercise of *Charter* rights as between men and women – and LEAF argued that this right should extend to people of all genders.

LEAF also argued that while the notwithstanding clause can be used to override some sections of the *Charter*, s. 28 is not one of them – meaning that the Court can strike down the religious symbols ban as unconstitutional because it violates the s. 28 gender equality provision.

The Supreme Court heard this appeal in March 2026 and reserved its decision.

LEAF was represented by Véronique Roy, Simon Bouthillier, and Anita Badaku-Kpalley (McCarthy Tétrault LLP), as well as by Cee Strauss (LEAF).

Preventing jurors from relying on rape myths in sexual assault trials

R. v. Bilinski

Sexual Assault and Consent Law

In this case, the accused was charged with sexual assault for removing his condom during intercourse, even though condom use was a condition to the complainant's consent to that sexual activity. A jury acquitted the accused. On appeal, the Alberta Court of Appeal ruled that the trial judge had not sufficiently equipped the jury to make its decision, and ordered a new trial.

In our intervention at the Supreme Court, LEAF told the Court that a clear and legally accurate jury instruction is critical to making sure that jurors do not rely on myths and stereotypes about sexual assault survivors when coming to a decision. LEAF proposed new language for a jury instruction that would directly confront stereotypes and provide jurors with a clear legal basis to set them aside.

The Supreme Court head this appeal on May 22, 2026 and reserved its decision.

LEAF was represented by Neha Chugh (Chugh Law) and Reakash Walters (Queen's University).



Promoted access to justice for survivors of family violence

Ahluwalia v. Ahluwalia

Access to Justice

Family Law

Gender-Based Violence

This case required the Supreme Court to determine how survivors of intimate partner violence can seek financial compensation from their former partners for the harms that they experienced. Historically, survivors would have to try and combine separate individual torts, such as assault, battery, and the intentional infliction of emotional distress. Instead, Ms. Ahluwalia asked the Court to create a new tort of family violence

We went to the Supreme Court to emphasize that this is an access to justice issue. We stressed that a tort of family violence would provide an avenue for survivors to access compensation for the harms they suffered, better encourage them to seek compensation in the first place, and allow them to receive validation from the legal system that those harms matter.

In a landmark victory for survivors in May 2026, the Supreme Court agreed and created a new tort of intimate partner violence. We were thrilled to be specifically cited multiple times in the decision, which demonstrates a feminist and intersectional understanding of intimate partner violence. This decision will help open the door for more survivors who want to seek redress through the courts.

LEAF was represented by Pam Hrick (Lerners LLP), Maneesha Mehra (Mehra Sample LLP), and Surinder Multani (Niman Mamo LLP).

Fighting against the non-consensual distribution of intimate images

Privacy Commissioner of Canada v. 9219-1568 Québec Inc. et al [Aylo]

Gender-Based Violence

Socio-Economic Rights

The complainant in this case learned that her ex-boyfriend non-consensually uploaded an intimate video she made with him to porn websites that were operated by Aylo (then known as MindGeek).

At the time of the complaint, Aylo only required uploaders to attest—not prove—that everyone in an intimate image had consented. No direct consent from the person in the intimate image was required. The takedown process for non-consensually shared intimate images was also extremely onerous and required separate requests for every posting on each website.

The complainant filed a complaint with the Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada (OPC). The OPC found Aylo in violation of the *Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act* (PIPEDA) and has applied to the Federal Court to enforce its recommendations.

LEAF will be intervening to highlight the disproportionate impact—including serious and irreparable harm—of non-consensual distribution of intimate images (NCDII) on women, girls, trans, and non-binary people. These serious harms necessitate companies like Aylo to obtain direct consent for intimate images they host on their websites.

A hearing date has not yet been set for this case.

Molly Reynolds, Nic Wall, Allyson Reid Taylor (Torys LLP), and Rosel Kim (Senior Staff Lawyer, LEAF) are representing LEAF.

LEGAL ACTIVITIES

Law Reform

LEAF makes submissions on laws and policy issues that impact the equality rights of women, girls, trans, and non-binary people. In 2025-26, LEAF engaged in the following law reform activities:

Called for investments to improve gender equality in Canada

Socio-Economic Rights

Gender-Based Violence

Investing in Canada requires investing in women, girls, and trans and non-binary people, and in national organizations advancing their rights. We cannot have a strong economy or a resilient society without addressing the ongoing gender-based violence epidemic. In addition, in the face of ongoing tariff threats and looming layoffs, we need to ensure that new parents at risk of losing their jobs are not left without essential financial supports simply because they took time off work to care for a child.

Our 2025 pre-budget submission urged the government to create an independent federal gender-based violence commissioner, amend the *Employment Insurance Act* to address gender-based discrimination, and provide operational funding to support national gender equality organizations advancing systemic change. We will continue to push the government to invest in feminist infrastructure in Canada.

Advocated for increased access to restorative and transformative justice processes for survivors of sexual harm in Ontario

Access to Justice

Gender-Based Violence

Sexual Assault and Consent Law

Survivors of sexual harm deserve options, not obstacles. Yet, an Ontario policy is barring them from accessing justice options available to them by preventing diversion to alternatives if they choose to engage in criminal proceedings.

In November 2025, LEAF and Community Justice Initiatives published *Bridging Justices: A Critical Exploration of Moratoriums on Restorative and Transformative Justice for Sexual Harm in Ontario.* The report builds on LEAF's 2023 *Avenues to Justice* report, which concluded that there is a need to reevaluate provincial and territorial moratoriums on using restorative and transformative justice (RJ/TJ) in criminal sexual assault cases, and makes six Ontario-specific recommendations.

The launch of *Bridging Justices* included a press conference and a webinar that attracted over 200 participants. We will continue to advocate for increasing justice options for survivors of sexual harm.

Pushed for meaningful responses to gender-based violence

Gender-Based Violence

Sexual Assault and Consent Law

Existing criminal law responses often fail to protect survivors, and in many instances, retraumatize them. At the same time, expanding criminal law will not end the gender-based violence epidemic. We need to invest in preventative responses that stop gender-based violence before it happens. This is why we continue to urge governments to look beyond criminal law in their legislative, policy, and funding responses to gender-based violence in Canada.

This year, we partnered with the Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic to provide a joint submission on Bill C-16, a bill that seeks to address gender-based violence and survivors' experiences in the criminal legal system. In our submission, we supported the bill's increased emphasis on restorative justice and recommended amendments to better support women, trans, and non-binary people. We also appeared before House and Senate committees studying Bill C-16, and participated in a House committee study on bail reform and sentencing.

Highlighted gendered harms of AI technology

Gender-Based Violence

Socio-Economic Rights

Despite its documented harms, AI has been deployed and integrated in our daily lives without meaningful consent of many people who are most likely to be negatively impacted by it. LEAF was proud to endorse and make a submission to the People's Consultation on AI, a civil society initiative to advance AI law, policy, and regulation centred around human rights and the public interest, and an alternative to the rushed consultation process undertaken by the federal government to develop its National AI Strategy.

LEAF's submission discussed how predictive technologies and large language models perpetuate racist and sexist biases, where their unfettered use has amplified discrimination and harm on an unprecedented scale. We urged governments to enact legal and policy responses that will curb excessive corporate control over AI by enabling meaningful participation and decision-making by people and communities who will be most directly impacted by the technology.



Called for refugee protections for survivors of gender-based violence and LGBTQIA+ people

Access to Justice

Gender-Based Violence

Identity-Based Oppression

This year, the federal government tabled Bill C-12 which, among other things, would deny individuals a hearing at the Immigration and Refugee Board if they claim refugee status more than one year after having entered Canada. The one-year bar on claiming refugee protection does not account for the complexity of traumatic experiences of sexual violence, nor of accepting one's sexual or gender identity. It will severely harm women and gender and sexual minorities at risk of persecution in their countries of origin.

In response, LEAF filed submissions at both the House of Commons and the Senate, urging the government to withdraw the bill, or at minimum, withdraw the restrictions on claiming refugee protection after one year of entry.

Unfortunately, the government passed this bill into law in March 2026. LEAF is appreciative of the refugee and migrant justice organizations that conducted significant and compelling advocacy to get this bill withdrawn, as well as the Senators who used every tool they could think of to make sure that this harmful bill did not become law.

Developed advocacy positions to improve economic security for care workers

Socio-Economic Rights

Workplace Rights

Care work is significantly undervalued in Canada. It is also feminized and racialized work – within care occupations, immigrant women, Indigenous women, and racialized women have the lowest employment income of all care workers. We know Black and Filipina women are disproportionately represented in the care economy. Further, women spend more time on household work than men, while women, trans men, and non-binary people are all more likely than cis men to be single parents.

With the Valuing the Care Economy Project, LEAF has identified legal, regulatory, and policy barriers that limit the economic security and prosperity of women, non-binary, and trans people in the care economy – and we have created law reform advocacy proposals that address some of those barriers. In particular, we've developed an advocacy brief calling for an end to the exclusion of domestic workers from employment standards legislation in New Brunswick, and another calling for improvements to Employment Insurance.

We are also developing public legal education materials, which will be launched in fall 2026.



LEGAL ACTIVITIES

Public Legal Education

LEAF's Public Legal Education Program (PLE) received the Catalyst Grant, a three-year core funding grant, from the Law Foundation of Ontario in 2025. This grant provided the resources to expand the capacity of our PLE program with the addition of new staff, a Public Legal Education Manager and a Branch Resource Manager, which strengthened our ability to deliver PLE workshops and train our branches across Ontario.



LEAF staff and volunteers at Branch Training Day in Toronto

Branch Training Day

LEAF held its first all-branch training day in Toronto on September 27, 2025. We hosted 25 volunteers from branches including Toronto, Windsor, Hamilton, Kitchener-Waterloo, London, Ottawa, and Winnipeg. Volunteers were trained on how to deliver PLE, our core workshops, trauma-informed workshop delivery, and volunteer engagement.

Public legal education workshops and resources

AI and Gender-Based Violence

Based on consultations with subject matter experts, the PLE program updated its *Double Tap on Consent* workshop to include information on AI and gender-based violence, focusing on the proliferation of deepfakes and deepnudes and the related legal implications. Additionally, we created an AI and GBV digital explainer as a primer to the issue. This work was completed with support from the Social Justice grant from Unifor.

Valuing the Care Economy

As part of the Valuing the Care Economy Project, we created a workshop to help high school students understand what the care economy is and what care work involves, the undervalued and gendered nature of the work, and the legal challenges and barriers care workers encounter.

We will be presenting and training our branches on this new workshop at the 2026 Branch Training Day.

LEAF staff and branch volunteers delivered 54 workshops that engaged approximately 1000 total attendees this year, including virtual workshops for Immigrant Services of Nova Scotia, and custom workshops for Hello Fresh and Canvas Programs.

Helping gender-based violence organizations capacity to push for systemic change using the courts

Gender-Based Violence

The participation of gender-based violence (GBV) advocates in feminist strategic litigation (FSL) is critical to ensuring courts make decisions that consider the lived experiences and expertise of survivors.

Building on the introductory workshop to FSL that was delivered across Canada, we created a second workshop focused on how organizations can get intervene in court cases, as well as a free, self-paced, online course that dives deeper into FSL as part of the Strengthening Community Capacity Project.

Altogether, we reached 103 organizations through this project, with 100% of the core participating organizations saying they are now better prepared to engage in FSL. We look forward to continuing to build on this momentum, and to working together with GBV organizations towards a future free of violence.

Advancing Social Justice Through Law Conference: Addressing Violence Against Indigenous Women and Girls in Manitoba

Indigenous Rights and Law

Gender-Based Violence

With generous funding from the Manitoba Law Foundation and the Winnipeg Foundation, LEAF convened the Advancing Social Justice Through Law Conference on November 7, 2025 to address violence against Indigenous women and girls in Manitoba and the ongoing imperative of advancing the Calls for Justice coming out the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

The conference brought together the broader legal community in Winnipeg on Treaty 1 territory to highlight the ongoing work to achieve the Calls for Justice by Indigenous lawyers, policy makers, community advocates, politicians, frontline workers, and more; and to identify the work that still needs to be done and the legal community's responsibility in it as part of reconciliation. We were honoured to have Brandi Morin and MP Leah Gazan as keynote speakers.

Recommendations coming out of the conference and provided in the post-conference report included the need for sustained Indigenous-led leadership, stronger sectoral collaboration, and more concrete, practice-oriented strategies for addressing the ongoing crisis of violence against Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit Peoples.

LEAF is committed to applying the insights and recommendations coming out of this conference to its advocacy and community engagement, and to the ongoing work of reconciliation.



Breanne Lavallée-Heckert moderating a discussion on the National Inquiry into MMIWG featuring Stacey Soldier, Sheila North, and Karine Duhamel

COMMUNITY PARTNER PROFILE

Sendero Centre: Sexual Trauma Supports

"

Sendero Centre: Sexual Trauma Supports is based in Red Deer, Alberta, and has been supporting individuals, families, and communities impacted by sexualized violence since 1983. Serving Central Alberta West, Sendero works with people across the lifespan, from ages 3 to 99+, through counselling, crisis support, public education, prevention work, outreach, group programming, and specialized police and court support.

At the heart of our work is the belief that survivors deserve clear information, meaningful choices, and support that meets them where they are. Healing and justice rarely move in a straight line. Survivors may find themselves navigating counselling, police reporting, court processes, family systems, housing, safety planning, employment, and community supports all at once. Sendero's programs help create steadier ground while survivors decide what safety, healing, and justice can look like for them.

Our work with LEAF, particularly through the *Bilinski* case (see page 15 for more details) and the Strengthening Community Capacity Project (see page 21 for more details) has been deeply meaningful. Being invited to participate gave Sendero the opportunity to bring forward what we see every day through our Specialized Justice Navigator program: how legal language, courtroom decisions, and public understanding directly shape the experiences of survivors.

For us, this collaboration was a reminder that front-line knowledge belongs in legal reform conversations. Survivors' experiences should not be treated as an afterthought to the law, but as essential knowledge that helps reveal where systems are working, where harm is being repeated, and where change is needed.

Working with LEAF allowed us to contribute to broader conversations about consent, credibility, trauma-informed practice, equality rights, and access to justice. It also affirmed something we know deeply at Sendero: community-based support and systemic advocacy are not separate paths. They are braided together in the larger work of justice for all.

"

– Ula-Erin Chauvet, Sendero Centre

BRANCH UPDATE

LEAF Branches

Across the country, from the Prairies to the Maritimes, LEAF's volunteer-run branches continue to play an integral role in advancing gender equality at the local level. Each branch is a unique reflection of its region and is comprised of a diverse array of members, including students, lawyers, professionals, retirees, activists, and feminists.

This past year, our branches made an impact through a variety of activities, including informational panels, speaker engagements, networking functions, fundraisers, and other fun events. Many branches also engaged in critical advocacy efforts to shape municipal and provincial policies, and alerted LEAF to emerging issues related to gender justice.

Additionally, branches have continued to lead the growth of our public legal education (PLE) program through the delivery of workshops on topics such as workplace discrimination, reproductive justice, and consent. In September 2025, we were thrilled to convene representatives from many branches in Toronto for a full day of PLE training sessions and seminars.

We are incredibly proud of everything our branches are doing to support LEAF's work, and are grateful to the members who generously volunteer their time, energy, expertise, and resources. The enthusiasm and momentum generated by LEAF branches continues to shape our organization's work and sustain our national mandate!



LEAF Toronto volunteer Sydney McIvor presenting at Branch Training Day in Toronto

LEAF Branches

Calgary
Edmonton
Hamilton
Kitchener-Waterloo
London
Newfoundland & Labrador
Ottawa
Saskatchewan
Sudbury
Toronto
Windsor
Winnipeg



Branch Feature: LEAF Ottawa

LEAF Ottawa is a proudly bilingual, student-run branch led entirely by law students at the University of Ottawa. Our branch is committed to advancing gender equality through public legal education and community engagement. Through workshops, events, and resource development, we strive to make information more accessible by fostering conversations about gender justice in the Ottawa-Gatineau community.

One of our major accomplishments this year was the growth of our Public Legal Education program. With the support of 25 volunteers, we delivered over 20 workshops during the academic year for four local high schools on topics including consent, reproductive justice, workplace harassment, and technology-facilitated gender-based violence. This marked a significant expansion of our Public Legal Education program, and we look forward to continuing to expand our reach in the years ahead.

Another highlight of the year was the creation of a pamphlet we called our Feminist Resource Manual geared towards incoming students at the University of Ottawa. The pamphlet brings together information on local and campus-based services related to mental health, sexual and reproductive health, gender-based violence, 2SLGBTQIA+ supports, and legal resources. By compiling these resources into a single, accessible document, we aimed to help individuals more easily connect with support services in their community. The Manual was released during Orientation Week and distributed in-person to new students at the law school.



LEAF Ottawa's 2026 Equality Day event

Our annual Equality Day event also marked a significant achievement. This year, we welcomed Jane Doe of *Jane Doe v. Metropolitan Toronto Commissioners of Police*, whose landmark case continues to shape conversations about gender-based violence and institutional accountability in Canada. More than 100 students, faculty, legal professionals, and community members attended *"A Conversation with Jane Doe: Gender-Based Violence and Police Complicity,"* creating an engaging discussion on survivors' experiences and pathways toward greater equality in our justice system.

We are incredibly grateful to our executive team, volunteers, and supporters for helping make these initiatives a reality, and we look forward to continuing to expand our reach and impact in the coming academic year.

– Emma Boland, Alisha Eljaji, and Eadaoin Catherine O'Gorman

Members of LEAF Ottawa distributing their Feminist Resource Manual on campus



LEAF SUPPORTER PROFILE

Mary Walton-Ball

"In my 40 years of work as a social worker and psychotherapist, I became deeply aware of the problems of family violence. Over the years, I have become increasingly excited and inspired by LEAF's work to challenge colonial laws and policies. I have witnessed how these challenges have led to important reforms in family law that have created solid ground for gender justice. I also really appreciate the ground-breaking work to ensure survivors of family violence in Ontario and beyond have access to options for restorative justice.

Over the years, I've been very impressed by the intelligence, creativity, dedication, and hard work of LEAF's staff and volunteers.

I'm pleased to advocate for LEAF's work to continue securing gender justice for all."

– Mary Walton-Ball, retired social worker and psychotherapist, longtime LEAF donor



Statement of Financial Position

AS OF MARCH 31, 2026

ASSETS	2026	2025
Current assets		
Cash	901,095	806,249
HST recoverable	17,443	11,201
Grants receivable	4,500	10,000
Prepaid expenses	56,974	75,295
Long-term assets		
Investments	1,600,816	1,408,852
Total assets	2,580,828	2,311,597

LIABILITIES	2026	2025
Current liabilities		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	152,344	195,114
Deferred revenue	263,750	335,000
Deferred contributions	341,630	253,511
Total liabilities	757,724	783,625

NET ASSETS	2026	2025
Internally restricted	567,000	567,000
Unrestricted	1,256,104	960,972
Total net assets	2,580,828	2,311,597

Statement of Operations

FOR THE YEAR ENDING MARCH 31, 2026

REVENUES	2026	2025
Donations and fundraising	1,110,847	853,530
Grants	1,301,436	942,824
In-kind pro bono legal services	927,568	367,294
Investment income	174,825	69,547
Total revenues	3,514,676	2,233,195

EXPENSES	2026	2025
Administrative	543,502	640,208
Fundraising	396,778	318,424
In-kind pro bono legal services	927,568	367,294
Legal cases and projects	995,649	881,177
Professional fees	356,047	229,154
Total expenses	3,219,544	2,436,257
Excess (deficiency) of revenues over expenses for the year	295,132	(203,062)

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EQUALITY DAY

An Evening for Equality 2025: Celebrating 40 Years of Gender Justice

On April 16, 2025, LEAF welcomed more than 400 supporters, partners, and community members to The Carlu in Toronto for An Evening for Equality, LEAF's signature annual fundraising event.

Held on the eve of the 40th anniversary of Equality Day and LEAF's founding, the event celebrated four decades of advancing equality rights in Canada. Evening for Equality is our largest and most important celebration of the year.

Attendees included some of LEAF's founders and leaders from the legal, academic, labour, corporate, and feminist communities, who came together to reflect on LEAF's impact and recommit to the work ahead.

This year's keynote address was delivered by acclaimed Anishinaabe journalist, author, and filmmaker Tanya Talaga, who spoke about truth, reconciliation, and the ongoing pursuit of justice.

Thanks to the generosity of sponsors, donors, and attendees, this event raised over

$422,000.

These funds will help ensure that LEAF can continue defending and advancing the rights of women, girls, trans, and non-binary people across Canada.

We are deeply grateful to everyone who joined us in marking this important milestone and investing in the future of gender justice.

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LEAF acknowledges the support of Women and Gender Equality Canada.

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ReferToHer™ is proud to partner with LEAF as the exclusive matching donor of their annual #GivingTuesday fundraiser for four years. ReferToHer is dedicated to advancing gender equity, specifically in the legal industry. ReferToHer is a website that hosts a series of lists, organized by practice group, of experienced female lawyers to whom you can confidently refer work. As referrals are key to achieving business success, this program helps ensure that women lawyers are positioned as equal, available resources for those seeking legal help. Visit refertoher.com to learn more and to keep women top of mind not just for referrals, but also for speaking engagements, publishing opportunities, media interviews, and ranking and award nominations.

THANK YOU

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All of LEAF's work is shaped by consultative processes.

Our Case Committees are composed of academics and practitioners with relevant expertise who inform and support our arguments in litigation.

THANK YOU

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Valuing the Care Economy Advisory Committee

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Adriel Weaver
Maggie Wente

LEAF's Law Program Committee advises and makes recommendations concerning our litigation and law reform efforts.



THANK YOU

Community Partners & Volunteers

Abortion Access Tracker	Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights
AI and Gender-Based Violence	Bianca Wiley Blair Attard-Frost Rhiannon Wong
Bridging Justices Project	Community Justice Initiatives Jessica Evans Mandi Gray Survivors 4 Justice Reform
Bill C-16 Submission	Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic
Employment Insurance Advocacy	Mouvement Action-Chômage de Montréal National Association of Women and the Law
Gender Affirming Healthcare Advocacy	Enchanté Network Gender Affirming Care PEI
International Women's Day Event	Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic Law Society of Ontario Ontario Bar Association Women in Canadian Criminal Defence Women's Law Association of Ontario Young Women in Law
Public Legal Education	Cairine Wilson Secondary School Canterbury High School Canvas Programs Central Technical School Conestoga College Gloucester High School Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia Law in Action Within Schools (LAWS) Lisgar Collegiate Institute Middlefield Collegiate Institute Port Perry High School Skills for Change Springboard WEST of Windsor Westview Centennial Secondary School Windsor Law Women in House (uOttawa) YWCA Windsor

Restorative Justice as a Path Forward for Sexual Assault Survivors Speaker Series	Feminist Legal Collective at McGill Faculty of Law
Strengthening Community Capacity Project	Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes Alberta Council of Women's Shelters Avalon Sexual Assault Centre Battered Women's Support Services Canadian Council for Muslim Women Central Alberta Sexual Assault Support Centre Ending Sexual Violence Association of Canada Fédération des femmes du Québec Fédération des maisons d'hébergement pour femmes Halte-Femmes Montréal-Nord METRAC Native Women's Association of the NWT Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants Ottawa Rape Crisis Centre Provincial Association of Transition Houses and Services of Saskatchewan RISE Program Salal Sexual Violence Support Centre Sexual Assault Centre (Hamilton and Area) Sexual Violence New Brunswick The Journey Project Transition House Association of Nova Scotia Woman Abuse Council of Toronto (WomanACT) Women's Shelters Canada
Transfeminine Inclusion in Feminist Workplaces	Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies Jammy Lo Mary Vaccaro West Coast LEAF Wisdom2Action

Valuing the Care Economy Project

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Canadian Labour Congress
Canadian Union of Public Employees
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Decent Work and Health Network
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Fédération de la santé et des services sociaux-CSN
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Nova Scotia Association of Black Social Workers
Nunavummi Disabilities Makinnasuaqtiit Society
Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada
Tatyannah Côté
Vancouver Committee for Domestic Workers and Caregivers Rights
Workers Action Centre

Volunteers

Hillary Di Menna, Bridging Justices Film Screening
Victoria Shariati, Bridging Justices Film Screening
Humna Wasim, Evening for Equality 2025
Kimberley Graham, Evening for Equality 2025
Siena Mcilwraith-Fraticelli, University of Manitoba Extern

Winnipeg Conference: Advancing the Law Through Social Justice

Breanne Lavallée-Heckert
Brenda Gunn
Ka Ni Kanichihk
Paula Ethans
Southern Chiefs Organization Mobile Crisis Response Team
Tsungai (Tsue) Muvingi Van Landeghem





Thank you for fuelling the fight for gender justice.

Together, we will continue to advance equality for all women, girls, trans, and non-binary people in Canada, for a future where gender justice is a reality.

To make a donation or learn more, visit **leaf.ca/donate**.

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