

October 2022

**To: Women and Gender Equality**

**From: National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC)**

**Re: Response to Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence Against Women (Convention of Belem do Para)**

**Question #1:** Is your organization generally supportive of Canada acceding to the Belem do Para Convention? Please explain:

**NCWC Response:** For over 129 years, the National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC) has advocated for women's equality. Members of the organization have been party to a number of important advances towards this end including the efforts to obtain women the vote early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Persons Case of 1929, the Canadian Commission on the Status of Women in 1967, and numerous United Nations Commissions on the Status of Women. The advocacy of the NCWC has been unfaltering and continues every effort to bring this goal to fruition..

The NCWC believes that Canada must be a catalyst in advocating for human rights and women's equality. Freedom from violence is essential to women's individual and social development, their full and equal participation in all walks of life, and to the benefit of society.

**Question #2:** If, not please explain what challenges and/or obstacles you see that would not enable you to support the accession?

**NCWC Response:** The NCWC sees no obstacles to Canada acceding to the Convention. Although other Conventions and United Nations (UN) Declarations such as CEDAW (1993) have created long standing positions on violence against women, these instruments are not specific as is the Belem do Para on the prevention, punishment, and eradication of violence against women..

Canada has taken numerous steps, both nationally and internationally, including the establishment of WAGE (2017), a whole government program dedicated to ensuring coherence in all federal departments and the development of a joint federal and provincial agreement to address violence against women (2021). It is actively involved with the UN Commission on the Status of Women and the Human Rights Council. As noted these groups address numerous issues and are not particularly focused on violence against women.

It should be noted that the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls specifically addressed violence against women and recommended that Canada ratify the Belem do Para Convention. Canada actively participated in the development of the Convention and also provided funding.

**Question #3:** Do certain articles of the Convention pose significant concerns or problems for your organization?

**NCWC Response:** The NCWC would encourage a review by our government to address the concerns raised by the identified inconsistencies to both our domestic and international approaches to violence against women based on current information/developments and the links of the Convention on the American Convention on Human Rights (ACHR) to which Canada has not acceded.

This review should be aimed at clarifying Canada's position on the Convention and remove any obstacles to accession.

**Question #4:** Do you have any other comments on Canada's potential accession to the Conventions?

**NCWC Response:** Recent incidents in our own country and in the international community have placed an increased focus on violence against women, sometimes referred to as a war on women, including alarming statistics on the crises in Canada. Every effort must be taken to eliminate sexual, physical, psychological violence and abuse including threats, harassment, sexual exploitation, and online violence.

This requires a multidisciplinary approach and the involvement of all levels of government with the federal government being the lead actor. These acts must not be condoned by the state and includes criminal and civil law, policies, and programs aimed at eliminating social structures, attitudes, and beliefs that subordinate women and the human rights elements these represent.

Canada must be a catalyst to addressing violence against women nationally and internationally and do whatever it takes to alleviate this infringement on basic human rights.

Sincerely,

Patricia Leson, President  
National Council of Women of Canada

***The National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC) works in the spirit of truth and reconciliation, acknowledging Canada is the traditional territory of Indigenous and Metis People. We are grateful to join with others in peace and hope, advocating for an improved quality of life for women, children, families, and society.***