

December 6 Coalition Calls for National Action on Violence against Women Women's Groups, Shelters and Labour Press Federal Government

OTTAWA – On the National Day of Remembrance and Action, a coalition of women's groups, shelters and labour organizations is urging the federal government to take concerted action to end violence against women in Canada. Reminding the government that its 2011 Throne Speech promised to address violence against women and girls, the December 6 Coalition called for a comprehensive National Action Plan to end violence against women in Canada and a national public inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. Internationally, Canada should commit to playing a lead role at the 2013 UN Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW) and work for an agreement that builds upon and strengthens existing rights for women, and holds governments accountable for their progress toward eliminating and preventing all forms of violence against women and girls. Last year's sitting of the UNCSW failed to reach an agreement.

"With the end of the gun registry, Canada lost an important tool for keeping women safe from violence. Without investment in social services, health care or educational supports, the government's law-and-order approach of longer and more punitive sentences cannot make women and children in Canada safer. It will only make them more vulnerable," asserted Kim Pate, Executive Director of the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies.

"The United Nations has recommended that Member States put National Action Plans in place by 2015, our government needs to adopt a proactive, comprehensive approach to a systemic problem and start the process of creating Canada's Plan now," said Alex Neve, Secretary-General of Amnesty International Canada.

"Canada's National Action Plan needs to include legislation, as well as specific resources and strategies for those most vulnerable to violence: Aboriginal women, immigrant women, women with disabilities, LGBTQ women and young women. It must also provide sufficient resources for the strategies to be implemented, including support for research to measure progress."

"A key component of Canada's plan must also include strategies to end women's poverty and address the crises in affordable housing and child care," added Barbara Byers, Executive Vice-President of the Canadian Labour Congress. "Because we all know that women need to be able to work, they need safe, affordable housing, and they need economic security. Any public policy that lifts women out of poverty and gives them self-sufficiency and alternatives is a public policy that gives women the tools they need to leave a violent situation."

"It's long past time the federal government announced a national public inquiry to

examine the deaths and disappearances of indigenous women,” said Susan Young, Executive Director of the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses. “Aboriginal women in Canada are at least five times more likely to be murdered than non-Aboriginal women. As our organizations have repeatedly urged, such a response is necessary to address the scale and severity of violence faced by Aboriginal women and girls, and an inquiry would help identify strategies that could form part of a comprehensive and coordinated National Action Plan.”

The groups are calling for Minister Rona Ambrose to announce these initiatives in March 2013, when the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women meets to discuss the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls.

“The stakes in these discussions are high, as any agreement will hold Member States accountable for taking action to prevent and respond effectively to gender-based violence,” said Paulette Senior, CEO of YWCA Canada, a member of the World YWCA. “On behalf of our 25 million YWCA sisters in over 100 countries around the world, from the Democratic Republic of Congo to Bangladesh, we're asking Canada to lead the way to an agreement at the UNCSW that builds women's rights where they're lacking, strengthens existing rights and reduces violence of all kinds in their daily lives.”

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Organizations participating in the December 6 Coalition:

Amnesty International Canada

Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies

Canadian Auto Workers

Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions

Canadian Federation of University Women

Canadian Labour Congress

Canadian Union of Public Employees

Canadian Union of Postal Workers

Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada

Feminist Legal Studies Queen's

Harmony House

Lanark County Interval House

Native Women's Association of Canada

Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses

Public Service Alliance of Canada

YWCA Canada