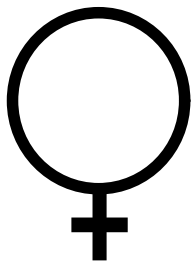


NATIONAL DAY OF REMEMBRANCE AND ACTION  
ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN  
December 6, 1999



*Highlights of federal government  
initiatives to address  
violence against women*

**Background:**

The federal government recognizes that reducing violence against women means righting the economic, cultural, social, legal, political and other bases of inequality. Social institutions, attitudes and practices that perpetuate inequality and reinforce violence against women must change.

The federal government's strategy to reduce violence and assure safety of women in Canada is based on a partnership among a number of federal departments and agencies from all sectors of society, including women's and other equality-seeking organizations, business, educators and other levels of governments. It is predicated on a relationship of co-operation and co-ordination. Concern for the enormous social and economic costs for victims and society has prompted the federal government to take strong action to end violence against women, through legislation, education and prevention.

Status of Women Canada (SWC), the federal government department with responsibility for promoting gender equality, has made it a priority to eliminate systemic violence against women. SWC has developed and supported many initiatives which aim to raise awareness and promote institutional change on issues related to violence against women and children.

**LEGISLATIVE REFORMS THAT ASSIST IN ADDRESSING  
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN 1999**

**Bill C-79:**

On June 18, 1999, Bill C-79 received Royal Assent. This Bill, known as the Victim's Bill, increased the victim surcharge that offenders must pay upon conviction in order to increase funding to victim's services. The Bill also made other changes to the *Criminal Code* including the removal of judicial discretion as to the reading of victim impact statements in court and the introduction of additional protections and support to victims when they appear in court. For example, victims of sexual or violent crime up to the age of 18 will now be allowed protection against direct cross-examination by a self-represented accused. These reforms respond to concerns raised by equality-seeking women's groups regarding the responsiveness of the criminal justice system to the needs of women who are victims of violence.

**Bill C-69:**

Bill C-69, included an amendment to the *Criminal Records Act* and allows for the disclosure of records for sexual offences in cases where applicants are being screened for positions of trust with children and other vulnerable groups. This amendment helps to promote the personal security of women and children by providing additional protection from sexual predators.

**Bill C-51:**

On March 11, 1999, Bill C-51 came into force. This Bill included two provisions that address issues of concern to Canadian women. The Bill repealed the "year and a day" rule in section 227 of the *Criminal Code*, which previously blocked homicide prosecutions where the victim survived for more than a year and a day prior to dying. This amendment will have an impact on cases where individuals are deliberately infected with life-threatening diseases, such as HIV/Aids. Moreover, Bill C-51 contained an amendment

to the *Criminal Code* to make it an offence to communicate for the purposes of obtaining a child prostitute; thus allowing police decoys to be used in laying charges. This amendment responded to a recommendation set out in the final report of the Federal-Provincial/Territorial Working Group on Prostitution entitled *Report and Recommendations in Respect of Legislation, Policy and Practices Concerning Prostitution-Related Activities* which was released December 15, 1998.

## **STATUS OF WOMEN CANADA INVOLVEMENT**

### **The Iqaluit Declaration:**

The Federal-Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women released their *Iqaluit Declaration of the Federal-Provincial/Territorial Status of Women Ministers on Violence Against Women* on December 6, 1998. This declaration reflects their shared vision of safe, healthy communities in every region of Canada and their governments' commitment to end violence against women. It is underpinned by three key strategies: 1) a focus on public education and awareness to change attitudes and behaviours; 2) accessible and responsive services to victims with a view to preventing revictimization; and 3) effective justice programs to hold perpetrators accountable and provide treatment programs for abusive men.

### **Violence Prevention Framework:**

In July 1999, the Federal-Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women released a framework for the compilation and evaluation of innovative initiatives and strategies in the area of prevention of violence against women. This is a mechanism through which important new information in this area is being exchanged by jurisdictions to inform policy development work across the country. In participating in the elaboration of this document, Status of Women Canada gained valuable knowledge of the efforts made by other jurisdictions to combat violence against women, information that will serve Status of Women Canada and stakeholders in establishing future programs and policies.

### **Guide to Federal Government Programs and Services for Women:**

Also in 1999, Status of Women Canada released the *Guide to Federal Government Programs and Services for Women* which contains brief descriptions of a variety of initiatives that are currently available to help improve the status of women in Canada. A number of sections of this guide are relevant to addressing the issues of violence against women. The Guide also references 11 other federal government guides to help women access additional non gender-specific programs and services. This guide has been made available to a wide range of stakeholders to ease the task of identifying programs and services which can be beneficial in responding to a need or concern, be it in a voluntary sector setting, academic and research institutions, government, private enterprise or other.

### **Crime Prevention:**

The National Crime Prevention Centre at Justice implemented the National Strategy on Community Safety and Crime Prevention. The National Strategy on Community Safety and Crime Prevention has three main priorities: 1) Investing in Children and Youth; 2) Investing in Aboriginal People and Communities; and 3) Investing in Women's Personal Security. Status of Women Canada has worked collaboratively with the National Crime Prevention Centre in development of strategy to address women's concerns and to raise awareness of work of Alliance of Research Centres on the girl-child.

### **The Girl-Child:**

Stolen Innocence: Status of Women Canada is partnering with Kids Friendly! in Vancouver, British Columbia, to pilot an inter-sectoral project entitled *Stolen Innocence: A National Education Campaign Against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children*. A National Steering Committee with representatives from each of the targeted sectors is developing a strategy to increase public awareness, educate the Canadian travel and tourism industry and improve sharing of information and resources.

Out of the Shadows into the Light: The International Summit of Sexually Exploited Youth held in Victoria, British Columbia, in March 1998 prompted an initiative called "*Out from the shadows and into the Light*", with funding from the federal government. The initiative aims to address the commercial sexual exploitation of girls and boys by increasing public awareness of the realities of the problems facing these young people; by assisting them in leaving the sex trade and by deterring other youth from entering the sex trade. It was launched in May 1999.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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