

**Submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance (FINA)
Re: Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of Budget 2026**

May 6, 2026

Introduction:

The National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC) appreciates the opportunity to contribute to the Committee's pre-budget consultations. As a long-standing non-partisan organization representing the voices and concerns of women across Canada, NCWC urges the Government of Canada to adopt Budget 2026 in a manner that advances gender equality, strengthens community safety, and supports the health and well-being of women and girls in all their diversity.

A gender-responsive budget is essential to ensuring that public investments reflect the lived realities of women in diverse communities, including Indigenous, rural, racialized, remote, low-income, and otherwise marginalized populations. Budget measures should therefore be designed and assessed through an intersectional lens so that federal spending improves safety, health, and basic services while reducing long-standing inequalities.

1. Ending Violence Against Women and Girls:

Gender-based violence remains a persistent and urgent national crisis in Canada. The federal government has reaffirmed its commitment to addressing this crisis through the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence, including a February 2026 investment of \$223.4 million over five years, with \$44.7 million in ongoing funding through the Gender-Based Violence Program.

Budget 2026 should build on this foundation by providing sustained, enhanced, and long-term funding to fully implement the National Action Plan. This includes stabilizing shelters and transition housing, strengthening frontline prevention and response services, and expanding coordinated, community-based supports such as crisis lines and culturally appropriate, trauma-informed, Indigenous-led services. Investments must prioritize those at highest risk, including Indigenous women and girls, 2SLGBTQI+ people, and women and girls with disabilities. In addition, the federal government should remove financial barriers that prevent women and girls from accessing their own financial and police records, which are often essential for safety planning, legal protection, and escaping abuse. All measures should align with the Calls for Justice from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and support a shift from short-term crisis response toward lasting prevention, safety, and accountability.

Recommendation: Budget 2026 should provide sustained and enhanced long-term funding to fully implement the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence, while strengthening shelters, frontline services, and coordinated community-based supports. These investments must prioritize culturally appropriate, trauma-informed, and Indigenous-led approaches, align with the Calls for Justice, and enable communities to move beyond crisis response to address the structural drivers of violence.

2. Digital Safety and Online Harms:

As digital spaces increasingly shape social, economic, and civic life, women and girls face disproportionate exposure to online harassment, abuse, exploitation, and other harmful content. In March 2026, the Government of Canada reconvened its expert advisory group on online safety to address emerging issues, including harms linked to artificial intelligence, chatbots, and other evolving online services, and confirmed that the group's work will inform ongoing legislative efforts.

Recommendation: Budget 2026 should therefore prioritize funding for digital safety initiatives, including development of a stronger regulatory framework, public education, survivor supports, and research on gendered online harm.

3. Women's Health Research

Significant gaps remain in research on women's health, particularly in areas such as reproductive health, menopause, chronic pain, and conditions that disproportionately affect women.

Recommendation: Budget 2026 should increase dedicated federal funding for women's health research and require an intersectional approach that accounts for differences in age, disability, geography, income, ethnicity, and other identity factors. Improved data collection, sex- and gender-based analysis, and knowledge translation are essential to better diagnosis, treatment, and health outcomes. A stronger federal commitment in this area would help address persistent inequities in care and ensure that research and health policy better reflect the realities of women across Canada.

4. Infrastructure Priorities

Safe and Clean Drinking Water Access to safe, clean drinking water is a fundamental human right and a basic condition of public health and community well-being. The federal government has previously committed substantial funding to water and wastewater infrastructure in First Nations communities, including more than \$1.5 billion announced in 2020 and ongoing annual support for operations and maintenance. Government reporting has also confirmed continuing investments to maintain reliable access to clean water and safe service delivery on reserve.

Recommendation: Budget 2026 should continue and strengthen targeted infrastructure investments to eliminate remaining drinking water advisories, prevent new ones, and support sustainable, climate-resilient, community-led water systems, particularly in Indigenous and

remote communities. Equitable access to clean water is indispensable to health, dignity, and safety, and should remain a core federal infrastructure priority.

Energy Transition

The Government of Canada is urged to phase down subsidies and other public financial supports to the oil and gas sector and redirect public investment toward renewable energy, grid modernization, energy storage, and other clean electricity solutions. The federal government has already committed to phase out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies and has stated that support measures for the sector should not undermine Canada's climate objectives or delay the transition to clean energy. This shift is fiscally and environmentally prudent. Clean Energy Canada has reported that wind and solar are already highly competitive electricity options in major Canadian markets and, in several cases, are cheaper than new gas-fired generation, particularly when paired with storage and supported by modernized grids.

Recommendation: Budget 2026 should therefore favour energy investments that can be deployed more quickly, reduce emissions in the near term, and improve long-term affordability and resilience.

The NCWC also urges the Government not to rely on nuclear power as a primary energy solution in Budget 2026. New nuclear generation is associated with high capital costs, long development timelines, complex waste management responsibilities, and significant lifecycle and accident-related liabilities. Where lower-cost and faster-to-deploy renewable alternatives are available, federal policy should prioritize those options.

Conclusion:

Budget 2026 presents an important opportunity to advance equity, safety, and well-being for women and communities across Canada. By prioritizing sustained investments in gender-based violence prevention, digital safety, women's health research, clean drinking water, and a rapid transition to renewable energy, the Government of Canada can make meaningful progress toward a more just, inclusive, and sustainable society.

The National Council of Women of Canada stands ready to work with the Government of Canada and with other stakeholders to support the development and implementation of these priorities.

Respectfully,

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NCWC Mission:

To empower all women to work together toward improving the quality of life for women, families, and society through a forum of member organizations and individuals