

NCWC Statement: Gender Equality Week 2026 September 20–26

Gender equality is not a commemorative theme. It is a test of whether women, girls, and gender-diverse people can live safely, participate fully, and exercise real power over their lives.

During Gender Equality Week, the National Council of Women of Canada recognizes important progress—but refuses to confuse progress with equality. Too many women still face violence, economic insecurity, unequal care responsibilities, barriers to health care and housing, discrimination, and exclusion from the decisions that shape their communities, workplaces, governments, and futures.

This year marks 50 years since the creation of Status of Women Canada in 1976. It is an important milestone, but anniversaries must not become substitutes for action. The fourth week of September is intended not only to celebrate women’s achievements, but also to confront the persistent gender gaps that continue to hold people back.

Since 1893, NCWC has brought women together across Canada to press for change through informed advocacy, public-policy engagement, and collective action. Our history reminds us that gains for women have never been automatic. They have been demanded, organized for, defended, and carried forward by women determined to make Canada more just.

Equality Must Be Real

Gender equality means more than formal rights on paper. It means:

- Freedom from gender-based violence, harassment, exploitation, and online abuse.
- Economic security, including fair pay, decent work, affordable housing, and recognition of unpaid care work.
- Accessible health, social, legal, and public services—regardless of income, location, age, disability, race, immigration status, sexuality, or gender identity.
- Full participation in public life, including elected office, boardrooms, community leadership, policy-making, and the digital spaces that increasingly shape democracy.
- Meaningful action to ensure that women and gender-diverse people are not left behind by technological change, misinformation, digital surveillance, algorithmic bias, or online hate.

Equality cannot mean asking women to adapt to systems that continue to undervalue their work, dismiss their expertise, or put their safety at risk. It means changing the systems.

A Call to Action

NCWC calls on its members, local, regional, provincial/territorial Councils, member organizations, and partners to use this week to celebrate women’s leadership—and to speak plainly about what still must change.

Fifty years after the creation of Status of Women Canada, the question is not whether equality matters. It is whether Canada is prepared to do what equality requires.

Gender equality is unfinished work—and it needs all of us.