



Government  
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# **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women**

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**Interim Report in follow-up to the review of  
Canada's Sixth and Seventh Reports**

**February 2010**

**Canada**

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Works and Government Services Canada 2010  
Catalogue No. CH37-4/18-1-2010E  
ISBN No. 978-1-100-15027-7

## Introduction

1. On October 22, 2008, Canada appeared before the United Nations (UN) Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (the Committee) for the review of its Sixth and Seventh Reports on the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW). In its concluding observations following the review, the Committee asked Canada to submit, within one year, information with respect to two of its recommendations (paragraphs 14 and 32). Additional information can be found in Canada's Sixth and Seventh Reports on CEDAW, available at [www.pch.gc.ca/pgm/pdp-hrp/docs/cedaw-eng.cfm](http://www.pch.gc.ca/pgm/pdp-hrp/docs/cedaw-eng.cfm).

**Recommendation 14:** *The Committee calls upon the State party to establish minimum standards for the provision of funding to social assistance programmes, applicable at the federal, provincial and territorial levels, and a monitoring mechanism to ensure the accountability of provincial and territorial governments for the use of such funds so as to ensure that funding decisions meet the needs of the most vulnerable groups of women and do not result in discrimination against women. The Committee also calls upon the State party to carry out an impact assessment of social programmes related to women's rights.*

## Social Assistance Programs and Services

2. In Canada, the Constitution confers legislative and executive powers on two levels of government, each of them sovereign in its own sphere. The Canadian federation includes a central government for all of Canada and a government for each of the provinces and territories. The Constitution of Canada assigns a range of exclusive legislative powers to the federal and provincial orders of government. It also explicitly provides for joint federal and provincial jurisdiction in certain areas, for example, immigration, pensions and agriculture.<sup>1</sup>
3. Social assistance and social services are areas where provincial governments have exclusive legislative authority. The Government of Canada provides financial support to provinces and territories for the provision of these services, through the Canada Social Transfer, a block transfer that also provides support for post-secondary education and programs for children. The Canada Social Transfer has one condition: that recipient jurisdictions not have a minimum residency requirement, i.e., a person cannot be refused social assistance by a province or territory because she or he has not lived a sufficient amount of time in the province or territory.
4. The Government of Canada does not set national minimum standards for the provision of funding to social assistance programs as a condition of this block

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<sup>1</sup> Unlike the provinces, which are allocated very specific areas of responsibility by the Constitution, the territories are the creation of the Parliament of Canada, which has delegated to them responsibilities similar to those of the provinces. For a list of the federal government's and provinces' respective legislative responsibilities see Canada's Fourth Report on the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, paragraphs 11 and 12.

transfer. This gives provincial and territorial governments greater flexibility in designing and administering their social assistance and social services according to the needs of their citizens.

5. However, in order to reflect the Government of Canada's commitment to ensure that general-purpose transfers provide equal support for all Canadians, the Canada Social Transfer is calculated on an equal per capita cash basis. The Government of Canada has also increased the transparency of support provided through this Transfer by providing information on the notional allocation of federal support among the three priority areas, based on provincial-territorial spending patterns and existing child care agreements as well as further investments from recent budgets.
6. Further, to facilitate the functioning of a multi-level system of governance, ad hoc and standing federal-provincial/territorial forums meet on a myriad of topics to discuss and co-operate on a variety of areas of mutual interest, such as social services, key issues for seniors and for Aboriginal women, including violence against Aboriginal women, and women's economic security.<sup>2</sup> For example, Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women meet annually to examine ways to improve the situation of women and to exchange information on issues affecting women in Canada, specifically in the areas of economic security, violence and human rights. In 2007, they agreed to promote women's economic self-sufficiency, safety and security, and to work toward improving the situation of Inuit, First Nations and Métis women in Canada.<sup>3</sup>

## **Accountability**

7. Provincial and territorial governments are accountable to their own provincial and territorial legislative assemblies, their citizens and their stakeholders on expenditure of public funds, including federal transfers. Provincial and territorial governments' use of public funds may be subject to audit by their respective auditors who assist in holding the governments and their administrators accountable for the quality of stewardship over public funds and for the achievement of value for money in government operations.<sup>4</sup> Provinces and territories do not account to the federal government on how they spend the funds they receive through the Canada Social Transfer.

## **Assessment of social assistance programmes**

8. In Canada, social assistance programs and services are reviewed, assessed or evaluated regularly. The social and economic impact on women and on vulnerable

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<sup>2</sup> Section 35 (2) of the *Constitution Act, 1982* defines Aboriginal peoples of Canada as Indian, Inuit, and Métis peoples of Canada. The term First Nations is the preferred term to be used when referencing "status" Indians. The terms Aboriginal will be used when referring to all three groups.

<sup>3</sup> For more information see: [www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/med/news-nouvelles/2007/0711-eng.html](http://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/med/news-nouvelles/2007/0711-eng.html).

<sup>4</sup> Office of the Auditor General of Canada, Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the House of Commons: Chapter 1: A Study of Federal Transfers to Provinces and Territories, pages 7 & 8, 2008; [www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/docs/parl\\_oag\\_200812\\_01\\_e.pdf](http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/docs/parl_oag_200812_01_e.pdf).

groups of women is taken into consideration through various assessments and through other forms of analysis such as research, statistical analysis, client surveys, stakeholder reviews and feedback, province-wide public consultations, meta-analysis and Gender-Based Analysis. Examples of measures undertaken by federal, provincial and territorial governments are outlined below.

9. The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador conducts regular, ongoing evaluations of the appropriateness of social assistance programs and services in the context of responding to economic conditions. The social and economic impact on women and vulnerable groups of women are considerations that, as a matter of course, would be included in the ongoing reviews of the sufficiency of social assistance programs and services. Further, the province has a Women's Policy Office that is consulted respecting specific gender-based issues that may affect the establishment of benefits under social assistance programs and services. Arising from such ongoing reviews has been an increase in the province's minimum wage and increases in social assistance contributions, particularly to defray living and rental expenses for board and lodging.
10. In the province of Prince Edward Island (PEI), the social assistance rate structure is reviewed annually and the Government's service delivery model is reviewed informally as part of the ongoing management process to ensure it is meeting the needs of clients. Improvements to programs and services are also accomplished through research, the use of promising practices and working with community partners representing vulnerable groups, such as the PEI Newcomers to Canada Assoc., the PEI Council for Persons with Disabilities, and the Mi'kmaq Confederacy. As an example of the impact of such initiatives, under changes made to the Disability Support Program, persons with disabilities do not have to be receiving social assistance in order to qualify for support through this Program.
11. In the province of Quebec, an evaluation service was established in 1984 in the ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale, which is in charge of social assistance programs. Over the course of the last decades, employment and social assistance services have been evaluated numerous times to facilitate decision-making. Program evaluation is an integral part of the development and monitoring of social assistance policies and programs in Quebec, and plays an important role in accountability and reporting. As a result, each year, nearly 30 evaluations are conducted on as many measures, programs and initiatives using qualitative and quantitative methodologies.
12. Several of the evaluations and research exercises undertaken on social assistance programs took into consideration the impacts on women or on specific groups of women. For instance, in measuring the impact of assistance programs targeted at unemployed people in Quebec, consideration is given to the different effects on men and on women. The impact on women was also considered in several of the studies conducted on programs for persons with disabilities, older workers, immigrants and lone-parent families.

13. As well, in Quebec, Section 7 of the *Act to combat poverty and social exclusion* states that actions in that regard “must [...] in their conception and implementation, take into account realities specific to women and men, in particular through gender-based analysis.” Therefore, Quebec ministries and agencies in charge of developing measures as part of the Government Action Plan to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion must, in doing so, consider the factors which are specific to women.
14. Some evaluations conducted in Quebec confirm that social assistance programs impact men and women differently. Two studies focused on measuring the impact of the Work Premium (a refundable tax credit to improve the situation of low income workers). According to these studies, the Premium fosters work effort and contributed to an increase in women's participation in the labour market, having a more significant impact on women who are lone parents compared to other types of households. The Premium, combined with other fiscal measures, also led to an increase in the income of families with children, especially for lone-parent families, and as a result, helped reduce poverty for these families.
15. The Government of Quebec also conducted two studies on self-employment support and wage subsidy programs through gender-based analysis. Some adjustments were made to the programs based on the results of those studies. According to the study conducted on the Self-Employment Support Measure, which helps individuals become independent in the labour market by creating or developing their own business, or by becoming self-employed workers, women are, compared to men, slightly less likely to create a business. When they do, their businesses less frequently have employees other than the business owner herself. Also, the survival rate of their businesses tends to be slightly lower. However, the evaluation allowed for the identification of different needs in project development: men's needs relate more to support measures for the development of a business plan, whereas the needs of women are more oriented towards assistance focused on their financial situation.
16. The results of social assistance program evaluations are shared with the people responsible for those programs to allow for discussions on follow-up measures. For instance, in order to take into consideration the particular training needs of young lone-parent mothers, the Government of Quebec implemented a measure designed specifically for them, the program *Ma place au soleil*, which provides coaching to help these women obtain a diploma, as well as access to day-care and transportation services.
17. As well, with respect to follow-up measures, statistical data to identify the characteristics of the clients reached by the programs, and to monitor the programs' evolution, in particular by differentiating between the factors relating to men and those relating to women. In the past ten years, changes in the structure of the households that benefited from the social assistance programs were observed in

Quebec, including a significant decrease in the number lone-parent families, the vast majority of which are headed by women.

18. The Government of Ontario regularly reviews social assistance programs to assess and improve their effectiveness in helping the province's most vulnerable people, including persons with disabilities. In examining its programs, it looks at the differential impact of its policies and programs on different categories of people and family groups including sole support families generally headed by women, persons with disabilities, and children.
19. Reviews and assessments of the province of Ontario's social assistance programs have resulted in opportunities to respond to the needs of women in receipt of social assistance. For example, a review of Ontario Works' Learning, Earning, and Parenting Program led to improvements that benefit the parents participating in the program, many of whom are single mothers. The province of Ontario has also made changes to streamline and enhance access to social assistance for victims of domestic violence so that their safety is not put at risk.
20. Policy changes stemming from the Government of Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy have also addressed the needs of women by exempting the earnings of full-time post-secondary students, and increasing the flexibility of child care benefits.
21. The Government of Manitoba's Employment and Income Assistance program is reviewed as part of the province's annual report, budget and estimates process, and in compliance with the province's Treasury Board guidelines on fiscal management and performance reporting. Further, Manitoba social assistance programs and services are also regularly reviewed by non-government organizations and research centres, such as the National Council on Welfare, Canadian Council on Social Development, the Caledon Institute of Social Policy, the Fraser Institute and the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg.
22. The province of Manitoba also has a Status of Women's Division that partners with other government departments to ensure women continue to achieve and participate fully in all aspects of Manitoba life.<sup>5</sup> For example, it sits on the Interdepartmental Working Group for Manitoba's Poverty Reduction Strategy entitled, *ALLAboard*, bringing a gender perspective to the ongoing work of the strategy, which includes initiatives to reduce poverty for all Manitobans.<sup>6</sup> The Government of Manitoba Senior's Directorate and the Manitoba Disabilities Issues Office provide a role similar to that of Manitoba Status of Women, with respect to issues of poverty for women in these vulnerable groups.

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<sup>5</sup> For more information on Manitoba Status of Women, see: [www.gov.mb.ca/msw/index.html](http://www.gov.mb.ca/msw/index.html)

<sup>6</sup> For information on the initiative, see paragraph 76 on pages 16 and 17 and see: [www.gov.mb.ca/fs/misc/pubs/all\\_ aboard\\_report.pdf](http://www.gov.mb.ca/fs/misc/pubs/all_ aboard_report.pdf)

23. In the province of Manitoba, 95 percent of lone-parent families living in low-income are headed by women and Manitoba has targeted a number of initiatives to improve their income security. For example, the Manitoba Child Benefit was created, and the provincial claw-back of the federal Child Tax Benefit was ended. A range of government interventions targeting poverty generally and lone-parent families specifically are also intended to improve the income security of vulnerable groups of women. Between 1999 and 2006 (using the Market Basket Measure), Manitoba recorded a 40 percent drop in the incidence of poverty for female-headed lone-parent families, falling from 43.8 percent to 26.3 percent.
24. The Government of Manitoba also recently conducted province-wide public consultations on women's health. Participants provided feedback on the impact of poverty on women's health, and this information is being used to guide the direction of a renewed Women's Health Strategy for Manitoba.
25. The Government of Saskatchewan reviews and evaluates its income assistance programs on an ongoing basis to ensure that quality service and accountability is maintained or increased. Regulatory and policy amendments are made on a regular basis: in response to changing social and economic conditions; in response to concerns raised by clients, community stakeholders, and appeal tribunals; and in support of provincial and federal government initiatives. The province takes the circumstances of all vulnerable groups into consideration during these reviews and regularly assesses client groups including those with characteristics defined by constitutional status (First Nations/Métis), disability, employment/employability, and length of time on assistance and those defined by family constitution, such as single clients, single-parent families, and two-parent families. Since most single-parent families are headed by women, the social and economic circumstances of this group of vulnerable women clients are reviewed frequently.
26. For example, after concerns arose about the adequacy of Saskatchewan's Transitional Employment Allowance<sup>7</sup> and the appropriateness of employment services for expectant women and parents responsible for the care of newborns, the Government of Saskatchewan consulted with key stakeholders using focus groups to assess services and income support processes for this client group. Following its review, the Government of Saskatchewan approved a new service statement and contact centre assessment criteria, and services changes were expanded to include two-parent families.
27. An ongoing review of program service delivery also identified a gap in employment services being provided to low-income parents. As a result, in 2008 and in 2009, the Government of Saskatchewan developed the Accelerated Employment Service for Parents Initiative. In May 2009, the impact of the initiative, which targets the unique needs of low-income parents to support

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<sup>7</sup> The Transitional Employment Allowance provides financial support for employable clients who are participating in employment programs or services, are planning for a transition to independence, or have a known date of self-sufficiency.



successful and durable transitions to employment, was assessed by two focus groups and their recommendations resulted in some changes in service delivery.

28. In the province of British Columbia, evaluations of the situation of women are undertaken by various ministries. For example, in 2009, the Government of British Columbia completed an analysis of women in the workforce using data from social assistance programs and services, as well as from other provincial ministries that have an impact on women and on vulnerable groups of women. The report examines women and the economy, women in advance education, employment trends for women and support for child care.<sup>8</sup>
29. The application of lessons learned and best practices research, including valuable stakeholder feedback, have been used to improve social programs and services by the Government of British Columbia. For example, their use has led to the new design of the Bridging Employment Program, which has been providing services since 2003 to help abused women and former sex trade workers overcome barriers to employment that prevent them from making successful transitions to independence. The revised program, which started in January 2009, was expanded province-wide and its capacity increased to help a further 418 women (from 562 to 880 women per year). A "healing" component was also added to complement the program's employment-related services. The program also changed to continuous participant enrolment with flexible and individualized services. Other modifications included the development of a Personal Plan with each participant and the inclusion of suitable non-Income Assistance participants in the program.<sup>9</sup>
30. The Government of Yukon's Women's Directorate provides Gender Inclusive Analysis (GIA) on government policies, programs and services, through interdepartmental work, training in GIA, and input to bodies such as the government's Policy Review Committee. All Cabinet Submissions contain a "Differential Impact on Women" section. Through on-going reviews, the Government of Yukon has made, and continues to make, changes in its programs and services to ensure that it delivers the best product possible to all of its clients.
31. Provinces and territories participate in a national "Social Assistance Statistical Report" which provides detailed statistics on income-support related programs, such as the number of recipients and cases, as well as a breakdown of cases by family type, number of children on assistance, reason for assistance, duration on assistance, sources of income, and levels of income.
32. The Government of Canada through Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) strives to provide First Nations in reserves with access to a range of services, such as education, social development and community infrastructure that is reasonably comparable to those accessible to Canadians living off reserves. As a matter of policy, INAC provides funding to support province-like social programs in First

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<sup>8</sup>This report can be found at: [www.gov.bc.ca/fortherecord/workforce/wf\\_women.html?src=/women/wf\\_women.html](http://www.gov.bc.ca/fortherecord/workforce/wf_women.html?src=/women/wf_women.html)

<sup>9</sup> For information on the initiative, see: [www.eia.gov.bc.ca/factsheets/2004/Bridging.htm](http://www.eia.gov.bc.ca/factsheets/2004/Bridging.htm)

Nation communities including education, housing, child and family services, family violence prevention, help for persons with disabilities and income assistance. First Nation organizations, provinces, territories and other federal departments are partners in funding and delivering these services.

33. A preliminary Gender-Based Analysis was completed in 2006 on INAC's social programs, including its Income Assistance Program and its First Nations National Child Benefit Reinvestment Initiative (NCBR). Although it was determined that there was insufficient data to enable a substantial assessment of the programs' impact on women, improvements in data collection and more detailed research into the characteristics of income assistance recipients is planned and may help in future assessments. For example, new application and annual report forms have been developed for the NCBR and include data fields to capture sex-specific information on project participants. The forms have been designed in such a way as to facilitate the systematic collection and production of sex-disaggregated data.
34. Government officials at INAC have increasingly taken sex and gender consideration into account for ongoing policy and program development and have determined that policy options and programming responses considered for inclusion in future policy renewal activities must take into consideration Gender-Based Analysis. In addition, future changes to social development program manuals will be written in a manner to reflect the requirements of Gender-Based Analysis.
35. Gender-Based Analysis is a requirement of all full-scale projects of the Government of Canada's Aboriginal Health Transition Fund, which provides short-term proposal-based funding for partners to undertake a range of projects intended to better integrate federally- and provincially/territorially-funded health services and adapt existing provincial and territorial health services. Project evaluations are expected prior to March 31, 2011. A meta-analysis synthesizing project results is planned in 2011 and should provide information to determine whether or how the Gender-Based Analysis was or will be used to develop or amend health services.
36. The Government of Canada's Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) is a community-based program that relies on communities to determine their own needs and to develop appropriate projects. Many communities have recognized growing numbers of women and girls amongst their homeless population and have chosen to target women and the challenges they face – such as mental, physical and sexual abuse as well as marginalization – within their homelessness community plans. Many HPS projects are targeted specifically at ensuring that homeless women have access to housing options and appropriate support services that address the challenges they face including single parenthood as well as mental, physical and sexual abuse.

**Recommendation 32:** *The Committee urges the State party to examine the reasons for the failure to investigate the cases of missing or murdered aboriginal women and to take the necessary steps to remedy the deficiencies in the system. The Committee calls upon the State party to urgently carry out thorough investigations of the cases of aboriginal women who have gone missing or been murdered in recent decades. It also urges the State party to carry out an analysis of those cases in order to determine whether there is a racialized pattern to the disappearances and take measures to address the problem if that is the case.*

37. Canada takes the issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls very seriously and continues to take action to improve the safety and well-being of all Aboriginal women and girls. It is a pressing concern that cuts across many different sectors including Aboriginal affairs, the justice system, public safety and policing, gender issues and women's rights.
38. In Canada, Aboriginal women and girls are among the most vulnerable members of Canadian society. They experience violence at a rate more than three times higher than other Canadian women, and they are five times more likely to die as a result. Aboriginal women in Canada experience numerous challenges and disadvantages that make them more vulnerable to exploitation and violence. The economic outcomes of Aboriginal women continue to fall behind those of Aboriginal men and non-Aboriginal Canadians.<sup>10</sup>
39. Addressing the underlying issues contributing to violence against Aboriginal women and girls warrants coordinated attention from all levels of government. The federal, provincial and territorial governments are working in partnership with Aboriginal people and other stakeholders to develop more effective and appropriate solutions to prevent such violence and to strengthen cross-sectoral responses to it when it occurs, including improving criminal justice and social service responses.
40. Efforts undertaken include the development of standards that provide clear direction and support to police forces on facilitating the conduct of an effective investigation into missing persons, how to establish sensitive relations with the affected families and how to communicate effectively with the public.
41. The Government of Canada, through Status of Women Canada, is funding the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) Sisters in Spirit (SIS) initiative – \$5 million over five years (2005-2010). This research, education and policy initiative addresses the underlying factors contributing to gendered racism and violence against Aboriginal women, particularly missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in Canada. SIS works to improve the safety and well-being of Aboriginal women by conducting research, raising awareness, and influencing policy related to violence against Aboriginal women and girls.

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<sup>10</sup> Juristat - Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics – catalogue no.85-002-XIE, Vol. 26 no. 3.

42. In addition to the research and policy activities, the communications and education activities continue to advance knowledge and awareness of missing and murdered Aboriginal women through the following activities: Community Engagement Workshops; SIS Community Presentations; SIS Vigils across the country; Annual Family Gatherings; Media Outreach and improvement in both the amount of media coverage, as well as how the victims are now being portrayed; and overall effective promotion and dissemination of activities, publications and events.
43. NWAC and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) are continuing an information sharing arrangement related to missing and murdered Aboriginal women. Justice Canada is working with the NWAC to explore the development of resources to raise awareness among victim service providers about the specific needs of families of missing and murdered Aboriginal women.

### **Investigation of cases**

44. In relation to the investigation of missing and murdered Aboriginal women, a number of initiatives have been undertaken in recent years. The results of these initiatives will help ensure a better understanding of this problem, the causes and risk factors involved, and options or solutions for a way forward.
45. Canada's national police force, the RCMP, works with other Canadian police forces to investigate and resolve cases of missing or murdered women. For example, Project E-PANA, established in 2006, has a dedicated team of investigators who continue to review files involving missing and murdered women in the North District and Central Region of British Columbia (which includes Highway 16 that is sometimes referred to as the "Highway of Tears"). As well, the RCMP established Project Even-Handed with the Vancouver Police Department in 2001 and Project KARE with the Edmonton Police Service in 2003 to enhance investigations of missing and murdered women. As of August 2009, the province of Manitoba, the RCMP and the Winnipeg Police Service have formally established a task force to review cases involving missing and murdered women. In addition to actively investigating all reported cases of missing women, these projects are developing "best practices" relating to information sharing, file management, file coordination and disclosure that can be shared with other investigative units or implemented in similar initiatives across the country.
46. The Government of Saskatchewan is collaborating with members from Aboriginal, police and non-government agencies, through a Provincial Partnership Committee on Missing Persons, to better understand issues around missing persons, including prevention and response. The provincial government is working to implement the recommendations of the 2007 final report of this Committee. Specific actions undertaken include: enhanced police resources to address cold case files and new missing persons cases; research on youth runaways and police practice; publication of a checklist for families on a public Web site; and new provincial legislation. *The Missing Persons and Presumption of Death Act* was proclaimed on September 28,

2009, and will make it easier for families to deal with the estates of missing persons and for police to conduct investigations.

47. Members of the Partnership Committee have also undertaken action to implement recommendations on connecting families of missing persons and providing support to these families, on developing prevention and awareness materials, and improving the search and rescue capacity across the province. As well, the Partnership Committee is continuing to work on implementation on all of the other recommendations of the 2007 report and has continued meetings with families of long-term missing persons to obtain their views and suggestions for improving the response to missing persons cases.
48. The Government of Canada and the provinces and territories collaborate through the Federal-Provincial-Territorial (F-P/T) Missing Women Working Group to examine criminal justice system responses to cases involving serial killers who target vulnerable women, including Aboriginal women in high-risk situations.
49. A second F-P/T Working Group, whose mandate is to look at Aboriginal justice issues, is also examining the issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal women as part of its broader examination of victimization in Aboriginal communities resulting from disproportionately high levels of family and interpersonal violence. The ongoing efforts of this Working Group include a focus on improvements to police response and investigation models. This Working Group and the F-P/T Missing Women Working Group share information related to common themes.
50. The RCMP has also contributed to the development of Community Forums to increase awareness about women who have gone missing along the stretch of Highway 16, running between Prince George and Prince Rupert, British Columbia. Further, the National Aboriginal Policing Services of the RCMP, through a collaborative partnership with the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC), developed a Community Education Tool Kit called "Navigating the Missing Persons Process", which can be utilized at the community level by friends and family members of people who have gone missing. This guide is a valuable resource that the RCMP promotes to its members and the communities they serve. The RCMP continues to partner with NWAC to ensure both agencies are able to effectively address the issues related to missing and murdered Aboriginal women.
51. The Government of Manitoba has struck an Action Group, bringing together Aboriginal organizations and community agencies, including representatives of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, Métis Women of Manitoba, Mother of Red Nations Council and the Native Women's Transition Centre. The group will also review past recommendations from inquests and reports on vulnerable and exploited women and girls and will be available to consult with the Manitoba Integrated Task Force for Missing and Murdered Women.

## **Sexual exploitation**

52. In April 2009, NWAC released *Voices of Our Sisters in Spirit: A Report to Families and Communities*, which describes the cases of 520 Aboriginal women and girls across Canada reported killed or missing over the last 30 years. It sets out to tell their stories, to understand the causes of the violence they experienced, to determine how the justice system responded, and to identify needed changes. It shows that while they shared some similarities – most were mothers under 30 in difficult economic circumstances – the women varied widely in their individual situations. When they disappeared some were attending school or university, some were seeking work, and others were attending a cultural event or visiting family.
53. According to the Report, most of the Aboriginal women and girls who disappeared or who were murdered were not leading lives that made them particularly vulnerable. However, the federal, provincial and territorial governments are taking steps, both individually and collectively, to address the sexual exploitation of Aboriginal women and girls.
54. For example, the RCMP has recently developed an array of public awareness materials and has also coordinated a dedicated tip line with the Canadian Crime Stoppers Association to facilitate the reporting of human trafficking activities, including the domestic trafficking of women and girls for the purposes of sexual exploitation.
55. Manitoba has created a Human Trafficking Response Team comprised of the RCMP and various provincial and community partners, which is targeting the trafficking of Aboriginal women and girls for sexual exploitation.
56. F-P/T Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women are continuing to explore ways to facilitate women's labour force participation and economic security, and are considering actions that improve the lives of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis women, both on and off reserve, and are continuing their efforts to address violence against women in Canada. In addition, they are also focussing on the issue of sexual exploitation of women and have directed officials to develop a best practices document to explore innovative approaches used within Canada and internationally to address human trafficking. This work is currently underway.
57. Manitoba's Sexual Exploitation Strategy is addressing issues relating to high-risk runaways and missing children, many of whom are Aboriginal children in care; the Winnipeg Streetreach program for example provides a coordinated and integrated effort to help youth escape exploitation, help prevent high-risk runaways from becoming exploited and better identify predators, prostitution and drug houses by coordinating the outreach efforts of more than a dozen organizations including police, agency outreach workers, Child and Family services and child care workers. A new community outreach coordinator in Thompson Manitoba will also link stakeholders and RCMP, focusing on runaways and additional training for RCMP officers on the issue of sexual exploitation among youth.

58. For more information on Canadian responses to the sexual exploitation of women and girls and human trafficking, please see Canada's *Sixth and Seventh Reports on the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women*.

### **Violence Prevention and Poverty Reduction Measures**

59. The Government of Canada recognizes that there is an urgent need to provide First Nations women and their children with a safe place to stay during situations of family violence. The First Nations Family Violence Prevention Program provides operational funding for a network of 36 shelters and supports approximately 350 community-based prevention projects for First Nations women, children and families resident on reserve. In June 2007, it announced new investments totalling \$55.65 million over five years to support the existing network of shelters and the construction and operation of five new shelters.
60. In 2007, the Government of Canada made a long-term commitment to urban Aboriginal issues by investing \$68.5 million over five years to promote self-reliance and to increase life choices for Aboriginal peoples in key centres across Canada. To accomplish this, the Urban Aboriginal Strategy is focussing investments in three priority areas, one of which is supporting Aboriginal women, children and families.
61. The Urban Aboriginal Strategy works in partnership with key stakeholders to reduce the number of families that are living in poverty; to provide transitional support to families that have moved into the city for whatever reason; and to prevent women, children and families from being victims of crime or from entering a life of crime. Examples of activities include: counselling services for Aboriginal women to rebuild self-esteem; encouraging positive life choices through culture, education, and life skills training; and healing approaches to eliminate sexual exploitation.
62. Since 1998, the Government of Canada's National Crime Prevention Strategy has provided funding for community-based projects designed to reduce offending among at-risk groups of the population. One of the Strategy's priorities is to support culturally sensitive crime prevention initiatives in Aboriginal communities, both on and off reserve, and in the North. Projects funded under the Strategy include a focus on high risk children and youth who present multiple risk factors for later delinquency, including having been exposed to, or victims of, violence in the family. In 2008, the Government of Canada doubled the Strategy's permanent funding base to \$63 million per year to reflect its commitment to effective prevention as a component of public policy in responding to crime and violence.
63. The Government of Canada, with the assistance of provincial and territorial partners, organized a Northern Responses and Approaches to Victims of Crime conference in September 2009. The conference's objective was to build capacity

among those who work with victims of crime, raise awareness about victims' issues, specifically within the context and nature of victimization in the North, and build relationships between and within communities, professions and programs. This Conference highlighted the special needs of victims in the North and the participant feedback will be included as part of the Federal Aboriginal Victims Strategy.

64. In 2006, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador collaborated with the Government of Canada to provide provincial probation officers an Aboriginal specific high intensity family violence prevention program, designed to develop the skills and knowledge to work with Aboriginal perpetrators of family violence to reduce recidivism and provide for some stability in the home environment. The province continues to provide cultural sensitivity training to new probation officers, particularly those working in Labrador, and reinforces such awareness in its own assessment of provincial probation officer performance reviews.
65. The Government of Canada also committed \$479,798 to NWAC for a 32-month project from October 2007 to May 2010, for a Violence Prevention Toolkit. The objective of this project is to train 200 youth and youth councils across Canada to deliver workshops to sensitize and equip another 1,000 Aboriginal youth to deal with all forms of violence that Aboriginal girls face in their communities. Participants will use the toolkit to address their security needs and concerns regarding domestic violence and its impact, as well as date violence, sexual assault, emotional abuse and bullying.
66. In 2008-2009, additional funding was provided by the Government of Saskatchewan to strengthen services to women who are sexually assaulted and who are victims of domestic violence. This was allocated to 29 community-based organizations in 14 communities. Services included Transition Houses for women and their children, services and supports for survivors of sexual assault, and family violence outreach services. While services are available for all residents regardless of cultural background, 75 percent of residents in the ten family violence crisis residential services, funded through the Saskatchewan government, were of Aboriginal ancestry.
67. A third domestic violence court opened in the province of Saskatchewan in 2007-2008 and there are now 18 police-based victims services programs in the province, following the merger of two programs and the addition of two new programs that opened in 2007 in northern communities with predominantly Aboriginal populations.<sup>11</sup> These programs provide intensive support to victims. Six of the police-based victims' services programs have specific Aboriginal Resource Officer components. Additionally, funding is provided through an Aboriginal

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<sup>11</sup> For further information on these courts, see paragraph 247 of Canada's Seventeenth and Eighteenth Reports of the *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination*, which can be found at: [www.pch.gc.ca/pgm/pdp-hrp/docs/cerd-eng.cfm](http://www.pch.gc.ca/pgm/pdp-hrp/docs/cerd-eng.cfm).



Family Violence Initiative to Aboriginal organizations that provide comprehensive and holistic family violence services to urban Aboriginal families.

68. Since 2007-2008, funding has been provided by the Government of Saskatchewan to support the expansion and enhancement of Children Exposed to Violence Programs. A high proportion of the clients served by these programs are Aboriginal, especially in two new northern programs that opened in 2007 and 2009.
69. The Government of British Columbia has contributed over \$100,000 to support implementing the recommendations from the March 2006 Highway of Tears Symposium Report, based on input by 500 local residents attending the Lheidli T'enneh Nation community symposium. In addition, British Columbia government ministries and the RCMP are working together to support community-based initiatives focused on violence and crime prevention. These have included:
  - Six Aboriginal youth forums held in First Nations communities throughout the region. The forums focused on supporting personal and community safety as violence prevention strategies as it relates to the Highway of Tears.
  - Workshops provided at two youth conferences to engage rural and urban youth in awareness as to the risks associated with hitch-hiking.
  - A provincial forum in Prince George with local groups to address the sexual exploitation of children and youth through a series of workshops to build on the positive preventative action taking place within British Columbia communities.
70. The British Columbia's Victim Services and Crime Prevention Division funds many programs and services in the region surrounding Highway 16 such as:
  - A 24/7 multilingual victim telephone service (VictimLINK) which provides immediate crisis support to victims of family and sexual violence and provided in Aboriginal languages spoken in the region.
  - Nine victim service programs that operate in collaboration with the RCMP and six programs that operate out of non profit/community organizations; two are delivered by Aboriginal victim service workers.
  - Eight Outreach Programs in the area that help women identify and access the services they need by providing supportive counselling, information and referrals, and accompaniment and transportation to other necessary services.
  - Thirteen Stopping the Violence Programs that provide individual and group counselling for women who have experienced childhood abuse, sexual assault and violence in their relationships.
71. The issue of violence against Aboriginal women was identified as a priority action item at the first National Aboriginal Women's Summit (NAWS) held in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador in June 2007. During the summit, it was recognized that increased financial resources for family violence prevention and abuse prevention initiatives was necessary to improve the quality of life and well-being of Aboriginal women and families. As a result of the recommendations

coming from the NAWs, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador established the Aboriginal Women's Violence Prevention Grants Program, the goal of which is to create programs to achieve stability in the lives of Aboriginal women and children. This Program supports projects intended to reduce violence against Aboriginal women and children. It is funded through the provincial government's Violence Prevention Initiative and coordinated by the Women's Policy Office.

72. Projects recently funded through the Aboriginal Women's Violence Prevention Grants Program include the Rigolet Partnership Against Family Violence where, in March 2009, the province of Newfoundland and Labrador contributed \$30,000 to support necessary renovations for a safe house in the community of Rigolet for women and children experiencing family violence. Additionally, in November 2008, the province provided a \$30,000 grant to the St. John's Native Friendship Centre for a program to assist incarcerated Aboriginal women who had been exposed to family violence in receiving the community services supports and services to assist in successful reintegration into the community and provide individual assessments on which to base referrals to counsellors and other social and legal services.
73. Further, in 2008, through partial funding by the Aboriginal Women's Violence Prevention Grants Program, an Aboriginal Legal Interpreter Course for Criminal Law was developed to standardize key justice system terminology for Aboriginal interpreters providing victims of violence the opportunity to tell their stories to the justice system in their first language and reducing the barriers to accessing justice services.
74. In May, 2009 the Government of Manitoba announced *AllAboard: Manitoba's Poverty Reduction Strategy*. There are four pillars in the strategy: safe, affordable housing in supportive communities; education, jobs and income support; strong healthy families; and accessible, coordinated services. These pillars will help to address the social and economic marginalization of Aboriginal women. The strategy brings together new and existing programs in these areas, and announced \$212 million of new investments. Progress towards poverty reduction will be assessed using a set of key indicators.
75. The *Rewarding Work Strategy* was also launched in Manitoba in 2008 to address barriers to employment facing social assistance participants who are largely women.
76. In June 2009, the Government of Manitoba released *HOMEWorks! Manitoba's Long-Term Housing Strategy and Policy Framework*. The strategy complements *AllAboard: Manitoba's Poverty Reduction Strategy*. A priority of this strategy is safe, affordable housing in supportive communities. *AllAboard* as well as earlier *HOMEWorks!* announcements have included substantial funding for new public housing and extensive renovations.

77. Manitoba's three-year affordable housing strategy is now in its second year. According to Manitoba Housing, approximately 3,200 units of safe and affordable housing have been repaired, rehabilitated or built under this strategy. The strategy identifies that Aboriginal women are often single-parents, and the need for intense services for those experiencing family violence. Women in Manitoba will benefit from a housing policy that acknowledges the importance of safe and affordable housing to social, health and economic wellbeing.

### **Aboriginal Women and Economic Development**

78. Over the past 20 years, there have been significant improvements in the economic outcomes of Aboriginal Canadians. Notwithstanding such improvements, work is required to close the gap between the economic outcomes of Aboriginal women, Aboriginal men, and their non-Aboriginal counterparts. For example, despite the fact that Aboriginal women tend to have higher levels of overall educational attainment compared to Aboriginal men – especially in terms of post-secondary education – Aboriginal women are less likely to be employed and are more likely to work in lower paying occupations such as sales or administration. In the 2006 Census, a significant gap between the employment rates of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women in the 15 to 24 age group was evident - 35 percent of Aboriginal women compared to 57 percent for non-Aboriginal women. (Statistics Canada, 2006, 2001, and 1996 Censuses of Population (20 percent sample data) INAC tabulations)
79. However, there are new opportunities that may lead to an increase in the economic participation of Aboriginal women, including a rising interest on the part of the non-Aboriginal private sector to work with Aboriginal businesses and communities, the growing self-employment among Canadian women as well as an increasing land base that could lead to job creation and provide a significant source of employment for Aboriginal women. Moreover, the contributions by Aboriginal women to their communities increase the capacity of all community members to participate in the economy as both employees and entrepreneurs.
80. To help take advantage of these opportunities, the government of Canada launched the new Federal Framework for Aboriginal Economic Development on June 29, 2009. The Framework represents the first step in a fundamental change of how the Government of Canada supports Aboriginal economic development: it provides First Nation, Inuit and Métis women in Canada every opportunity to share in Canada's economic opportunities and prosperity; it adopts a modern and comprehensive approach to Aboriginal economic development that is opportunity-driven and places emphasis on building strategic partnerships with Aboriginal groups, the private sector, and the provinces and territories; it increases Aboriginal women's self-reliance by strengthening their entrepreneurship, developing their human capital, and enhancing the value of Aboriginal assets. By focusing on economic opportunities, responding to new and changing conditions, leveraging partnerships, and focusing on results, the Framework helps provide Aboriginal

women with the same opportunities for employment, income and wealth creation as other Canadians.

81. A number of recent federal actions to improve the participation of First Nation, Inuit and Métis women in the Canadian economy are also aligned with the Framework. These include an investment of \$200 million through Canada's Economic Action Plan for Aboriginal skills and training to improve labour market outcomes for Aboriginal peoples and investments to benefit all Canadians living in the North, including Aboriginal women. The Government of Canada is also investing \$75 million in a two-year Aboriginal Skills and Training Strategic Investment Fund.