



CANADIAN RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN
INSTITUT CANADIEN DE RECHERCHES SUR LES FEMMES

Statement Regarding Speech from the Throne

The Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAW-ICREF) wishes to acknowledge the important announcements that address women's inequality in Canada in the 2020 Speech from the Throne.

Women have been disproportionately impacted by the economic downturn caused by this pandemic. Although these issues are not new, [these underlying experiences of inequality](#) have been exacerbated during COVID-19. Low wages and increased [precarious employment](#) in women-majority fields like the care sector, the retail and service sector, and the [not-for-profit sector](#)—have a significant impact on women generally, but a particularly disproportionate impact on immigrant women, racialized women, single mothers, Indigenous women, women with disabilities, and senior women—women facing multiple intersecting inequalities.

We are encouraged to hear about the commitments to build a system for high-quality childcare and early learning and share the optimism and analysis of [Child Care Now](#). We are also very encouraged to hear that there is a new commitment to address women's economic inequality through the creation of a taskforce on Women in the Economy. A thorough and intersectional plan is crucial for the advancement of all women in Canada post COVID-19. This taskforce has tremendous potential to address our economic recovery in ways that build a more equitable, effective Canada. The success of this taskforce will be contingent on giving the taskforce the capacity and resources to accomplish these goals—its success hinges on where it is housed, its composition, its scope, the financial resources it is given, and the ongoing commitment of the government to take up the committee's recommendations.

The situation of women's economic inequality is so far reaching that an equitable economic recovery plan needs to take a 'whole of government approach.'

Women's economic inequality is deeply rooted; it cannot be narrowly analyzed and addressed. Economic inequality impacts all the other aspects of our lives, and all the other aspects of inequality we face have an impact on our economic equality. It is all interrelated. We call on the government to ensure that this taskforce itself is not marginalized in government, but is housed centrally, under the Office of the Prime Minister or Deputy Prime Minister. This will ensure the taskforce can truly address the interconnections between the economy and the different ways in which inequality manifests. A 'whole of government approach' is both symbolic and necessary to position the taskforce in ways that will enable it to truly address women's economic inequality.

Centering the Expertise and Perspectives of Diverse Women's Organizations

For this taskforce to be successful and address the diverse and intersecting aspects of women's economic inequality, the composition of this taskforce is incredibly important. To this end, it is essential that the taskforce be composed of experts that include women's rights organizations working on women's substantive equality.

Many women's rights organizations were working and advocating on women's economic equality before the pandemic; economic inequality during the pandemic has been a deeper manifestation of a reality women have been facing for decades. The expertise and knowledge, that women's organizations have developed from their work in this area, cannot be undervalued. It is absolutely essential that this taskforce include and support the involvement of a wide array of women's organizations representing diverse demographics of women who have been working on the multiple intersecting issues around women's inequality. National women's rights organizations also bring rich analyses that have been developed over time, and in consideration of the experiences of women in Canada, in ways that are accountable to our communities, something that will be necessary for the credibility of the taskforce.

The federal government has acknowledged that systemic racism is pervasive in Canada. This taskforce presents an important opportunity to address the intersecting impacts of systemic racism, sexism, and economic inequality, by ensuring the knowledge and expertise of women's rights organizations working with and for Indigenous, Black and racialized women are key in this taskforce.

Bold Action

December 2020 is the 50th Anniversary since the release of the report from the Royal Commission on the Status of Women. It is a historically significant time for this government to take the bold, inclusive, and historic actions to address women's economic inequality to which it has been committing. We are optimistic that as the government builds this taskforce it will ensure that it is set up for success by ensuring that it is put together, housed, resourced, and otherwise set-up in ways that will ensure that its work will, finally, take substantive steps to address the gendered intersectional ways that economic inequality in Canada continues to be experienced.

Since 1976, CRIAW-ICREF has been researching and documenting the economic and social situation of women in Canada. Using intersectional frameworks, we have developed and undertaken a variety of important, ground-breaking research that is women centered. CRIAW-ICREF is a not for profit member-based organization. www.criaw-icref.ca