



## Briefing Note: Urgent Request to Include Economic Abuse in Your Violence Prevention Definitions

**To:** Minister Valdez and the Ministry of Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE)

**From:** Canadian Center for Women's Empowerment (CCFWE)

**Date:** 09/02/2025

**PURPOSE:** to have the federal government include “economic abuse” definition in key areas online to raise awareness and integrate responses to this form of domestic violence.

### ISSUE

Despite its prevalence, economic abuse remains largely unrecognized in federal public-facing resources. This omission limits survivor visibility and support, undermining Canada's commitments to addressing gender-based violence (GBV) as outlined in the National Action Plan to End Gender-based Violence (NAP).

- CCFWE's national study (2023), the first of its kind in Canada, found that 96% of survivors of intimate partner violence experience some form of economic abuse.
- CCFWE conducted an audit on the inclusion of “economic abuse” on federal government websites and found a significant lack of presence, with only one mention of it on the WAGE website (Appendix 1).
- Many survivors do not realize that what they are experiencing is economic abuse, making awareness essential to help them name the abuse and recognize the harm being done.
- Government recognition of economic abuse legitimizes efforts to address and prevent it while acknowledging the lived experiences of victims and survivors.

### BACKGROUND

Economic abuse is a form of family and gender-based violence that involves control, exploitation, or sabotage of a person's economic resources, assets, and opportunities to undermine their independence and security. The three main types of economic abuse include:

**Economic Control:** This occurs when an abuser limits or completely controls a survivor's access to financial resources and decision-making. This can include:

- o Monitoring or restricting all of the survivor's financial activity
- o Denying the survivor access to bank accounts, credit cards, or cash
- o Forcing the survivor to ask for money or live on a strict “allowance”
- o Limiting the survivor's access to basic needs such as food, housing, transportation, or healthcare

**Economic Exploitation:** This occurs when the abuser actively damages the survivor's financial standing or credit. This can include:



- o Asset deprivation: Withholding or stealing income, savings, or jointly owned property
- o Coerced debt: Forcing the survivor into debt, often without their knowledge or consent
- o Identity fraud and theft: Using the survivor's identity to commit financial fraud or open credit accounts

**Employment and Education Sabotage:** This occurs when the abuser controls or inhibits the survivor's ability to gain or maintain employment and education. This form of abuse can be exacerbated when the survivor works with the abuser (e.g., co-owning a business). This can include:

- o Preventing the survivor from working or attending interviews
- o Harassing the survivor at their workplace
- o Interfering with transportation or childcare to sabotage job or school attendance
- o Destroying equipment or technology needed for work or education

## RECOMMENDATIONS

CCFWE urges WAGE to lead the inclusion of the proposed definition, filling in the gaps highlighted in the government agency audit (see Appendix 1):

**Economic Abuse:** is a form of family and gender-based violence that involves control, exploitation, or sabotage of a person's economic resources, assets, and opportunities to undermine their independence and security.

WAGE should ensure that the federal government:

1. Explicitly includes "economic abuse" in the government's website definitions of violence, alongside physical, emotional, and sexual abuse.
2. Adopts the survivor-informed definition (above) to promote clarity and consistency across federal agencies.
3. Provides concrete examples to enhance the identification of economic abuse by survivors, service providers, and policymakers (as outlined in this brief).

### Contact:

Meseret Haileyesus (she/her)

Executive Director, Canadian Center Women's Empowerment (CCFWE)

Email: [mesi.haileyesus@ccfwe.org](mailto:mesi.haileyesus@ccfwe.org)

Denna Berg (she/they)

Director of Public Policy, Canadian Center for Women's Empowerment (CCFWE)

Email: [denna.berg@ccfwe.org](mailto:denna.berg@ccfwe.org)

Website: <https://ccfwe.org/>



## Appendix 1: Environmental Scan of Federal Agencies

Agency	Current Definition Status	Mentions "Economic Abuse"?	Notes / Gaps
Department of Justice (DOJ)	Defines financial abuse as misuse of money/property.	No	Lacks the term "economic abuse" and examples such as coerced debt or employment sabotage.
Public Health Agency (PHAC)	Mentions financial abuse in family violence context.	No	Scope incomplete, "economic abuse" absent.
Women and Gender Equality (WAGE)	Glossary notes financial abuse (also referred to as economic abuse).	Yes (minimal)	Mentions but without a detailed definition or examples.
Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship (IRCC)	References economic vulnerability in newcomers.	No	No definition in violence prevention materials.
Employment and Social Development (ESDC)	No definitions provided.	No	Absent.
Statistics Canada	Reports on financial abuse in surveys.	No	Inconsistent terminology, limited nuance.
CMHC	No definitions related to family violence.	No	Entirely absent despite housing links.
RCMP	References financial abuse in IPV prevention tips.	No	Does not use term "economic abuse," lacks scope.
Canadian Human Rights Commission (CHRC)	No definitions.	No	Absent.
Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)	Discusses GBV in Indigenous communities.	No	Lacks explicit recognition of economic abuse.



CANADIAN CENTER  
FOR WOMEN'S  
EMPOWERMENT

CENTRE CANADIEN  
POUR L'AUTONOMISATION  
DES FEMMES