



JUST: Bill C-223 Keeping Children Safe Act

The Canadian Center for Women's Empowerment (CCFWE) is the only non-profit organization in Canada that solely focuses on economic abuse and economic injustice in the context of gender-based violence (GBV) through research, education, advocacy, and financial empowerment. Learn more: <https://ccfwe.org/>

RECOMMENDATIONS

CCFWE is in support of Bill C-223 and has also endorsed the National Association of Women and the Law's (NAWL) submission. The following are minor amendments to support people who have experienced economic abuse:

- **In section 2(1) of the definitions, amend under “family violence” to change “(g) financial abuse” to “economic abuse”.** This will align with the [Ministry of Women and Gender Equality's definition](#) framing, which focuses on economic abuse, not financial. As stated by WAGE, “Economic abuse is a broader term. It includes all the ways someone's financial freedom or independence can be controlled or harmed.”
- **Support this amendment proposed by NAWL to amend 3.1 Subsection 15.2(5) of the Act to include the following:** “In making an order under subsection (1) or an interim order under subsection (2), the court shall not take into consideration any misconduct of a spouse in relation to the marriage, **but may consider family violence where relevant to the economic circumstances of the spouses.**“

WHAT IS ECONOMIC ABUSE?

Economic Abuse is a range of behaviours that allow someone to control someone else's economic resources or freedoms. It refers to various tactics that limit an individual's financial autonomy, including but not limited to: denying them access to their money, exerting control over their resources, or leveraging intimidation and threats to constrain their economic freedom.

PARENTAL ALIENATION AND ECONOMIC ABUSE

We frequently hear from survivors of economic abuse that they also often experience wrongful parental alienation. Bill C-223 appropriately challenges the misuse of “parental alienation” as a courtroom tactic, protecting survivors and their children.

It is not surprising that false claims of parental alienation and economic abuse co-occur, as both are forms of coercive control. When this happens, economic abuse is used to fund, facilitate, or hide alienating behaviors, or it can be the main lever to make it appear that a parent is unfit to care for their child. For example, legal cases may be used as a form of economic abuse, depleting the resources of the person experiencing harm to make it look like they cannot afford to care for their child, while forcing them to participate in the legal action in the hopes of



maintaining a relationship with their child (Spearman et al., 2024¹). Extended time off work to attend legal proceedings contributes to survivors' job insecurity and financial depletion. The federal domestic violence leave is only paid for the first five days, while provincial leaves are paid for three to five days in most provinces.

This bill recognizes that violence does not necessarily end once spouses separate or divorce proceedings begin. In the context of rising rates of femicide, explicitly accounting for post-separation violence within legal frameworks is one important way to respond to this deeply concerning trend. It also acknowledges the reality that some victims of spousal violence remain in abusive relationships out of fear of losing access to their children. When compounded by the housing and affordability crisis, these dynamics become even more complex.

Including the role of economic abuse clearly within this Bill is essential to better protect a parent's ability to remain safe while continuing to provide care and stability for their child, despite experiencing economic abuse, gender-based violence, and false claims of parental alienation.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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¹ Spearman, K. J., Vaughan-Eden, V., Hardesty, J. L., & Campbell, J. (2024). Post-separation abuse: A literature review connecting tactics to harm. *Journal of Family Trauma, Child Custody & Child Development*, 21(2), 145-164.