

Written Submission for the Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of the Upcoming Federal Budget 2026

By: Canadian Center for Women's Empowerment
(CCFWE)

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Recommendation 1: Modernize the Pay Equity Act and its accompanying measures, including a guaranteed livable basic income and reforming Employment Insurance, to build a more resilient and inclusive Canadian economy that works for everyone.

Recommendation 2: Allocate dedicated, sustained funding for targeted programs that support the economic empowerment of Black and racialized communities through the Ministry of Employment and Social Development Canada and the Ministry of Women and Gender Equality Canada.

Recommendation 3: Set budget for the implementation of the Code of Conduct on the Prevention of Economic Abuse within Canada's Anti-Fraud Strategy.

Recommendation 4: Provide stable, multi-year core funding to the Canadian Center for Women's Empowerment (CCFWE).

Recommendation 5: Sustained Funding for a Canadian Institute for Research on Economic Justice

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ABOUT CCFWE

The Canadian Center for Women's Empowerment (CCFWE) is the only non-profit organization in Canada solely dedicated to addressing economic abuse and economic injustice in the context of gender-based violence (GBV).

Through research, education, policy change, and financial empowerment, CCFWE works to prevent economic harm, strengthen survivor safety, and advance systemic solutions that support women's economic security and independence.

Learn more: <https://ccfwe.org/>

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.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Budget 2025 was momentous for CCFWE as this was the first time economic abuse was mentioned in a federal budget - and was done so seventeen times! CCFWE is grateful for the federal government's continued and active commitment and support to combating this form of GBV and uplifting the economic empowerment for women and gender-diverse people.

The federal government continues to prioritize the seven commitments outlined in the mandate letter issued by Prime Minister Carney in May 2025. While the Canadian economy remains in a period of uncertainty, and issues such as affordability and housing are being actively addressed, there are still important gaps in how intersectional realities are reflected in policy responses.

Despite this progress, further work is needed. We hope that Budget 2026 will focus further on the diversity that strengthens this country, while recognizing that this diversity can come with

barriers rooted in systemic inequities. A truly inclusive and resilient economy requires targeted action to address these barriers so that all people in Canada can fully benefit from economic progress.

This must include Black and racialized communities, people with disabilities, as well as women and gender-diverse people who are, or have been, impacted by economic abuse and other forms of GBV.

The Canadian Center for Women's Empowerment (CCFWE) offers five key recommendations for Budget 2026:

Recommendation 1: Modernize the Pay Equity Act and its accompanying measures, including a guaranteed livable basic income and reforming Employment Insurance, to build a more resilient and inclusive Canadian economy that works for everyone.

Persistent wage inequities and gaps in income supports continue to limit full economic participation, particularly for women and gender-diverse people. Statistics Canada found the gender wage gap in hourly wages narrowed by only 7.7 percentage points between 1998 and 2021, demonstrating slow progress and ongoing structural barriers. Canada ranks 26th in 31 OECD countries in terms of its gender pay gap among full-time employees.¹ Furthermore, data from the International Labour Organization (2024) estimates that **eliminating the employment rate gap in Canada could increase GDP per capita by 3.6 percent over time.**

These inequities are compounded for individuals experiencing GBV, including economic abuse. Survivors frequently face employment disruption, income instability, and long-term financial harm as a result of this violence/abuse. These barriers limit access to stable and fairly compensated work and reinforce economic dependence.

Addressing wage inequity requires more than equal pay measures. Structural conditions, including labour market inequities and inadequate income supports, can function as forms of systemic economic harm. Ensuring access to livable wages, stable employment, and equitable opportunities is essential to strengthening economic resilience.

A guaranteed livable basic income is a critical policy tool to address these gaps. Income security enables individuals to meet basic needs and reduces the likelihood of remaining in or returning to abusive situations due to financial constraints.

Employment Insurance also requires reform to better reflect the realities of workers experiencing economic disruption. Current limitations in eligibility, benefit adequacy, and administration exclude or inadequately support those whose employment has been impacted by economic abuse and other forms of GBV. In 2024 the indicator of Canada's unemployment benefits generosity was 48%, 10 percentage points below the 58% average standard for the OECD

¹<https://www.policyalternatives.ca/news-research/theres-a-long-way-to-go-to-closing-the-gender-pay-gap-in-canada/>

countries.² Furthermore, the benefit rate that the EI program offers “places low-income individuals below the poverty line in many provinces”³

Budget 2026 must build on existing federal investments and partnerships by advancing pay equity and income security measures already underway. CCFWE is completing a WAGE-funded project that ends in 2027 to advance work on pay equity and Employment Insurance reform, specifically for survivors of GBV and economic abuse. This investment positions CCFWE to continue driving evidence-based policy recommendations and collaboration with the government.

Budget 2026 should:

- Allocate funding to modernize the Pay Equity Act and strengthen implementation and enforcement
- Establish a federally led guaranteed livable basic income pilot, with dedicated transfers to provinces and territories
- Continue modernizing Employment Insurance by expanding eligibility, increasing benefit adequacy to livable levels, and introducing flexible access provisions for those experiencing GBV, including economic abuse

Recommendation 2: Allocate dedicated, sustained funding for targeted programs that support the economic empowerment of Black and racialized communities through the Ministry of Employment and Social Development Canada and the Ministry of Women and Gender Equality Canada.

Budget 2025 did not provide new funding in economic empowerment programs for Black and racialized communities. Advancing economic empowerment requires sustained, targeted investments in culturally responsive initiatives that address systemic racism and barriers to employment, income security, and financial inclusion.

Reinstating and expanding funding, as in previous budgets, would enable community-led organizations to deliver tailored supports, including workforce development, entrepreneurship programming, and financial literacy initiatives. Furthermore, Canada co-sponsored the United Nations’ International Decade for People of African Descent (2025-2034) and has an opportunity to model equity and advance its international leadership.

Budget 2026 should:

- Reintroduce targeted funding streams for Black and racialized communities in the Ministry of Employment and Social Development Canada and the Ministry of Women and Gender Equality Canada, expanding programs like the Supporting Black Canadian Communities Initiative.

² https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/society-at-a-glance-2024_918d8db3-en.html

³ <https://irpp.org/research-studies/building-a-package-of-compromise-solutions-for-ei-reform/>

- Invest in community-based employment and skills training programs that reflect diverse lived experiences, including those of newcomers, refugees and immigrants, survivors of violence, and low-income individuals.
- Expand access to safe, low-barrier financial services and supports to improve financial inclusion and resilience
- Fund disaggregated data collection and evaluation to ensure accountability and measure impact

This reallocation is critical to dismantling systemic inequities while strengthening economic participation. Targeted investments will better align opportunities with individuals' skills, experiences, and aspirations, contributing to a more inclusive and resilient economy.

Recommendation 3: Set budget for the implementation of the Code of Conduct on the Prevention of Economic Abuse within Canada's Anti-Fraud Strategy.

Budget 2026 should allocate funding to support the implementation of the Code of Conduct for the Prevention of Economic Abuse within Canada's Anti-Fraud Strategy and the Financial Crimes Agency. Investments must ensure the Code continues to be shaped by the lived realities of those it is intended to protect, even after implementation. The funds must also support strong collaboration between financial institutions and community-based organizations throughout its creation and implementation.

A Code of Conduct is only as effective as its implementation. Grounding its design and rollout in survivor experience and community expertise will strengthen early identification, improve institutional responses, and ensure that Canada's anti-fraud efforts are responsive to the complex and evolving nature of economic abuse.

Budget 2026 should have dedicated funding:

- Continue supporting the participation and compensation of survivors of economic abuse in the design, testing, and refinement of the Code of Conduct, ensuring it reflects real-world risks, including technology-facilitated abuse.
- For CCFWE, alongside GBV and economic abuse organizations, to co-develop and deliver trauma-informed, culturally responsive training for financial institutions, grounded in lived expertise and frontline service knowledge.
- To establish coordinated referral systems between financial institutions and community organizations, enabling safe, timely, and appropriate support for individuals experiencing economic abuse.
- For national, multilingual, culturally sensitive awareness campaigns to improve recognition of economic abuse and increase access to supports, aligned with broader anti-fraud efforts.
- For national coordination, development of practical tools and protocols, and ongoing evaluation to ensure consistent, effective implementation across jurisdictions.

- To develop and implement an accountability framework around the Code's implementation, including national standards for financial institutions and regular public reporting on trends.

Recommendation 4: Provide stable, multi-year core funding to the Canadian Center for Women's Empowerment (CCFWE)

WAGE has been a long-time supporter of CCFWE allowing us to make significant progress in addressing economic abuse. We continue to align with the government's priorities by removing systemic barriers for women and survivors in the tourism industry, improving access to microloans, expanding entrepreneurship opportunities, and addressing persistent wage gaps that undermine women's full participation in the economy. CCFWE has also been a main contributor to the development of the Code of Conduct for the Prevention of Economic Abuse. This included the organization of a survivor roundtable discussion, ensuring the government heard directly from those experiencing economic abuse. These actions directly strengthen individual economic security and the health of Canada's overall economy.

Unlike project-based funding, which limits long-term planning and organizational resilience, core funding would allow CCFWE to invest in strategic partnerships, respond quickly to emerging policy opportunities, and evaluate outcomes in a consistent, evidence-based manner. It would also ensure that our research, education, and advocacy efforts can continue to inform federal priorities such as the Code of Conduct for the Prevention of Economic Abuse, wage equity initiatives, and broader efforts to diversify and stabilize Canada's economy during a period of global uncertainty.

Predictable resources for CCFWE is not only a social investment but an economic one. Economic abuse contributes to cycles of poverty, underemployment, and financial instability that ripple outward to the national economy. Supporting our work through sustainable core funding will help ensure survivors are able to rebuild their lives, contribute fully to Canada's workforce, and participate in the economy to support growth and innovation.

Recommendation 5: Sustained Funding for a Canadian Institute for Research on Economic Justice

Budget 2026 should allocate dedicated, multi-year funding to establish and sustain the Canadian Institute for Research on Economic Justice (CIREJ) as a national hub for applied research, policy development, and innovation on economic abuse.

Despite growing recognition of economic abuse in Canada, there remains a significant gap in coordinated, applied research to inform policy, financial systems, and service delivery. Existing research is fragmented, underfunded, and often disconnected from frontline and lived experience expertise.

CIREJ would address this gap by centring community-based knowledge and survivor-informed approaches while strengthening partnerships across universities, financial institutions, and the

non-profit sector. The institute would generate evidence, support innovation pilots, and facilitate international knowledge exchange, positioning Canada as a global leader in advancing economic justice.

Finance Canada and Women and Gender Equality Canada should prioritize core, sustained investment in this work. CIREJ would also serve as a critical mechanism to assess and monitor the impacts of emerging initiatives, including the Code of Conduct on the Prevention of Economic Abuse.

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