



CANADIAN FEDERATION OF STUDENTS
FÉDÉRATION CANADIENNE
DES ÉTUDIANTES ET ÉTUDIANTS

Members' Advisory

Taking Action to End Violence Against Young Women and Girls in Canada

March 2017

Introduction

On March 20, the Standing Committee on the Status of Women released a report titled, Taking Action to End Violence Against Young Women and Girls in Canada. The report contains 45 recommendations to the federal government based on testimonies and written submissions from 93 witnesses, which include individuals, community organizations (such as the Canadian Federation of Students) and federal and provincial government agencies.

Campuses are a reflection of greater society and as such are not immune to the systemic issues that plague our communities at large. The Federation has been a source of collective action against sexual and gender-based violence on campus for decades and has pushed our campus communities to face uncomfortable realities by challenging rape culture and building cultures of consent. As part of our federal lobby efforts, the Federation submitted several recommendations to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women on how the federal government can best address sexual and gender-based violence on Canadian campuses.

The Federation's submission focused on three key recommendations:

1. Introduce legislation to mandate all post-secondary institutions to have stand-alone sexual violence policies that are survivor-centered and are developed through a student-driven process;
2. Create and adjudicate a Sexual Violence Support Resource Fund; and
3. Develop a national public education campaign on sexual and gender-based violence awareness and prevention, including mandatory consent education for faculty, staff and students.

The Federation is pleased to see several of these recommendations reflected in the Committee's report and will work to ensure that the federal government quickly and effectively implements the recommendations and takes meaningful steps towards combating sexual violence. At the same time, the Federation will continue to pressure the federal government to be bolder in its commitments to combatting sexual violence on campuses across the country, calling for a strong, national action plan that mandates participation at all levels of government.

Committee Recommendation	Response and Next Steps
<p>A Survivor-Centric Approach</p> <p>Recommendation 1: Ensure that the Federal strategy on gender-based violence include violence against young women and girls in Canada and that the strategy be survivor-centric, prevention-based, trauma informed and tailored to the unique needs of marginalized groups.</p>	
<p>Addressing Intersectionality</p> <p>Recommendation 2: Ensure that the Federal Strategy on Gender-based Violence adopts an intersectional approach, addressing the higher rates of violence faced by some groups of women, including Indigenous women; immigrant and refugee women; visible minority women; women identifying as lesbian, bisexual and transgender; female sex workers; women living with disabilities; women with mental health issues; low-income women; women in Northern, rural and remote communities; and other marginalized sectors of the female population.</p> <p>Recommendation 40: Allocate additional funding to research and data collection that focuses on intersectional violence against young women and girls in Canada</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Throughout the report, the Committee does begin to address intersectional identities, recognizing not only cisgender women but also members of the trans-spectrum community and Two-Spirit people. ▶ The Committee recommends that the federal government work in consultation with all communities to improve community-based services and provides specific recommendations for Indigenous women, homeless women, immigrant, refugee and women living with disabilities. ▶ The Federation will continue to push for the federal government to work with campus and community-based organizations in order to build, strengthen and adequately fund campaigns, services and supports that address and combat the higher rates of violence experienced by women and trans spectrum people from marginalized communities and recognize the multiple identities that exist within these communities.

<p>National Education Campaign</p> <p>Recommendation 26: Develop and invest in a nation-wide public awareness campaign, as part of the Federal Strategy on Gender-based Violence, to educate the public about consent, healthy sexuality, bystander intervention and the role of men and boys in ending gender-based violence and rape culture, and that community groups, men's ally networks and youth be consulted during the development of the awareness campaign.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As students continue to advocate for university and college administrations across Canada to recognize the existence and impact of rape culture on our campuses, the Federation is encouraged to see the Committee acknowledge the existence of rape culture and recognize the need to educate the public on what rape culture looks like, how this culture serves to condone and normalize sexual violence and what a culture of consent looks like.
<p>Sexual Violence on Post-Secondary Campuses</p> <p>Recommendations 7, 8 and 9: Work with provincial and territorial Ministers responsible for justice and public safety to urge provinces and territories to discuss mechanisms to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Mandate post-secondary institutions to implement stand-alone sexual assault policies and provide sexual violence intervention and sensitivity training to students, faculty and staff; Require all post-secondary institutions to establish sexual assault centres on campus that would offer free and accessible counselling services; and Make mental health first aid courses mandatory for faculty members, staff, administration and campus police. <p>Recommendation 10: Examine best practices for reporting, investigating and adjudicating cases of sexual violence on post-secondary campuses.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Though post-secondary education is within the mandate of provincial and territorial jurisdiction, students will continue to push for greater federal leadership in the sector, which is both possible and necessary. While the federal government already invests over \$12 billion each year in the post-secondary sector, the government has chosen to support post-secondary education at the provincial and territorial levels through unconditional transfers. This makes it difficult for the government to have strong, federal leadership and ensure the participation of provincial and territorial governments that is needed to address barriers to accessing higher education, including sexual and gender-based violence. Students are calling on the federal government to attach strings to federal transfers for post-secondary education and that these strings include a requirement that post-secondary institutions in every jurisdiction have stand-alone sexual assault policies.

Conclusion

While the Federation is encouraged to see several important steps being recommended in the report, there is still a great deal of work that needs to happen. It is time for the federal government to take bold action to combat sexual and gender-based violence on our campuses and in our communities. As students continue to tirelessly organize at the provincial level for legislative change to ensure that our campuses have the tools and resources they need to appropriately address and combat sexual and gender-based violence, the federal government needs to do more than "urge provinces and territories to discuss" these necessary actions. Students need a national action plan that requires provinces and territories to take action to ensure that steps towards mandatory preventative education, proper policy and procedure, well-funded and varied support resources and accountability measures are all implemented. This is the only way we can begin to combat sexual violence on campus in a meaningful way and ensure that students are able to pursue an education free from sexual and gender-based violence regardless of where they choose to study.

Additional Recommendations of Note in the Report:

- Funding to develop comprehensive training on gender-based and sexual violence for the judiciary and that judges are encouraged to participate in
- Increased funding for survivor-centric legal resources that are readily available to survivors
- Investigating alternative, restorative or traditional Indigenous justice mechanisms as optional alternatives to the criminal court system in cases of sexual violence
- A review of the justice system to ensure equal access to protection and justice across the country for survivors of sexual violence

The complete report can be found [here](#).