

The Declaration drafted at the Governor General's Conference on Women and Security is as follows:

Declaration – Women and Security

September 13, 2010

The Governor General of Canada, the Right Honorable Michaëlle Jean, convened a conference on Women and Security on September 9th and 10th, 2010 in Ottawa.

Over 120 women and men participated. The participants were leaders from many communities and constituencies representing Canada in all its diversity of race, ethnicity, class, disability, language, sexual orientation, ages, from every province and territory.

Participants issued this Declaration at the conclusion of the Governor General's Conference, with a call for urgent action, addressed to the Government of Canada and governments in Canada at all levels, to renew their commitments to the full realization of women's human rights, as set out in international human rights treaties that Canada has ratified, and to make immediate and adequate allocations of resources to achieve that end.

Participants noted that policies and programs that promote equality and flourishing for all Canadians cannot be developed without the participation of women.

Participants also urged all Canadians, women and men, to join with them in their organizations and communities to build a Canada in which women and men can flourish equally.

Therefore, recognizing:

That injustice, stigmatization, exclusion, silence and violence are shared experiences of those whose equality and security are not protected, especially women;

That societies where women's equality and security are promoted and fulfilled, flourish and are more stable than societies where women's equality and security rights are compromised and undermined;

That a strong social safety net is essential for the protection of the equality and security of the most vulnerable in society, the majority of whom are women and children;

That there has been a serious erosion of basic social programs and services, such as social assistance and affordable housing, that are the foundations of

an egalitarian society;

That Aboriginal women, women of colour, immigrant women, LGBT women, women with disabilities, and girls are particularly vulnerable to stigmatization, violence, injustice, exclusion and silence which results in insecurity and inequality;

And recognizing further that:

Violence against women in Canada, especially Aboriginal and other marginalized women, is an urgent and widespread problem, and a human rights violation which compromises the physical and psychological security of women and girls;

Persistent inequality in the labour market compromises Canadian women's socio-economic security;

Women are not equally represented in formal positions of political power and do not have equal influence or effective access to democratic engagement with their governments;

Women's access to justice has been severely diminished by cuts to funding to legal aid, especially civil legal aid and to the Court Challenges Program, and by official and other attacks on statutory human rights institutions;

Therefore, be it resolved that:

As a matter of urgency, a national strategy supported by all levels of government be developed with clear targets and goals to ameliorate women's inequality and strengthen women's security;

That Canada fully, and without qualification, endorse the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples;

That the Government of Canada revitalize due process protections and reverse regressive criminal law reform measures which have been held out as protective of victims, particularly women and girls, yet are actually fuelling the increased criminalization of women and girls;

That fully adequate funding and resources be committed immediately by both federal and provincial governments to ensure that women can exercise their constitutional and statutory human rights and enforce their other legal entitlements and protections;

That new mechanisms be designed to document and hold accountable police, prosecutors, judges and correctional authorities for their treatment of women who are victims of male violence, or who are prisoners, immigration detainees, or otherwise involved with the justice system;

That inclusive and equitable curricula be developed to reflect the

contributions, challenges and achievements of women and to educate students about equality and security for women at primary, secondary and post secondary levels of education;

That a public inquiry be conducted and a national action plan, led by Aboriginal women's organizations, be implemented, to address the disappearances and murders of hundreds of Aboriginal women and girls, which is a massive and systematic violation of human rights, needing official and priority response by Canada;

That the Government of Canada's social, economic, and cultural policies and practices reflect the commitments made by Canada in international human rights treaties and respect and promote the indigenous value of women's equality;

That women's health be treated as a priority that calls for awareness of women's unique health needs throughout their life cycle. New and sustained investments in policies, programs, education, research and innovation are urgently needed to optimize health outcomes and to achieve the UN Millennium Development Goals. It is vital to ensure equitable and timely access for all women within a publicly funded, not for profit health care system;

That concrete steps be taken to ensure greater participation of women in the electoral process and that democratic processes and funding supports be designed, with women's full participation, to ensure effective dialogue and engagement between women and their governments;

That governments at all levels reverse the erosion of the social safety net in Canada and ensure that it is fully able to respond to the essential needs of women and children to achieve equality and security;

That young women and girls be provided with access to empowerment opportunities to grow their strength and confidence including self-defence, sexual health education and self expression through the arts;

That the implementation of these recommendations be monitored, utilizing adequate quantitative and qualitative data, that is publicly accessible, and reported on by the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, to the Parliamentary Committees on the Status of Women and Public Safety and Human Rights at least every two years.