

The Honourable Marci Ien, Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario,
Canada
K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Ien,

We applaud the current Liberal government's commitment to the development of a 10-year National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence, and greatly appreciate the immense work put into this plan to achieve a Canada free from violence against women and gender-based violence (VAW/GBV). The investment you have made gives us hope for what can be done to address this significant cross-sectoral problem.

To further this plan, **we believe it is critical that GBV experienced by youth is named and addressed in this plan.** It is necessary to center youth in this plan for the following reasons:

- 1. 1 in 3 adolescents** in Canada experience GBV in a romantic or sexual relationship. In adolescence, this violence is known as adolescent dating violence (ADV). GBV/ADV affects youth of all sexes, sexualities, genders, and gender identities, but disproportionately affects marginalized youth, including Indigenous, Black, refugee, and 2SLGBTQIA+ youth, and youth living with disabilities. ADV is linked to numerous adverse health, social and economic outcomes. Most concerning – and relevant to the National Action Plan – youth who experience ADV are significantly more likely to experience domestic violence in adulthood. As such, **a National Action Plan that does not center prevention of ADV will not effectively prevent VAW/GBV in adulthood.**
- The National Action Plan final report identifies VAW/GBV as a human rights issue and a public health crisis. Since ADV happens to youth, it is also a children's rights issue. Per the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Canada is a signatory, all children have a right to be protected from all forms of physical, sexual, and mental violence. **Formally addressing ADV through youth-centered policy in the National Action Plan is foundational to realizing this right.**
- The current lack of ADV policy means we are failing to protect youths' right to be safe in their relationships. There is a clear need for the development of youth-centred policy that specifically addresses adolescent dating violence. At a minimum, this policy needs to:
 - Clarify the roles and responsibilities of educators, caregivers, and other significant adults in responding to adolescent dating violence
 - Provide written and financial support for evidence-based, developmentally appropriate, and equity-centered dating violence prevention programs
 - Fund training initiatives for GBV service providers on youth-centered models for dating violence prevention and support
 - Fund longitudinal data collection on adolescent dating violence, to understand long-term outcomes in the Canadian context and to guide prevention activities

All children and youth have the right to be safe in their homes, at school, in their communities, and online. Through specific inclusion of adolescent dating violence in the National Action Plan, we can support youth's rights and well-being, and work together toward a future free from gender-based violence.

Sincerely,

Nora Constas
President and CEO
**Boost Child & Youth
Advocacy Centre**



Ada L. Sinacore
President
**Canadian Psychological
Association**



Pam Krause
President and CEO
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