

Thank you for your kind invitation to join this panel of accomplished women. It is an honour to be among you today.

As underscored by my fellow panellists, we live in a world where violence against women and girls remains much too common; in many cases it is normalised and barely even noticed and it happens right in front of us every day.

Violence against women is a violation of human rights, and an issue that affects all of us. We are all harmed when people in our communities and society experience violence, and we have an obligation to make sure women and girls can enjoy the respect, protection, and freedom that is their right.

We know that violence against women and girls is only one form of gender-based violence. Gender-based violence involves the use and abuse of power and control over another person and is perpetrated against someone based on their gender identity, gender expression or perceived gender. We know that gender-based violence affects differently and disproportionately those most vulnerable, including for example transwomen, Indigenous women, women of colour, LGBTI, gender non-binary people, women with disabilities, and refugees and displaced women.

Last week, UN Women underscored that, violence against women and girls affects one in three women worldwide and that no country is immune to this pandemic. We know and accept these statistics, and yet still, fail to hold perpetrators accountable, and continue to challenge the behavior and habits of women and girls who experience violence, systematically putting their testimonies, credibility and character in doubt.

Violence against women and girls affects every society and takes many forms. It includes micro-aggressions (such as sexualized or sexist comments, sexualized taunts, interruption, and appropriation of voice or ideas), groping in crowded areas (such as public transit), sexual assault and homicide. The roots of gender-based violence are all around us: it is in the language that we use, and in sexist jokes or comments that demean women; it is in media messages that objectify women; and it is in rigid gender norms we impose on children, both girls and boys.

Women and girls look over their shoulders while walking to the car in a parking lot, avoiding jogging or walking at night or alone, they try to travel to and from school or work during daylight, bring their own drinks to parties, or live with multiple locks on our doors. These precautions are not considered the evidence of a dangerous environment, but rather, simply measures that any normal person would take.

But, what would happen if you didn't take those steps? And, in rejecting those habits, do women waive the right not to be assaulted? The truth is that women are at risk every day, and the habits we have developed to mitigate that risk help us navigate a world still full of violence and discrimination. But, they are still held up as evidence that "we should have known better"...and we believe it. That is how deeply ingrained gender based violence is.

So what can we do? What does Canada do?

Canada champions human rights nationally, multilaterally and bilaterally and seizes opportunities where they emerge to advocate for change. And in the context of our Feminist International Assistance Policy, We use our international assistance to help prevent gender-based violence, including harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation. I would like to share with you several examples of Canada's efforts.

In multilateral fora such as the UN, the OAS, and others, Canada actively supports resolutions calling for the elimination of violence against women and girls. Canada's work at the UN contributed to the development of

a strong Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, which led to the establishment and renewal of the mandate for a UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences. Canada was also instrumental in ensuring sexual and gender-based crimes were included in the draft Statute for the International Criminal Court. Canada is also committed to helping countries implement the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

At the Summit of the Americas, the creation of the Inter-American Task Force on Women's Empowerment and Leadership moves us forward in the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 5 in the Americas. The initiative aims to increase women's political representation and participation in public decision-making, and strengthen the rights of women and girls by improving coordination among Inter-American and UN institutions, key stakeholders, and women's rights organisations. The Task Force specifically recognizes violence against women as a key barrier for women's engagement in public life, and their access to positions of leadership.

Here in the Americas, Canada launched an international assistance project with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) on "Combatting Discrimination and Violence Against Women and Girls in Latin American and the Caribbean". With funding of \$1.9 million over 2.5 years, the project aims to address violence and discrimination against women and girls, who are disproportionately affected by poverty, discrimination and violence in Latin America and the Caribbean. More specifically, it addresses two major challenges: (1) providing access to justice for women and girls who have petitioned the IACHR to resolve violations of their rights in a region where impunity for these crimes is very high; and (2) helping member states meet their obligations to prevent, protect against, investigate, and act to correct the historical and structural discrimination, inequality and violence against women and girls.

The IACHR has reported that between July 2017 and March 2018, they were able to reach at least 290 women and girls through the 26 precautionary measures which were granted under the project. In addition, 93 people (73 women, 16 men, 4 without indication) have been trained on regional and universal legal standards related to discrimination, inequality, and violence against women and girls.

The growing democracies in the Americas continue to advance toward inclusive and accountable governance supported by strong autonomous institutions. The empowerment of women and girls and their full participation in leadership and decision-making processes is fundamental to ensuring our democratic societies are inclusive and representative.

Canada's work to promote women's leadership in government and business and to prioritize gender equality in our decision-making at home and abroad is part of a cultural shift towards valuing women's voices. Canada recognized that women's leadership is key to tackling the challenges we face when we made gender equality and women's empowerment a top priority for our G7 Presidency this past year. G7 Leaders also made a Commitment on Innovative Financing for Development, specifically recognizing that access to capital is an important tool towards enhancing women's economic empowerment.

The historic investment that came out of this year's G7 Summit now stands at over \$4 billion for education for women and girls in conflict and crisis situations. In September, at the UN General Assembly, we welcomed another \$527 million to help developing countries give every child access to the education and skills training needed to succeed. These funds will give critical support to the world's most vulnerable women and girls, and empower the next generation of global change-makers.

This important investment is part of the fight against gender-based violence because of the role of education. Women and girls can reach their potential and participate fully in the economy when receive the same educational advantages as boys and men. Gender based roles and identities that limit opportunities for girls, early/child/or forced marriages and forced domestic work also contributes to their absence from the education system. Research shows that ending these practices may make it easier for women and girls to get an education and that the more schooling they receive, the less likely they will be victims of violence.

As part of our ongoing efforts to end gender based violence, Canada adopted a strategy, entitled *It's Time: Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence*. With nearly \$100 million in funding over five years and \$20 million per year on an ongoing basis, this Strategy includes prevention, support for survivors and their families, and responsive legal and justice systems.

We also invested in the construction and renovation of shelters and transition houses for victims of family violence, amendments to the *Criminal Code* to clarify aspects of sexual assault law relating to consent, as well as intimate partner violence offences; and launching the first ongoing national survey on gender-based violence in Canada.

Through this strategy and other efforts, we remain determined to seek justice for missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and to prevent these tragedies from continuing to occur.

This past spring, our Government announced additional funding to expand the Strategy in order to also focus on preventing teen dating violence, enhancing and developing preventative bullying and cyber-bullying initiatives, and better equipping health professionals to provide appropriate care to victims.

This point about health care is worth underscoring because a trauma- and violence-informed approach within the context of healthcare is becoming more and more necessary for to health care providers.

We are increasingly aware that people seeking services—in health care, housing, justice or other systems—may have histories of violence and trauma. Service providers and organizations who may not understand the complexity, severity, or lasting impacts of violence and trauma may unintentionally re-traumatize victims. Trauma- and violence-informed approaches promote fundamental changes in how systems are designed, how organizations function, and how practitioners engage with people.

These approaches recognize that experiences of violence are strongly linked to gender. Violence has consequences for women's health, and health workers can play a role in our efforts to end violence against women and to alleviate its consequences. Policies and practices that recognize the correlation between violence, trauma, negative health outcomes, and behaviour are more likely to increase safety, control and resilience for people who are seeking services in relation to experiences of violence.

In this context, we appreciate very much the work undertaken by PAHO and the WHO related to integrating a gender perspective into health research, the development of programmes and policies that promote gender equality and equity for women in health, and enhancing awareness on specific women's health issues and overall promotion and improvement of women's health and rights.

Canada's efforts to put an end to violence against women will not succeed without a wider effort to promote a culture of gender equality and respect, and we know this for a very specific and Canadian reason.

The 16 Days of Activism campaign includes December 6th, Canada's National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women.

December 6th is the anniversary of the 1989 massacre in Montréal. On that day, 14 women were viciously murdered at the Université de Montréal's engineering school in a senseless and hateful act of violence. The shooter targeted his victims *because* they were women, studying engineering.

The shocking event led the Parliament of Canada to designate December 6th as a National Day of Remembrance and Action. Every year on December 6th, we mourn as a nation, and reflect on this tragedy as a devastating reminder of what can happen when hatred and misogyny are allowed to prevail. That day Canadians saw the effect of the violence and discrimination that had marked our society. Our failure to recognize the pervasive presence of gender based violence in our communities, and our benign reaction to it, enabled the violent act that cost those 14 women their lives. By turning our backs on micro-aggressions, by blaming victims for their victimhood, by allowing bullying and discrimination, and by adhering to rigid and

outdated gender based roles, we establish and support the same culture of violence that empowered the gunman on that horrible day.

30 years later, the effects of this tragedy continue to be felt. Women remain targets because of their gender; gender-based violence continues to affect the daily lives of women and girls around the world. We must find a way to move forward.

Recently we have seen the emergence of anti-rights movements, and it is disheartening to see them gaining momentum across the globe. Ending violence against women means transforming a culture that devalues women and dismisses their voices. A culture that justifies roles or allocates power based on stereo-typical or socially ascribed norms and standards at best denies the basic rights and dignity of women, and at worst produces and reinforces the unequal, imbalanced and violent paradigm that led to the Montreal Massacre.

As long as ideology is allowed to prevail over what we know to be true about the indivisibility of our rights as people, women and girls will continue to suffer discrimination, denial of education and opportunity, and their inherent right to self-determination.

Human rights are not assigned by sex or by gender. They belong to us all as individuals. In Canada, we learned this the hard way on December 6th, and we continue to learn it through national processes including the Commission on Missing and Murder Indigenous Women. We have a long way to go.

It will be by valuing the rights and autonomy of all gender identities that we will make the leap necessary to eliminate gender based violence

We each have the opportunity and the responsibility to stand up against misogyny, sexism, and hate, and to work to create a culture of respect.

Over the past year, following the launch of the Strategy, our Government used social media to engage Canadians to ask what they think they can do to prevent gender-based violence and also suggested five approaches to consider in becoming an ally in our collective efforts to end gender-based violence. These suggested approaches included:

1. Listen: be open to learning from the experiences of others
2. Believe: support survivors and those affected by violence
3. Speak out: add your voice to call out violence
4. Intervene: find a safe way to help when you see acts of gender-based violence
5. Act: give your time to organizations working to end violence, and be the change you want to see

Every single one of us, no matter our gender identity, can and must be part of the solution to change the culture of violence. We must find the courage to stand up and speak out against gender-based violence in all its forms. That means valuing the voices of women and girls, fighting the injustices and inequalities that put the most vulnerable women at the greatest risk of violence, and breaking down a culture that dismisses women's worth.

Together, across Canada and around the world, we continue to work to eliminate violence against women and girls. Our actions matter. Our words matter. Each of us has the power to make our world more just and more gender-equal. We are interdependent and interconnected, and we are stronger when everyone's rights are protected.

All of us have a role to play in challenging the sexism, discrimination, and gender inequality that we see every day.