

Canada's feminist government needs improvement, Oxfam Canada says ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Canada's feminist government has significant work left to do on a range of policy issues affecting women's equality, Oxfam Canada says in a new scorecard.

The only point on which Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government scored well -- getting a green-light rating -- is on representation, where Oxfam Canada says the government took meaningful steps to support women's leadership "by appointing Canada's first gender-balanced cabinet and deciding to restore funding for women's rights advocacy."

Trudeau is a self-proclaimed feminist, whose government has put an increased focus on gender-based policy analysis and women's rights in international development.

The report also notes the "important policy and spending decisions" on a national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, and new money for childcare and women's shelters.

On jobs and pay equity, Oxfam gives the government a red light, noting it hasn't taken any steps to ensure women's work is equally valued.

The government got a yellow light on the remaining six policy issues identified by Oxfam, including conflict and crisis, violence against women, taxes, climate change, global development and care work, including affordable childcare.

"It's too early to say if it's a pass or fail," said Lauren Ravon, director of policy and campaigns for Oxfam Canada, citing the government's 15 months in office.

"On the whole, the intentions are there. It's kind of the right commitments but we need more tangible policy decisions and, most importantly, investments."

'Talk is good. Action is even better'

Ravon says the six yellow-light rankings show the government is making the right commitments, but "a commitment without resources isn't much of a commitment at all."

"The talk is good. Action is even better. We're definitely hopeful for the next couple of years," Ravon said.

Status of Women Minister Maryam Monsef said there's never before been a federal strategy to address and prevent gender-based violence, one of a number of programs the government is preparing.

"We have worked towards enhancing gender equality and addressing and preventing gender-based violence," Monsef said at a press conference in Ottawa, where she announced \$285,000 in funding for Planned Parenthood Ottawa.

"The Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls inquiry was one part of that. Investing nearly \$90 million in shelters across the country is a part of that. We are working towards poverty reduction with the strategy. We are working towards a national housing strategy," Monsef said.

"We do have a long way to go."

Monsef said the government will soon be unveiling its strategy to prevent gender-based violence.

Wednesday is International Women's Day, leading a number of organizations to release reports on a range of feminist issues.

'Right number' of women in politics

The Oxfam report comes the same day as a new poll by Abacus Data that shows a majority of Canadians think there are enough or too many women in politics, at the same time that they overestimate how many MPs are women.

Women occupy only 26 per cent of seats in the House, but the average estimate of those Abacus polled thought it was 31 per cent. More than half -- 54 per cent -- said the right number of women are elected at the municipal, provincial and federal levels. Four per cent think there are too many women elected, while 42 per cent say there are too few women in politics.

Abacus further found that men and women say they would advocate for different issues were they elected to office. Asked to list their three priorities, "women were more likely to say they would campaign on making housing more affordable, improving public healthcare, and taking action to address climate change," Abacus said in their report, while "men were more likely to focus on reducing public debt, cutting taxes for corporations, and spending more on public infrastructure."

The poll was conducted on behalf of Equal Voice, an organization that works to help more women get elected at all levels of government. Abacus used an online poll to survey 2,125 Canadians aged 18 and over from Feb. 10 to 16, 2017. A random sample of panelists was invited to complete the survey from a large representative panel of over 500,000 Canadians.

It's not possible to state a margin of error for online surveys, but the margin of error for a comparable probability-based random sample of 2,150 is plus or minus 2.2%, 19 times out of 20.

The data were weighted according to census data to ensure that the sample matched Canada's population according to age, gender, educational attainment, and region, Abacus said

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