

# B.C. not meeting women's rights targets established by UN, says legal advocacy group <sup>[1]</sup>

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## EXCERPTS

A legal advocacy group says British Columbia is falling short of meeting targets set by the United Nations on women's rights.

The report card released by West Coast LEAF (Women's Legal Education and Action Fund) says the province is missing targets in a UN convention aimed at eliminating all forms of discrimination against women in a number of areas, including prison conditions, violence against women and poverty.

Although seven of nine focus areas showed improvements, the highest grade was a C-plus for health and employment.

The handling of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, and access to childcare received the lowest grade of D.

"We are so far still from a society where women are safe, and a huge part of that has to do with systemic barriers to seeking safety in terms of access to the resources that women often need to be free from abuse," Alana Prochuk, manager of public legal education with West Coast LEAF, told The Early Edition host Rick Cluff.

B.C. received low grades on services such as access to affordable legal aid, childcare and housing.

### Access to justice

Access to family law legal services is limited in B.C. compared to other provinces, according to Prochuk, who says many people can't afford a lawyer to handle these cases. Those who can might not be able to retain a lawyer for any length of time.

"Often times, a person leaving an abusive relationship may be able to get an initial protection order in place against the abusive person that might expire. They might have a hard time getting further legal help after that," Prochuk said.

The high cost of child care for B.C. families earned the province a D grade.

The average day care costs for a Metro Vancouver family has gone up by about \$535 in the last year, she said, and is now the second highest household budget item, with wait list fees on top in many cases.

"It really keeps care out of reach for so many families that need it, and forces families to rely on unlicensed care, which can sometimes be dangerous," she said.

### Action needed for missing and murdered

The province scored another D grade for its lack of action in the cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, an issue that has garnered over 100 recommendations from both a provincial inquiry and a U.N. report that looked at Canada's missing women.

While Prochuk remains cautiously optimistic, she said LEAF will continue to press the government to improve its performance.

"If we respect women, then we push for policies where everyone can get their needs met, everyone can have a reasonable chance at thriving in life."

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