

Canada commits to bold and unprecedented global investments to support a caring economy and advance women's rights ^[1]

Author: Oxfam Canada

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EXCERPTS

OTTAWA – Today Prime Minister Trudeau took bold action in support of a global feminist economic recovery by announcing \$100 million in new international assistance funding dedicated to paid and unpaid care work at the Generation Equality Forum, the largest multi-sector gathering on women's rights in the world. This is the first targeted global investment in the care economy by a donor government.

This international assistance commitment, alongside Canada's historic \$30 billion commitment to build a national early learning and child care system in the 2021 federal budget, shows the government sees investment in the care economy – in areas such as childcare, eldercare and decent working conditions for domestic workers – as essential components to both Canada and the world's pandemic economic recovery strategies.

"This is a trailblazing commitment by the Government of Canada, and I applaud Prime Minister Trudeau and Canada's Minister for International Development Karina Gould for their bold feminist leadership. Investing in care drives economic growth, reduces poverty and inequality, tackles sexist norms and supports gender equality," said Lauren Ravon, Executive Director of Oxfam Canada. "This investment will be critical to helping countries around the world recover from the impacts of the pandemic in a more gender-just and sustainable way."

COVID-19 exposed how important care is for our society and our economy, while also demonstrating just how fragile the care sector is. Heavy and unequal care responsibilities remain one of the most significant barriers to gender equality across the world. According to the International Labour Organization, even before the pandemic hit 42 per cent of women of working age said they were unable to do paid work because of their unpaid care responsibilities such as care-giving activities and domestic chores like cleaning and cooking – compared to just 6 per cent of men.

Oxfam, along with global allies, has been calling for a multi-million-dollar investment in programs which will help recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care work, freeing up women's time and creating more opportunities for work and political and community participation. Research from Oxfam shows that the monetary value of unpaid care work globally for women aged 15 and over is at least \$10.8 trillion annually – three times the size of the world's tech industry. Ensuring decent work for paid care workers is also an essential step that Oxfam has called for to ensure the long-term sustainability of the care sector. Investing in both paid and unpaid care, in Canada and around the world, will support women's rights and makes good economic sense.

This \$100 million commitment has the potential to support initiatives that advocate for the rights of care workers, create and improve care infrastructure and support programs which foster positive social norms around men and women's shared responsibilities for care. In line with Oxfam's recommendations, this programming should be developed through partnerships with women's rights organizations, feminist movements, women's funds and civil society in the Global South – an essential approach to ensure it effectively addresses gender equality. Canada's leadership today opens an important opportunity to spur investment from other donor countries, paving the way to make investing in care a global priority.

"The care economy has been ignored in global efforts to tackle poverty and inequality for far too long. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us all that child care, health care and elder care is absolutely critical for the well-being of our communities, our societies and our economies – and that women and girls shoulder a disproportionate yet undervalued responsibility for this work," said Diana Sarosi, Director of Policy and Campaigns for Oxfam Canada. "We hope that Canada's groundbreaking commitment incentivizes other donor countries to invest in paid and unpaid care programming, and catalyzes a step-change in the international community's commitment to investing in care."

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