

From a woman's perspective: Canada's place in the world ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Today's day-after-International-Women's-Day story in the *New York Times* ^[2] by Nancy Folbre links to four indices of gender equity.

How is Canada doing?

Canada ranks 4th in the Human Development Index (we were number one for eight years) as well as the UNDP Gender Development Index, behind Norway, Australia and Iceland. Norway has been ranked the best country for human development and gender equality for seven years now.

The UNDP's Gender Empowerment Index puts us at 10th place (behind Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Iceland, the Netherlands, Belgium, Australia and Germany)

The World Economic Forum Gender Gap Index places us in 18th place, where we've been since 2007.

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While this ranking shows stasis for Canada in the past few years, any improvements women have seen in the past decade are based on their own steam -- getting more post-secondary education, working more, buying more homes, getting deeper into personal debt. For years federal budgets have focused on tax cuts and, more recently, stimulus that primarily benefits markets and men. Women, on the other hand, are the primary beneficiaries of improved access to public transit, child care, health care, affordable housing, affordable education, etc. etc. all supports that require more, not less, public sector involvement.

At roughly 13% of GDP, the federal share of the economy today stands at levels of the late 1950s, before we had Medicare, unemployment insurance, seniors' income supports and a vast network of universities and colleges, and roughly 2 percentage points lower than the post-war average. The government plan is to pull the size of government further back.

At the same time it's also focused on a crime-and-punishment agenda and a Defence plan that commits the public purse to spending billions more for policing and imprisoning people at home and fighting wars instead of helping develop nations abroad.

You can only make an economically strong country a great country for people to live in with a public sector engaged in supporting the public. A big public sector doesn't necessary mean we'll get the supports people need to reduce violence and have opportunities to learn, grow and participate.

Make a country a safe place for women to live and develop their potential, and it's great for everyone. That's of course why we went to Afghanistan...right? We should be aiming to make Canada the best country in the world for women (and their loved ones) to live.

- reprinted from the Progressive Economics Forum

Region: Canada ^[3]

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