

# Ottawa falling short in assessing gender impact of policy decisions <sup>[1]</sup>

**Author:** Campion-Smith, Bruce & Boutilier, Alex

**Source:** Toronto Star

**Format:** Article

**Publication Date:** 2 Feb 2016

## AVAILABILITY

Read online <sup>[2]</sup>

## EXCERPTS

Two decades after pledging to assess the gender impact of federal government policies, Ottawa is still falling short in its efforts, meaning that obstacles to both men and women still stand, auditor general Michael Ferguson says.

In an audit report released Tuesday, Ferguson reported some progress on the file but cautioned that Ottawa's commitment to assess the gender impact of its policy decisions was still haphazard.

"We observed that gender-based analysis is still not fully deployed across the federal government 20 years after the government committed to applying this type of analysis to its policy decisions," Ferguson said.

He noted that while Status of Women Canada, Treasury Board and Privy Council Office have made progress in this area, the gender analyses done by departments and agencies were "not always complete, nor of consistent quality."

"This means gender considerations, including obstacles to the full participation of diverse groups of men and women, are not always considered in government decisions," he said.

New Democrat MP David Christopherson said the audit findings are evidence the federal government is not taking the issue seriously.

"Imagine, 20 years later and there (are) still six departments that don't even have a framework for recording the information, let alone doing something about it. We're a long, long way from where we need to be," he told reporters.

At a 1995 United Nations conference on women, Ottawa committed to analyze the "gender-specific" impacts on women and men before making decisions on policies, legislation and programs across government.

Those considerations should include assessing the differences between men and women, which could include age, education, language, geography, culture and income.

Such analysis is meant to flag whether an initiative could have unintended impacts, or perhaps treats men and women differently.

Ferguson's audit team examined 16 initiatives undertaken by four departments: Employment and Social Development; Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development; Industry Canada; and Natural Resources.

The audit found that the departments performed gender-based analyses for all initiatives but did not always complete them. For example, in one case, analysis of a funding program for skills training did not flag the underrepresentation of women in the information, communications and technology field.

In another case, the review of an apprentice loan program did not examine barriers to access training and trades for women, visible minorities and immigrant women, the audit found.

Ferguson's report flagged a number of systemic barriers to gender-based analysis, starting with the fact that such assessments are not mandatory. As well, he noted the tight deadlines for developing policy initiatives and limited ability of some departments and agencies for doing this work.

And the report found that Status of Women Canada was unable to track whether gender-based analysis was being considered in the decision-making across government.

Ferguson's report urges the Privy Council Office, Status of Women and Treasury Board to "take concrete actions to identify and address barriers that prevent systematic conduct of rigorous gender-based analysis."

Still, the audit report did find progress in implementing gender-based analysis compared to 2009, the last time the auditor general's office

reviewed the issue.

Patricia Hajdu, the minister of status of women, said she agreed with the audit findings that while progress had been made, “more needs to be done.”

“Our government has been clear about its commitment to consider the gender impacts of our decisions. We will use the auditor general’s report as a renewed call for action within the federal government,” she said Tuesday.

Still, Hajdu said that the government is not considering make gender-based analysis mandatory.

Instead, she said Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has stressed gender equality “from the very first decision that he made,” a reference to his decision to have an equal number of men and women in his cabinet.

-reprinted from Toronto Star

**Region:** Ontario <sup>[3]</sup>

---

**Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022):** <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/16/02/ottawa-falling-short-assessing-gender-impact-policy-decisions>

#### Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/16/02/ottawa-falling-short-assessing-gender-impact-policy-decisions> [2]

<https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2016/02/02/ottawa-falling-short-in-assessing-gender-impact-of-policy-decisions.html> [3]

<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7856>