Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic
Freedom From Violence.
1985 - 2025
Empowering Women & Gender-Diverse Survivors

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Statement: Bill C-2 Risks Undermining Canada's Commitments to Gender-Based Violence Survivors

As organizations that work directly with survivors of gender-based violence—including refugee, non-status, and precariously documented women and gender-diverse people—we are deeply concerned about the implications and likely effects of **Bill C-2**, the *Strong Borders Act*. Introduced on Tuesday, June 3, this legislation threatens to erode the fundamental rights of refugee claimants by undermining due process and restricting access to justice, with especially harsh impacts on survivors of violence.

Canada has long positioned itself as a global leader in advancing gender equality and protecting the rights of those fleeing violence and persecution. Through international commitments such as the **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)**, the **UN Refugee Convention**, and the **Global Compact for Migration**, Canada has pledged to uphold the dignity and safety of vulnerable populations.

Domestically, the federal government has made important investments in addressing gender-based violence, including the **National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence** and the application of **Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus)** across policy development. These efforts have been critical in centering the experiences of survivors in public policy.

However, **Bill C-2 stands in stark contrast to these commitments**. Introduced as a response to organized crime and border threats, the bill proposes sweeping changes to Canada's immigration and refugee system. The legislation lacks a meaningful GBA Plus lens and fails to acknowledge the realities of survivors of gender-based violence—many of whom arrive in Canada with profound trauma, fleeing life-threatening circumstances. The bill represents a direct attack on the rights of refugee claimants and migrants by imposing rigid timelines, expanding discretionary powers, enabling the sharing of personal information without consent, and conflating irregular migration with criminality—all of which disproportionately harm the most vulnerable.

Survivors fleeing gender-based violence abroad are learning about legal processes with the added burden of living with trauma. Many are forced to do so under the control of an abusive partner who may restrict their access to information, support networks, or community resources. Others may be further exploited due to their vulnerable status — experiencing forms of harm such as **sexual violence, forced marriage,**

economic coercion, labour exploitation, and other intersecting abuses. Imposing strict time limits on these most marginalized refugees ignores Canada's commitments to gender equity and safety.

Survivors—particularly those who are racialized, Indigenous, 2SLGBTQI+, or living with precarious immigration status—face **heightened risks of lethality and femicide**. Denying them access to protection based on how or when they arrived in Canada is not only unjust—it is dangerous. We urge the government to find a different approach that doesn't harm survivors of gender-based violence in the interests of trying to enhance public safety.

Organizations like the **Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic** and others across the country are already working at their capacity to provide trauma-informed legal, counselling, and advocacy services. Bill C-2 will increase demand while narrowing legal pathways, leaving survivors with fewer options and a greater risk of deportation, detention, or death.

We urge the Government of Canada to:

- **Reassess Bill C-2** through a robust GBA Plus framework;
- **Engage directly with frontline organizations and survivors** to understand the real-world impacts of this legislation;
- **Ensure that no survivor is denied protection** due to procedural barriers or irregular entry;
- **Uphold Canada's international and domestic commitments** to gender equality and human rights.

Canada has the tools, the frameworks, and the leadership to do better. We call on the government to act now—by withdrawing Bill C-2 and ending the Safe Third Country Agreement—before putting more lives at further risk.

Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic

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Endorsed by the following organizations:

- AccessBC Campaign
- Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights
- Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes
- Amanda Dale - Human Rights Research and Education Centre, University of Ottawa Faculty of Law
- Aura Freedom International

- Building a Bigger Wave
- BWSS Battered Women's Support Services
- Canadian Alliance for Sex Work Law Reform
- Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives
- Canadian Center for Women Empowerment
- Canadian Council for Refugees
- Canadian Council of Muslim Women (CCMW)
- Canadian Women's Foundation
- Community Resource Centre (Killaloe) Inc.
- Counselling and Family Service Ottawa / Service familial et counseling Ottawa
- Elizabeth Fry National
- Ending Sexual Violence Association of Canada (ESVA Canada)
- FCJ Refugee Centre
- Fédération des femmes du Québec
- Fédération des maisons d'hébergement pour femmes
- Guelph-Wellington Women in Crisis
- Inasmuch House, Mission Services of Hamilton
- Interval House
- Kensington-Bellwoods Community Legal Services
- Lanark County Interval House and Community Support
- Luke's Place
- Migrant Workers Alliance
- North York Women's Centre
- Northwestern Ontario Women's Centre
- Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses: OAITH
- Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants

- Ottawa Coalition To End Violence Against Women - OCTEVAW
- Ottawa Rape Crisis Centre
- SAVIS (Sexual Assault and Violence Intervention Services of Halton)
- Sarnia Lambton Coordinating Committee on Violence Against Women
- Sexual Assault Centre Kingston
- South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario
- South Asian Womens' and Immigrant's Services
- Stella, l'amie de Maimie
- West Coast LEAF
- White Ribbon
- WomanACT
- Women's National Housing and Homelessness Network
- Women's Shelters Canada
- Women’s Habitat of Etobicoke
- YWCA Canada
- YWCA Sudbury
- YWCA Toronto