

Minister of Justice  
and Attorney General of Canada



Ministre de la Justice  
et procureur général du Canada

The Honourable / L'honorable Arif Virani, P.C., M.P. / c.p., député  
Ottawa, Canada K1A 0H8

**April 5, 2024**

Her Worship Andrea Horwath  
Mayor  
City of Hamilton

**(by email)**

Dear Madam Mayor:

Thank you for your correspondence, sent on behalf of the Hamilton City Council, concerning the epidemic of gender-based violence and femicide. Please excuse the delay in responding.

Gender-based violence is unacceptable and has no place in our country. The Government of Canada is committed to ending it in all forms, including intimate partner violence (IPV), and is working to address any gaps in the *Criminal Code* to ensure a robust justice system response.

While there is no single agreed-upon definition of “femicide” in the national or international context, the term is widely understood to refer to the killing of women, primarily by men, because of their gender. I agree with the United Nations and the Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability that femicide is the most extreme form of violence and discrimination against women and girls.

Under the *Criminal Code*, first and second degree murder are punishable by a mandatory penalty of life imprisonment. Similarly, manslaughter is punishable by a maximum penalty of life imprisonment, and parole ineligibility is based on the sentence imposed. In addition, the *Criminal Code* is designed to ensure that offenders of violence against women and girls receive sentences that are proportionate to the gravity of the offence and the degree of responsibility of the offender, taking into account aggravating factors. These can include evidence that the offence was motivated by bias, prejudice, or hate based on sex or gender identity or expression, or evidence that the offender abused their

intimate partner, a member of the victim's family, or a member of their own family. In convictions of second degree murder, the presence of aggravating factors may increase the offender's parole ineligibility period, and in convictions of manslaughter, aggravating factors may result in longer sentences. Justice Canada officials are currently examining ways to strengthen the criminal justice system's response to the murder of women.

Our government acknowledges the importance of identifying femicide to raise awareness and assist in developing appropriate responses. For this reason, Statistics Canada is working to track all gender-related homicides in Canada. In April 2023, Statistics Canada released a publication entitled *Gender-related homicide of women and girls in Canada* (<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2023001/article/00003-eng.htm>). Please be assured that departmental officials are working with Statistics Canada to determine what more can be done to improve our knowledge of femicide, including through enhanced data collection measures.

It may interest you to know that in November 2022, the federal, provincial, and territorial Ministers responsible for the Status of Women launched the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence (<https://femmes-egalite-genres.canada.ca/en/gender-based-violence/intergovernmental-collaboration/national-action-plan-end-gender-based-violence.html>).

The National Action Plan was informed by more than 1 000 recommendations collected over years of engagement with Indigenous partners and a wide range of stakeholders, including victims, survivors, front-line service providers, community leaders, experts, academics, and civil society. This 10-year plan is a strategic framework for action to support victims, survivors, and their families, no matter where they live. Budget 2022 provided \$539.3 million over five years in funding, including \$525 million to support the provinces and territories in their efforts to implement the National Action Plan.

The Government of Canada has also worked with the provinces and territories to establish bilateral funding agreements. As of December 2023, bilateral agreements have been announced in all 13 jurisdictions. These agreements are flexible and support jurisdictions in addressing their respective challenges, needs, and individual priorities under five pillars that guide cross-country efforts to end gender-based violence: support for victims, survivors, and their families; prevention; responsive justice system; Indigenous-led approaches; and social infrastructure and enabling environment.

Responsibility for the implementation of the National Action Plan rests with my colleague the Honourable Marci Ien, Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth. Therefore, I have forwarded a copy of your correspondence to her for information and consideration.

I can assure you that the federal government is committed to ending the gender-based

violence epidemic. I welcome Hamilton City Council's motion, and I agree that more must be done to protect against gender-based violence. I appreciate the opportunity to engage with you on these important issues.

Thank you again for writing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Arif Virani', with a stylized flourish.

The Honourable Arif Virani, P.C., M.P.  
Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada

c.c.: The Honourable Marci Ien, P.C., M.P.  
Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth