



December 13, 2019

**The Honourable Karina Gould,
Minister of International Development
House of Commons, Ottawa, ON, K1A 0A2**

Dear Honourable Minister Gould,

Congratulations on your re-election to the House of Commons and your appointment as Minister of International Development.

I write to you on behalf of Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights (formerly Planned Parenthood Canada), a progressive, pro-choice charitable organization committed to advancing and upholding sexual and reproductive health and rights in Canada and globally.

We are pleased to see your mandate letter include reference to: Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy and global leadership role as a leading donor on sexual and reproductive health and rights, increasing Canada's international assistance, and improving the transparency, accountability and effectiveness of Canada's international assistance.

In June 2019, Canada announced a commitment of \$1.4 billion annually to global health development assistance, with \$700 million per year directed at the most neglected area of sexual and reproductive health and rights. This announcement was welcomed by Action Canada and the broader development sector, which had come together under the *Thrive Initiative* to advocate for Canadian leadership in these areas. Now, Canada must act quickly to deliver on these commitments.

We urge you, as Minister of International Development, to take swift action to fully implement the June 4th announcement and carry through on Canada's commitment to defend women's rights and sexual and reproductive health and rights globally. In doing so, we urge you to:

- Prioritize support for the most neglected and stigmatized areas of sexual and reproductive health and rights

The neglected areas include: adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights, including quality sex-ed; access to contraceptives; access to safe abortion; advocacy for sexual and reproductive health and rights; and sexual and reproductive health services in emergency settings. Prioritizing these areas requires investment in programming that is both standalone and integrated within broader health and gender equality initiatives.

In the face of increasing pushbacks against women's health and human rights around the world, Canada is uniquely positioned to help fill gaps where sexual and reproductive health services have been affected by rising populist attacks on women's rights, including the U.S. Global Gag Rule, and increasing inequality around the globe. Canada has the opportunity to help prevent this backsliding and support the SRHR advocates and human rights defenders holding the line against these attacks. Further, action on the neglected areas of SRHR is critical to achieving the targets set in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, to which Canada has signed onto.

- Develop a robust accountability mechanism to track and report back to Canadians on progress on the June 4th commitment, and accompanying internal capacity to support its implementation

The June 4th announcement is the largest commitment Canada has ever made in the realm of development assistance. It therefore requires the creation of a new accountability framework to monitor and evaluate programming and investment across the initiative. The accountability framework should be developed in consultation with Canadian and



global experts, including specifically SRHR experts, include regular reviews conducted in consultation with Canadian and global experts, and have the capacity to track investments and results across the neglected areas of SRHR.

Implementation of the June 4th commitment must also be accompanied by meaningful investment in technical capacity, specifically as it relates to the neglected areas of SRHR, across Global Affairs Canada. This includes ensuring existing staff have the skills needed to determine quality programming across GAC investment streams and provide sound policy expertise to advance SRHR in multilateral fora, throughout Canada's missions abroad and in intergovernmental spaces. Further to this, implementation requires the creation of effective accountability for implementation and internal capacity development at senior levels of the department.

- Establish a stand-alone Canadian global sexual and reproductive rights policy

While Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy provides a base from which leadership on SRHR can be rooted, further clarity, policy coherence and direction is required in order for Canada to assume its role as leading donor in this area globally. A Canadian global sexual and reproductive rights policy, applied to both Canada's development assistance and foreign policy, is required to define Canada's strategy to advance SRHR, identify linkages across departmental priorities and areas of work, support the increase in capacity required to increase leadership in this area, and prevent backsliding on SRHR.

- Strengthen funding mechanisms to allow for core, flexible, reliable and responsive funding for local feminist organizations, particularly those engaging in advocacy, including advocacy to advance SRHR at local, national, regional and global levels

Traditional funding models used by bilateral funders do not work for feminist organizations. They are administratively onerous, taxing on small organizations, fail to reach grassroots women's groups and activists, and do not support sustainable community-led development. GAC must strengthen its funding mechanisms to support feminist advocacy, capacity-building, and movement building initiatives by: eliminating the tying of service-delivery interventions with advocacy, simplifying calls for proposals and financial and reporting requirements, accepting risk and redefining success, recognizing that change (particularly law and policy change) can take time and the path to change may not be linear, expanding the scope of results-based management to include collection of qualitative information, case studies, etc. in line in with feminist approaches to monitoring, learning and evaluation, and fostering consultative, transparent, and respectful relationships between funder and grantee.

We look forward to working with you to realize Canada's full potential as the leading donor advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights worldwide and welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss the above in greater detail.

Sincerely,

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