



DEMOCRACY DURING #METOO: TAKING STOCK OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN CANADIAN POLITICS

A comprehensive scope report prepared for Equal Voice

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This report is dedicated to all hard-working women politicians —and aspiring ones— from all political parties and at all levels of government in Canada who have experienced sexism, racism, ageism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia, sexual harassment, or violence of any kind simply for their choice of career.

Any errors of fact or interpretation are the sole responsibility of the authors.

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Executive Summary

One hundred years after some Canadian women were given the federal franchise, women remain significantly underrepresented in every legislature across Canada. Indigenous, racialized, and young women face additional barriers to participation and are underrepresented far beyond their numbers in the population. While barriers to participation are broad and pervasive, sexual harassment and violence against women in politics - whether in the form of direct threats, implied threats, violent symbolic images, and physical violence - play a significant role in limiting women's political participation.

This report presents non-partisan, evidence-based research on how governments, legislatures, civil society, and non-governmental organizations have addressed the problem of violence against women in politics both within and beyond Canada. The data included in the report draw from extensive Canadian and global research and a select number of interviews with current and former women politicians from across the political spectrum who have bravely spoken out about their experiences of sexual harassment and violence in Canadian politics.

The report's goals are to: (1) enhance public policy discussions on how to combat gender-based violence in Canadian politics and (2) raise awareness about this issue amongst decision-makers and the Canadian public.

Current strategies, policies, and legislation from eight countries and eight civil society organizations are included here. These include the world's first law explicitly and specifically criminalizing violence against women in politics (Bolivia, with similar models adopted in Costa Rica and Mexico). The recently adopted (July 2018) Grievance Scheme in the United Kingdom and the new law adopted (December 2018) by the United States Congress to address sexual harassment are also included, as are recent discussions and changes within the United Nations and European Parliament.

Although Canada had taken some steps to address this issue in the past, in the #MeToo era equal and full participation in the democratic process demand further concrete action to solve the problem of violence against women in Canadian politics once and for all. This report offers 12 recommendations for governments, legislatures, political parties, and media, all of which, we believe, have a role to play in combatting this fundamental issue for Canadian democracy and gender equity in politics.

About Equal Voice

[Equal Voice](#) is a national, bilingual, multi-partisan organization dedicated to electing more women to all levels of political office in Canada. The organization works with all political parties to increase the nomination of women candidates; promote change both in and outside of legislatures to support increased representation of women; equip women to run for office through online campaign schools as well as networking and skills development programs; and inspire young women to consider a political career through life-changing events like [Daughters of the Vote](#). Equal Voice is the leading authority on women in politics across the country, tracking and monitoring women's representation among candidates and in legislatures and governments in Canada.

Through a 2017 Department for Women and Gender Equality grant, Equal Voice is currently working to make systemic change in eight jurisdictions across the country, supporting elected representatives and legislative assemblies seeking to develop, adopt, or improve harassment policies. The organization has developed recommendations to support elected representatives, parties, clerks, and others developing

and evaluating harassment policies in a number of Canadian legislative assemblies. To date, these efforts have been concentrated in Alberta, British Columbia, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia. Additional efforts on this project include a focus on family-friendly practices, such as parental leave, in an effort to encourage more women to consider politics and to support and help retain those who are elected.

In June 2018 Equal Voice (along with Dr. Tracey Raney and Dr. Grace Lore) made a submission to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women on VAW-P in Canada. The submission tracked examples in the Canadian context and included several recommendations to improve harassment policies. Key to the recommendations was the establishment of an independent third-party responsible for taking complaints and guiding the resolution process. Other recommendations included the need for harassment policies to apply to and encompass social events and online interactions, the absence of unfair and unreasonable time constraints on the complaint process, and reasonable policies for dealing with unfounded cases. The importance of mandatory, in-person sexual harassment training was also highlighted.

The same month Equal Voice appeared before the [Status of Women Committee](#) to discuss factors germane to women's full and equal political participation. Its submission to the Committee made recommendations for unimpeded access to maternity leave; virtual participation and voting in committee work; the need for childcare that corresponds to the calendar and sitting hours of the House; and reduced travel obligations for expectant and new parents. These issues have been identified as critical to a healthy work-life balance for all Members of Parliament, but particularly for women since the burden of care work still falls largely on their shoulders.

Whether it is by working with elected officials, candidates, staff, or political parties to pursue safer, more inclusive spaces from the halls of power to the campaign office, or by filling the House of Commons with young women on International Women's Day, Equal Voice is committed to supporting multi-partisan efforts to increase the number of women in all avenues of politics from the band council level and municipal offices to the provincial and federal cabinet tables.

Introduction

The #MeToo movement that ignited the world in October 2017 continues to draw attention to the problem of sexual harassment globally. The movement emerged after allegations that Harvey Weinstein, an international media mogul, had sexually harassed or assaulted over fifty Hollywood women celebrities over the course of several decades. The more recent popularized and renewed interest followed the original #MeToo movement initiated by Tarana Burke, a black feminist civil rights activist in the United States, in 2006. Since these revelations, a floodgate has opened as women from all over the world began to speak publicly – usually on social media -- about their own experiences of sexual harassment in what has now become known as the #MeToo movement. This movement includes the voices of women parliamentarians and political staffers who have bravely talked about their own experiences of being sexually harassed while working in politics both in Canada and around the world.

The purpose of this report is to offer non-partisan, evidence-based research on how decision-makers and relevant stakeholders (ie. civil society organizations) have addressed the problem of violence against women in politics to date. We do so in two respects: first, we document some of the actions and steps taken by national legislatures that address violence against women in politics in 8 countries. While noting that some of these parliaments had enacted policies, codes or laws that prohibit (some aspects) of VAW-P prior to #MeToo, we focus primarily on documenting legislative actions taken since 2017. This comparative research will be useful for Canadian decision makers as they consider how best to combat violence against women in Canadian politics in the #MeToo era.

Second, we provide an overview of some of the major actions, reports, research, and calls to action undertaken by civil society organizations to help combat violence against women in politics. This comparative information will be useful for anti-violence and gender equality advocates in Canada as they reflect on best practices and strategies to help eradicate the problem of violence against women in the political sphere.

It should be noted at the outset that this report is not intended as a complete review of all actions taken globally on VAW-P. Rather, it should be viewed as an entry point into a broader public discussion on the prevalence of, and need for changes to combat, violence against women in Canadian politics today. The data included in the report draw from extensive Canadian and global research and a select number of interviews with current and former women politicians from across the political spectrum who spoke to us about their experiences of sexual harassment in Canadian politics.

The report's goals are to: (1) enhance public policy discussions on how to combat gender-based violence in Canadian politics and (2) raise awareness about this issue amongst decision-makers and the Canadian public.

Although Canada had taken some steps to address this issue in the past, in the #MeToo era, equal and full participation in the democratic process demands further, concrete action in order to solve the problem of violence against women in Canadian politics once and for all.

"We owe future generations nothing less than a world free of sexual violence... MeToo is a movement, not a moment."

– Tarana Burke
TEDWomen Talk, Nov. 2018

Violence Against Women in Politics: What's the Problem?

Violence against women in politics is widespread globally and deeply troubling. It is a phenomenon that predates the #MeToo movement but has only recently been the subject of academic research. Academic studies have found that women who stand as candidates and politicians from around the world face frequent intimidation in the form of sexual, psychological, physical threats to their well-being, both in person and online (Inter-parliamentary Union 2016; Krook and Restrepo Sanin 2016; Krook 2017; Collier and Raney 2018b). VAW-P is violence which specifically targets women *as women* with the intent of intimidating or silencing them, and/or pressuring them to: “step down as candidates or resign a particular political office” (NDI 2017, 13; Krook and Restrepo Sanin 2016). Political violence is unique from other forms of violence: “(1) it targets women specifically *because* of their gender; (2) in its very form it can be gendered, as exemplified by sexist threats and sexual violence; and (3) its impact is to discourage *women in particular* from being or becoming politically active” (NDI 2017, 12).

Krook and Restrepo Sanin (2016) identify four interrelated dimensions of VAW-P: physical, psychological, economic, and symbolic. Physical violence includes acts which affect the physical integrity of a woman and/or her family members. Psychological violence refers to trauma to the mental state of individuals (e.g. threats of rape). Economic violence seeks to control women’s access to resources in the political realm, such as the withholding of salary indemnities, office budgets, or staffing needs. Finally, symbolic violence seeks to diminish/erase women’s presences in political office, such as the distribution of highly sexualized and/or violent images depicting women politicians on social media. While violence in politics is usually directed at a specific person, its implications extend beyond those targets, serving to frighten and deter other politically active women from engaging in politics. It also communicates to the broader society that women generally do not belong in public life (NDI 2017, 13).

Drawing on this research, throughout this report we employ a broad definition of violence against women in politics (VAW-P) to mean the following:

Violence against women in politics is part of the spectrum of gender-based violence that includes physical, psychological, economic and symbolic actions or threats against women that result in, or are intended to result in, harm or suffering against women simply because they are women. Individuals who experience violence throughout the political process include voters, campaign and political party volunteers, scrutineers and elections officials, political party staffers, legislative and

Defining VAW-P:
Violence against women in politics is part of the spectrum of gender-based violence that includes physical, psychological, economic and symbolic actions or threats against women that result in, or are intended to result in, harm or suffering against women simply because they are women. It is intersectional, as racialized minorities, members of the LGBTQ community, the poor, religious minorities, disabled persons, and younger women tend to experience violence in politics disproportionately based on their social identities and diverse characteristics.

administrative staffers, political party members, candidates, and elected officials as well as those appointed to political office. Like gender-based violence more broadly, violence against women in politics is a result of historically unequal power relationships between women and men in society.

Since Canadian politics continues to be dominated by men in all legislatures across the country, gendered power asymmetries embedded within parliamentary rules, cultures and practices can work in tandem to foster and perpetuate violence against women in politics. Violence against women is disproportionately experienced by racialized minorities, members of the LGBTQ community, the poor, religious minorities, disabled persons and younger women who tend to experience violence in politics differentially based on these characteristics. Men can also experience political violence. Men and women who challenge dominant masculine, racialized and heteronormative codes of behaviour in politics tend to experience violence proportionally more than others.

VAW-P is a global problem. A 2016 report by the Inter-Parliamentary Union found that 81.8 percent of women politicians globally had been psychologically abused, while 44.4 percent had received death, rape, beating, or abduction threats (IPU 2016). A 2018 international study of sexism, harassment and violence against women in European parliaments specifically showed widespread evidence of violence against women politicians in these legislatures. 85% of women MPs reported that they had suffered psychological violence, 68% had been the target of sexist comments about their physical appearance or based on gender stereotypes, and 58% had been the target of online sexist attacks on social media. Moreover, 47% said they had received death threats or threats of rape and/or physical violence (IPU 2018b).

Writing in 1985, Canadian political scientist Sylvia Bashevkin noted that “the higher” you went in the political ranks of power, “the fewer” the women in those lofty spaces. Over thirty years later, this idea can be transposed onto women politicians who are attacked, especially on social media. Premiers, cabinet ministers, and mayors – are frequent targets of misogynistic online abuse. As many of us have become aware in the media, recent examples include: numerous personal safety threats including 11 credible death threats over a period of three years against the Premier of Alberta, Rachel Notley; rampant and explicit homophobia and sexism expressed against Premier Kathleen Wynne of Ontario, Canada’s first out-lesbian Premier, on her personal Facebook page; highly sexualised attacks against Mayor Nicole Read of Maple Ridge, B.C.; and more widespread and general abusive commentary about the bodies of women cabinet ministers at both levels of government that includes fat-shaming, sexism, stereotypes, and hateful attacks intended to demean and discredit their targets. Violence is not just directed at the top, however. According to Michelle Rempel, women become a target “as soon as you stick your head above the fence” (personal interview January 2019).

Parliamentary Culture

A contributing factor to VAW-P as identified in our research is the underlying cultures of Parliaments. Not only are most Canadian legislatures male-dominated numerically, but also many of the expectations of workplace behaviour in legislatures are aggressive and confrontational. In formal

“Just her very existence was an affront to these [male backbench MPs]. This had a major impact on me as a young relatively new female MP. That they could be so offended by her standing up and asserting her existence in that moment without her even saying anything yet. It is imprinted on my psyche”.

spaces like Question Period, this includes behaviours such as shouting, catcalling, yelling and belittling your opponent. While some amount of intense discussion and disagreement is to be expected during formal debates, these events are also spaces within which male dominance and privilege are reasserted. One female MP recounted to us how a more senior female MP was treated when she stood up to ask a question during Question Period, and how she was “loudly and forcefully” heckled by backbench male politicians without having even spoken yet. The hyper-partisan nature of Canadian party systems adds further fuel to the fire, where competition is prized over other workplace values, such as collegiality, respect, professionalism, and compassion.

The gendered nature of this partisan political nature is also clear. In a [2015 survey](#) of MPs in the 41st Parliament, The Samara Centre for Democracy found that not only do men heckle more than women, but women are more likely to be the targets of jeering across the floor. The content and consequences are also gendered; women reported hearing more heckles based on gender, age, ethnicity, and appearance and were far more likely to say that this toxic political culture impacts their ability to speak and raise issues in the House of Commons. This parliamentary culture is also racialized. Member of Parliament Celina Caesar-Chavannes, for example, has publicly shared her experiences of racism and the need she has felt to self-censor so as to not be seen as a ‘mad black woman’ (Byblacks.com, 2017). Caesar-Chavannes described racist micro-aggressions she experienced on Parliament Hill as a “death by a thousand cuts” (Cruikshank, 2017).

Parliaments are extremely hierarchical organizations with layers of power dynamics: between cabinets and legislatures, between governing and opposing parties, and between MPs and legislative and political staff. These power imbalances further embed a sense of privilege and entitlement of some over the many. All are further attenuated by societal power asymmetries based on gender and gender identities, race, sexual orientation, age, disability and religion.

This culture is pervasive and exists also in the social and networking spaces where politicians interact with colleagues, staffers, lobbyists, journalists, and others. Often, these ‘social’ events involve alcohol. One MP told us how she stopped attending social, networking events in order to avoid being groped or spoken to in a demeaning, sexualized way, even at the cost of missing out on important networking opportunities for herself and her constituents. In addition to normalizing violence against women, the broader, sexist culture of parliaments thus impedes women’s abilities to do the work that is expected of them in the same way as men.

SPOTLIGHT: SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS AS TOXIC SPACES

A study released in December 2018 by Amnesty International and Element AI corroborates what many politicians from marginalized communities have been saying for some time: misogyny, racism and homophobia are rampant on their Twitter feeds (Amnesty International 2018). The report monitors a sample of women politicians and journalists' twitter feeds in the U.S. and the U.K. throughout 2017 and found 1.1 million abusive or derogatory tweets, or, on average, one every 30 seconds. Black women were disproportionately on the receiving end of such attacks. Online abuse was further experienced by women from across the political spectrum. Mantilla (2015) defines these attacks as "gender-trolling", which is distinct from other types of trolling in that they are usually:

- perpetrated against women who have an opinion online and state it;
- graphic in sexuality and gender-based insults;
- cross-platform in nature (ie. Twitter/Facebook/Instagram);
- high in frequency, intensity and duration; and,
- committed by multiple attackers in a co-ordinated campaign, e.g. cybermobs, bots

For women politicians – especially racialized minorities – social media platforms can indeed be toxic spaces. The victimization of women MPs in the on social media has been well documented. A 2017 U.N. report revealed that MP Stella Creasy received up to 50 online threats per hour in 2013, while Jess Phillips received over 600 rape threats and approximately 5,000 Twitter notifications of "people discussing whether or not they would sexually assault her" (U.N. 2017, 102-103). A 2017 Amnesty International study found that in the lead-up to the 2017 UK general election, Dianne Abbott, a black Labour MP, was the most targeted female MP online, followed by Black and Asian minority women MPs.

In Canada, gender and race-trolling of politicians is commonplace across social media platforms. This includes racist, Islamophobic, homophobic, and misogynist name-calling. We've also seen the disturbing appearance of "parody accounts", which are anonymously created and used to further propagate misogyny and racism. For example, MP Iqra Khalid and Ministers Catherine McKenna and Patty Hajdu have each had parody Twitter accounts created under their names where Islamophobic and sexist attacks have occurred. In the event that a complaint is filed with Twitter, often account owners will quickly delete the account before a complaint can be processed. This 'solution' is woefully inadequate because it relies upon victims to report their abusers, often with no results.

Social media abuse against politicians who are women knows no political stripes, and women from parties across the political spectrum have been targeted. Green Party leader Elizabeth May has spoken out about her experiences of receiving "aggressive" and sexist messages, which included a very specific and credible death threat several years ago. As one interviewee reported to us, the violence that she experiences online comes predominantly from Twitter and on email and ranges from offensive comments about her body, to stalking behaviour, and in at least one instance, constituted criminal harassment.

The misogynistic attacks against Canadian women politicians of all parties and at all levels of government is so commonplace that we are unable to document them all here. But they all aim to deliver the same message: that women do not belong in politics, that their leadership is unwelcomed, and especially, that women should not assume or -- aspire to assume -- the highest offices across the country.

In addition to the psychological damage social media abuse inflicts on women, there are also democratic consequences. In the U.K., women politicians have been advised by their Parliamentary Health and Wellbeing Services to quit Twitter in order to avoid online attacks. For some politicians, social media is one of the most important and effective means of reaching out to their constituents. Such a gendered "chilling effect" could discourage women candidates from taking full advantage of the communicative benefits associated with social media use, putting them at a political disadvantage relative to their male competitors. As one interviewee explained to us, "[The online hate] silenced me. Do I have the stomach to hit 'send'? Do I want to deal with the hate? And I would think to myself, 'Yeah, this is not a hill I want to die on right now'."

Given that the global average of women parliamentarians is just 24% today, any measures or steps that place women at a further disadvantage politically would be detrimental to the goals of gender equality and full and fair democratic participation. More work clearly needs to be done to make social media a safer space for women politicians in Canada and around the world.

Implications of VAW-P

Violence against women is a manifestation of the historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of women's full advancement in society. Violence against women in politics is gender-based violence and a violation of human rights (United Nations 2018, 6). As the special rapporteur for violence against women stated in her 2018 report, “[t]he right of women to participate in public affairs, including by voting and standing for election, is an internationally recognized human right” (United Nations 2018, 9).

The costs of violence against women in politics are high. Politically-based threats to, and acts of, violence against, parliamentary workers reduce the overall well-being of employees. Those who are victimized can experience psychological and physical symptoms of illnesses (e.g. sleeplessness, stress and anxiety in the workplace and personal life, and a host of other physical symptoms). This can reduce productivity in the workplace, leading to negative consequences for political institutions, resulting in lower individual and team morale, higher rates of absenteeism, and potentially higher rates of turnover (Guttek 1985; Gruber 1992). In the case of elected officials, some women may choose not to seek re-election or to run for election at all.

Violence against women in politics undermines democracy and democratic institutions, which are purportedly founded on the principles of free and fair elections, the rule of law, and the equal participation and representation of all citizens. And it weakens public policies when a significant part of the population feels threatened or unable to sit at decision-making tables due to threats of violence against them or their loved ones because of their gender, race, sexual orientation, age, or religion. The cost of violence against women politicians today has repercussions for tomorrow's leadership. A 2018 report by the Westminster Foundation for Democracy found that violence against women in politics has become so common that it deters women from running for office all over the world. The study notes that this is especially the case for younger women, who may: “have an interest in engaging politically but find the environment too toxic or too risky” (WFD 2018a, 15).

Part I: International Context

In this section, we provide an overview of the problem of violence against women in politics from an international perspective, highlighting how two prominent international organizations and institutions - the United Nations and the European Parliament - have addressed this problem over time. These entities are important as they help establish global rules and norms that can influence how, and whether, national legislatures respond to VAW-P.

The United Nations

International and regional legal frameworks and norms exist on the issue of violence against women, although importantly, many of these do not explicitly address violence against women **in politics**. First and foremost, (and as mentioned above), violence against women in politics must be understood as a violation of basic human rights. In 1981, Canada ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which affirms the equal participation of women and men to positions of political leadership and decision-making at all levels (article 2). In 1993, the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women defined violence as: “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether

occurring in public or in private life.”ⁱ The 1993 U.N. Declaration recognized the urgent need for the all women to have access to rights of equality, security, liberty, integrity and dignity of all human beings (United Nations 48/104 1993).

The right to live and work violence-free is further enshrined in various international frameworks and agreements, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Article 4 of the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (1979) further encourages States to: “develop, in a comprehensive way, preventive approaches and all those measures of a legal, political, administrative and cultural nature that promote the protection of women against any form of violence” and to “take measures to ensure that law enforcement officers and public officials responsible for implementing policies to prevent, investigate and punish violence against women, receive training to sensitize them to the needs of women” ([United Nations A/RES 48/104](#), 1993).

The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW; 1979) affirms that all States are required to: “take appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in political and public life and to ensure that they enjoy, on equal terms with men, the right: to vote and be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies; to participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof; and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government (Article 7).

The international community’s commitment to eradicate violence against women was buttressed in the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action which included the elimination of violence as one of its strategic areas of concern. Although the platform does not explicitly reference violence against women in politics, it recognizes that acts of violence against women are perpetrated by and within different sectors, including the family, the general community, and that which is “perpetrated or condoned by the State, where it occurs” (United Nations 1995, D.113). The 2030 Sustainable Development Goals further reaffirms these international commitments in target 5.5 where it calls on states to, “ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life” ([United Nations A/RES/70/1](#), 2015).

In August 2018, the United Nations’ Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women turned the United Nations’ attention more directly to VAW-P when it released a report on the global causes and consequences of violence against women in politics around the world. The report further seeks to “strengthen cooperation and synergies between independent global and regional mechanisms dealing with women’s rights” (Šimonović 2018, 21). It affirms the lack of attention to this problem globally, and the limited data that has been collected on violence against women and requests urgent action be taken, “not only by States and their parliaments, but also by non-State actors, such as political parties and other stakeholders, international organizations and independent monitoring mechanisms on violence against women to prevent and combat gender-based violence against women in politics and elections” (Šimonović 2018, 18).

Some of her key recommendations that are relevant to the Canadian context include:

- ❖ The creation of comprehensive laws to cover all forms of violence, including online;
- ❖ Strengthening the legislative basis for gender parity in all branches and levels of government;
- ❖ Strengthening complaint mechanisms and response protocols in parliaments and electoral management bodies;

- ❖ The need to collect and monitor data on violence against women in politics;
- ❖ Encouraging media to promote public awareness and actions against VAW-P;
- ❖ The importance of government-initiated surveys and public debates to raise awareness about VAW-P;
- ❖ The need for political parties to address VAW-P in founding documents and codes;
- ❖ Including male parliamentarians in efforts to prevent and respond to VAW-P; and,
- ❖ The need for parliamentary caucuses and groups to work with civil society organizations to tackle VAW-P and the culture of silence against all forms of gender-based violence.

As of December 2018, over 70 civil society organizations had signed on to urge Member States to pursue the recommendations in her report. On December 17, 2018, the U.N. General Assembly adopted [Res A/73/148](#), the *Intensification of efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls: sexual harassment*. This is the first resolution adopted by the U.N. on sexual harassment specifically. The resolution encourages all: “national legislative authorities and political parties, as appropriate, to adopt codes of conduct and reporting mechanisms, or revise existing ones, stating zero tolerance by these legislative authorities and political parties for sexual harassment, intimidation and any other form of violence against women in politics” (U.N. Resolution A/73/148 Section 7, 2018b). The resolution further identifies sexual harassment as a barrier to women’s full political, legal, cultural, social, economic, institutional, and religious participation and acknowledges that “promoting women to leadership positions may significantly reduce the risk of sexual harassment” (Section 8(h)).

Finally, Section 13 of the resolution calls upon States to: “prevent, address and prohibit violence, including sexual harassment, against women and girls in public and political life, including women in leadership positions, journalists and other media workers and human rights defenders, including through practical steps to prevent threats, harassment and violence, and to combat impunity by ensuring that those responsible for violations and abuses, including sexual and gender-based violence and threats, including in digital contexts, are promptly brought to justice and held accountable through impartial investigation.”

These efforts are at a time when the United Nations itself has come under scrutiny for its inability to adequately deal with sexual harassment within its own organization. In 2018, a male senior advisor at U.N. Women was fired after an investigation over sexual misconduct allegations from several male employees. A November 2018 online survey completed by over 30,000 U.N. employees showed that junior and temporary staff were particularly vulnerable to sexual harassment, and 1 in 3 staff and contractors reported that they had been sexually harassed in the last two years. Based on its survey, the union representing the employees argued that: “the U.N. has a long way to go before the organization can “fully and openly” discuss sexual harassment, and that there may be “an ongoing sense of mistrust, perceptions of inaction and lack of accountability” (Welsh 2019).

The European Parliament

The European Parliament (EP) has also been active on VAW-P since #MeToo. On October 5th 2017, the EP convened a session to debate sexual violence and harassment and later that same month, passed a resolution affirming its commitment to combatting sexual harassment throughout the European Union by recognizing various international laws, directives, and resolutions, including those mentioned above. Its October 26, 2017 resolution includes, for example, a statement that directs all Member States to sign onto the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combatting violence against women, which came into force in 2014. To date, 11 member states had yet to ratify it.ⁱⁱ Prior to #MeToo, in 2014

the EU established a parliamentary committee to handle harassment cases, but struggled amidst legal and procedural questions.

In October 2017, the EP released a statement to recognize that violence and harassment in political life is “disproportionately targeted at women...[and that] such violence constitutes a violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the obligation to ensure that women can freely participate in political representation.” It also outlined that the European Parliament has a “**zero tolerance stance in the fight against sexual harassment and abuse in the EU**” ([European Parliament 2017/2897\(RSP\)](#)). Similar to the U.N., there have been setbacks and missteps with the EP’s approach to dealing with VAW-P. A [MeTooEP](#) website and Twitter account ([@MeTooEP](#)) was created by staff at the European Parliament to record (anonymously) workers’ experiences of sexism, sexual harassment, and sexual assault in the European Parliament, to track the progress of the European Parliament in implementing its anti-harassment promises, and to provide resources for victims. In 2019, MeTooEP invited MEP candidates running in the upcoming election to publicly sign a pledge vowing that if elected they will work to combat sexual harassment and commit to wider change in society with legislation and policies on equality. The pledge can be found [here](#).

At the end of January 2019, MEPs voted to adopt a new rule that its Members must refrain from “improper behaviour”, using “offensive language” or psychological or sexual harassment. The EP’s Code of Conduct will be annexed to the Rules of Procedure and MEPs must commit in writing to respect the Code. Refusal to sign a declaration could result in an MEP being barred from holding senior offices (e.g. representing the EP on an official delegation or being appointed a rapporteur). Serious breaches of the Code could also result in penalties being imposed ([European Parliament 2019](#)) .

Part II: The Canadian Context

One hundred years after some Canadian women were given the federal franchiseⁱⁱⁱ, women remain significantly underrepresented in every legislature across the country. Today, although women comprise over half of the Canadian population, they occupy only 27% of the seats in the House of Commons. While this percentage is an historical high, according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union this places Canada 59th in its international ranking of women in national parliaments, behind Mexico, Rwanda, and Vietnam. Representation across the country varies from Quebec, where 42% of MNAs are women, to just 11% in the Northwest Territories and 19% in Prince Edward Island. Indigenous, racialized, young, and poor women are especially under-represented across the country.

When women are underrepresented in politics, public policies are made without the viewpoints and talents of a major segment of the population. Unequal legislatures mean that Canada's political process is less diverse, less inclusive, and less democratic. As a self-identified global leader on human and gender rights, Canada's low percentage of women politicians weakens its ability to speak on these issues internationally. Additional research shows that women's equal presence in decision-making bodies, like legislatures, legitimizes public policy decisions and confers institutional trust, including on sexual harassment issues (Clayton *et al.* 2018).

Before #MeToo

The problem of violence against women in Canadian politics (VAW-P) predates the #MeToo movement. As Collier and Raney (2018a) show, sexism and sexually harassing words and behaviours began in the Canadian House of Commons as soon as the first woman took her seat. When the percentage of women in the House increased through the 1980s and 1990s, incidents became more widespread and well-known, and include the now-famous sexist taunts and insults launched against Liberal MP Sheila Copps by a male MP from an opposing political party in the early 1990s. In 2014, issues of sexual assault and harassment made national headlines, when the then-leader of the third party Liberals in the House of Commons, Justin Trudeau, publicly revealed that he had suspended two male MPs from his party caucus for allegedly assaulting and harassing two NDP women MPs in separate incidents. This revelation coincided with a number of other high-profile cases of sexual assault and harassment in other Canadian institutions, including the sexual assault trial of popular former Canadian Broadcasting Corporation radio host Jian Ghomeshi; numerous cases of sexual harassment inside of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police; and heightened awareness and reporting of incidents of sexual harassment and assault on university campuses across the country. After an independent internal party investigation into the actions of the two male Liberal MPs, Trudeau expelled both from caucus and they were denied access to the Liberal nomination in the 2015 federal election, ending both MPs' political careers.

In the shadow of these allegations, women politicians from all major parties began speaking publicly about harassment and violence in politics. These political women shared experiences of being called sexist names, being touched inappropriately, and being sexually assaulted by their male colleagues (Daro 2013; Payton 2014; Bueckart 2015). Others recounted being threatened and cyberstalked on social media by members of the public (Tasker 2016; Csanady 2016; Rempel 2016).

Women politicians are not the only targets of violence in politics. Political staffers on the Hill found themselves in an especially precarious position due to the tenuous nature of their employment alongside unequal power relations between staffers and their political bosses. On her experiences of

being sexually assaulted by a male MP in 2007, Lauren Dobson-Hughes stated, “[y]ou take your cues from people around you who are in positions of power, and if they don't think that's weird, if that didn't even momentarily give them a second glance, then (you think), 'Maybe the problem is me then ... OK, that's just normal'” (Kirkup 2018).

The events in 2014 drew attention to the fact that neither MPs nor staffers on Parliament Hill had adequate harassment protections on the job. Amendments were made to the existing federal staff policies (first in 2012 and then in 2014 by the Commons’ Board of Internal Economy), while the Subcommittee of the Procedure and House Affairs Committee was instructed to draft a new Code of Conduct on Sexual Harassment between MPs which was subsequently amended to the Standing Orders of the House. Parallel to these events, the Standing Committee on the Status of Women began a two-year investigation into sexual harassment protections for MPs and public service staff on Parliament Hill in 2012 which culminated in the [Standing Committee on the Status of Women Report on Sexual Harassment in the Federal Workplace](#) (second report) which was tabled in the House in February 2014.

Since #MeToo:

While Canada initially stood out as an international leader, particularly amongst its peers in other Westminster parliaments, in formally addressing the problem of VAW-P, cracks in these early responses became obvious under the bright light of #MeToo. In an annual report of the staff harassment policy released in 2018, 35 cases were recorded^{iv}. Of these, most - 28 - were for enquiries only; two were non-receivable as they did not meet the policy’s somewhat narrow definition of sexual harassment; two were resolved informally before the investigation was completed; leaving only three that resulted in formal investigations – one was substantiated; one was partially substantiated; and one was dismissed (House of Commons 2018). Considering the large numbers of public service employees that are covered by this policy, the total amount of employees that actually utilized the policy – albeit up from 19 the previous year - is surprisingly small.

In June 2017, the federal government announced a new broad-based strategy to address gender-based violence in Canadian society, including all workplaces. The official statement refers specifically to Canada’s Parliament as a workplace that must be free from harassment and sexual violence, and it follows several recent incidents of sexual assault and sexual harassment of Canadian women politicians by their male colleagues. The strategy, “It’s Time: Canada’s Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-based Violence”, outlines the government’s commitment to: “take action to ensure that Parliament and federal institutions are workplaces free from harassment and sexual violence” (Government of Canada 2017, 2). It builds on on-going federal-level initiatives and lays a foundation for greater action on GBV, based on three main pillars: 1) violence prevention; 2) support for survivors and their families; and 3) the promotion of responsive legal and justice systems. The Minister of Status of Women further established an Advisory Council to inform and implement Canada’s gender-based violence strategy. All of these actions provide a broader legislative framework that raises awareness of, and knowledge about, the problem of gender-based violence in Canadian society.

In October 2018 the Liberal government’s bill to reform Canada’s labour codes, as well as other pieces of legislation governing federally-regulated employees, received Royal Assent. [Bill C-65 An Act to Amend the Canada Labour Code \(harassment and violence\), the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act and the Budget Implementation Act, 2017, No. 1](#) brings the patchwork of federal staff-related harassment policies under one single improved policy. Canadian employers in federally-regulated workplaces will be required to prevent sexual harassment and violence under occupational

health and safety regulations and will also have to report and investigate all incidents brought to their attention accordingly (Connolly 2018).

In December 2018, the government announced that it would double its spending to tackle gender-based violence through a 50-million-dollar investment to fund 60 projects across Canada that focus on marginalized communities including Indigenous peoples, LGBTQ individuals, and immigrants. It also announced the creation of a new Gender-Based Violence Knowledge Centre. However, no specific targets nor additional spending have been earmarked to address VAW-P specifically.

While it is too early to fully evaluate the impact of these initiatives, it is clear that this new legislation across Canadian federal workplaces was certainly timely. A November 2018 Statistics Canada report, for example, revealed a marked increase in sexual assault reporting rates to police across the country after #MeToo (Statistics Canada 2018).

Not Enough: Gaps, Deficiencies, and Loopholes in Canada's Current VAW-P Strategy

Although there have been some positive developments in tackling sexual harassment in Canadian society and politics, weaknesses remain. The current MP-to-MP Code of Conduct has several serious flaws, particularly where interests of partisanship and protection of parliamentary privilege appear to have taken precedence over interests in curbing sexism and sexual harassment in the lower House (Collier and Raney 2018b). Although immediately after #MeToo the government announced that it would enact a review of the MP Code, minimal changes were adopted by the House of Commons in June 2018, none of which deal with the underlying issues of partisanship and the lack of a victim-centred process in the Code. The staffing policy is similarly flawed, in that party Whips are directly involved at various stages throughout the process when a claim of sexual harassment has been made by a staffer.

Early reviews of mandatory sexual misconduct training programs prescribed under the Code have also been mixed. One MP reported that the issue of "consent" was still not well-defined nor well-explained. They also observed that many of their federal colleagues left training programs with less clarity on what could be considered 'sexual harassment' and what would not.

Other gaps exist in Canada's VAW-P strategy, including the fact that it has no provisions on social media harassment and that the penalties in place for violating the MP policy; that is, for sexually harassing a colleague, are insufficient. Protections for politicians and staff in provincial and territorial legislatures are patchy at best; while some legislatures have policies that cover staff and elected representatives (Nova Scotia), others have policies that only cover staff (Prince Edward Island) or only cover Member to Member interactions (Ontario), and others have neither (B.C. and the Yukon). Definitions of harassment, inclusion of non-work, social environments, provisions for training, and clarity of process and timeline vary significantly and none reflect best practices.

To date, there is little to no comparative, systematic analysis of anti-violence strategies at all levels of government in Canada. Notably, neither the MP, nor the staffing codes, nor the amendments under Bill C-65, monitor or regulate sexual relationships between MPs and their staffers. This differs from other countries such as the United States and Australia who have recently moved to monitor or ban these relationships in the wake of a number of high-profile sexual harassment allegations (Stone and Anderssen 2018).

At the same time, violence against women in politics –including against both politicians and staffers – persists in Canada. Since these policies have been adopted, women MPs and political staff continue to report being sexually harassed (Rana 2017; Smith 2017). While increased or sustained levels of reporting in and of itself is not an indicator of policy failures with respect to this issue, it does illustrate that despite Canada’s progress on VAW-P to date, women in politics continue to be victimized. Recent reports include incidents where one male MP referenced a “three-some” while taking a photo with women colleagues; another who likened a woman MP to a stripper and another who dismissed the sitting Environment minister, who was a woman, as “Climate Barbie”.

Importantly, the belief amongst those who are supposed to be protected by these new codes and policies is that they are insufficient. A 2018 survey conducted by Canadian Press revealed that women MPs were uncertain about what #MeToo would mean for Parliament Hill. While 55 percent agreed that the #MeToo movement was a turning point in the global conversation about sexual harassment, 25% of respondents said they believed the movement could be “fleeting” (Smith 2018a). In another #MeToo survey, political staffers stated that they still underreport sexual harassment, while 25% said that they had personally experienced sexual harassment at least once (Smith 2018b).

Since #MeToo, women who work on Parliament Hill have spoken out about their experiences of sexual assault and harassment, while two men (MPs Liberal Darshan Kang and NDP Aaron Weir) have been removed from their party caucuses stemming from allegations that they had either harassed or acted inappropriately towards other colleagues who were women. Both MPs retained their seats in the House of Commons. In November 2018, Conservative MP Tony Clement was expelled from his party’s caucus after it was revealed that he had shared sexually explicit images and videos with women online. Since then, several women have come forward about their own experiences with Clement, including inappropriate activities on their Instagram accounts. Other recent incidents of bullying and harassment of women have involved male politicians within provincial legislatures, such as in Newfoundland and Ontario. These recent events demonstrate that the VAW-P continues in Canadian legislatures, and that ***it is a problem that spans across the partisan divide.***

As before #MeToo, the violence and harassment faced by women in politics, both elected and unelected, has continued to significantly impact racialized, Indigenous, and trans women. After resigning from cabinet in 2019, former Minister Jody Wilson-Raybould was subjected to political cartoons portraying physical violence and abuse directed at her. In the context of violence against Indigenous women in Canada, these racist metaphors are clear and disturbing. At the provincial level, trans candidates running in the 2017 B.C. election faced threats of violence to both themselves and their families.

One Canadian organization that has dedicated itself to solving this issue is the [Young Women’s Leadership Network](#), a national not-for-profit organization dedicated to fostering young women’s civic and political leadership at all levels. YWLN focuses primarily on fostering young women’s leadership and takes an intersectional approach to social justice, civic engagement and gender-based violence that is non-partisan, trans-inclusive and anti-oppressive. YWLN has developed a toolkit to help survivors of sexual violence in politics. YWLN further developed an “It’s Time” campaign including a report that is based on interview data with 60 Ontarians who have been impacted by sexual violence and harassment in politics. It seeks to equip: “political institutions with a broader understanding of sexual violence and provides effective ways to promote consent culture in political space” (YWLN).

To sum up, the gaps and deficiencies in Canada’s existing VAW-P strategies include the lack of:

- ❖ policies and protections at all levels of government and in all Canadian jurisdictions;
- ❖ fully independent oversight in current dispute resolution and disciplinary procedures (where such policies exist);
- ❖ sufficient (and weak) penalties for those who have been found to have sexually harassed another person (where policies exist);
- ❖ provisions on social media harassment;
- ❖ buy-in from political parties to adopt their own independent processes;
- ❖ monitoring or regulating of sexual relationships between politicians and staffers;
- ❖ sufficient data and research on the prevalence of violence against women in Canadian politics in all jurisdictions.

Part III: National Legislatures

Below we review the steps taken by a number of countries in dealing with VAW-P. This section is non-exhaustive and intended to provide a general overview of some of the major actions taken by legislatures that can inform the Canadian experience in order to guide policy discussions on VAW-P in Canada.

Bolivia

IPU ranking: 3rd (53% women in the lower house)^v

Bolivia is one of the only countries in the world to have specific legislation covering violence against women in politics. This legislation was enacted prior to #MeToo. Since 2010, Bolivia's electoral systems law has included a definition of political harassment and recognized such harassment as an electoral crime (Law 26, 2010, article 238). It states: "The person harassing a female or male candidate during or after an electoral process, in order to force them to resign their candidacy or office against his or her will, shall be punished with a prison sentence of two (2) to five (5) years." In 2012, this approach was enhanced with the adoption of the Law Against Harassment and Political Violence against Women (Law No. 243, 2012). The objective of the law is :to establish mechanisms for the prevention, treatment, and punishment of individual and collective acts of harassment and/or political violence towards women, in order to guarantee the full exercise of their political rights (Article 2).

Defining Political Harassment and Political Violence in Bolivia

Political Harassment: An act or set of acts of pressure, persecution, harassment or threats committed by one person or a group of persons, directly or through third parties, against women who are candidates, elected, designated or exercising a public/political role or against their families, with the purpose of reducing, suspending, preventing or restricting the functions inherent to their positions, to induce or oblige them to carry out, against their will, an act or omission in the performance of their functions or in the exercise of their rights.

Political Violence: Physical, psychological or sexual actions, conduct and/or aggression committed by one person or a group of persons, directly or through third parties, against women who are candidates, elected, designated or exercising a public/political role, or against their families, to reduce, suspend, prevent or restrict the exercise of their position or to induce or oblige them to carry out, against their will, an act or omission in the performance of their functions or in the exercise of their rights.

The law explicitly covers and differentiates between political harassment and political violence. The former includes acts of pressure, prosecution, harassment, or threats committed directly or via third party actors against women in politics with the purpose of “preventing and/or inducing an action or omission against their will in the performance of their duties in the exercise of their rights” (Article 7). The law also covers similar harassment aimed toward women’s families. Political violence includes physical, psychological, and sexual actions, behaviours or aggressions, aimed at limiting women’s capacity to fulfil their public roles or exercise their position. Again, these acts may be committed directly or through third parties or aimed at women themselves or their families. Women who are candidates, elected, or appointed women are all covered under the policy. Bolivia’s Violence Against Women legislation also includes specific reference to, and definition of, violence against women in politics.

Consideration of penalties for political harassment or violence take an intersectional approach and can be more severe if a woman is pregnant, over 60, or if the perpetrator is a repeat offender. Penalties also take into account whether a woman is illiterate, less well educated, whether the victims include minors or the family members of women politicians. Finally, if the perpetrator is a leader of a political party, civic group or a member of the public service, the crime is also considered more severe.

In 2012 a local council woman was assassinated. She, and others, had been critical of the mayor and when she refused to resign she was suspended. After a long legal battle, she was reinstated only to be found murdered one month later. While this may have hastened adoption of the law, the efforts behind its creation were over a decade in the making. In 2000, reports of violence against women candidates and elected women in rural communities led local council women to establish a seminar in the Chamber of Deputies. Activists and the Association of Local Councilwomen of Bolivia (ACOBOL) worked collaboratively to name, identify, and redress acts of violence that were meant to shorten, impede or restrict the exercise of political power or to force women to do – or not do – something related to her political position.

According to UN Women, ACOBOL retains capacity and influence in attending to and advising on cases of harassment and violence in Bolivia. UN Women has published a review of the process by which the law was introduced as well as some [lessons learned](#). The adaptability of the organization to changes in state institutions and the political context were key and ensured sustained and focused attention to the issue. Moreover, the involvement and empowering of public policy decision-makers by advocates was important to securing the passage of the law. The U.N. observes, in particular, that ownership of the issue by some elected women was central in the final stages.

In 2016, the Justice Department made a determination that prevents those who have a background of perpetrating violence against women from running for political office. Despite the law, in 2017 ACOBOL reported 65 complaints of harassment and political violence towards council women at the local level in Bolivia; within the first half of 2018, that number had grown to 79 complaints. Many of these complaints remain unresolved through bureaucratic delays. Although Bolivia’s law has not had a significant enough impact as of yet, it has created a legal space within which women can fight for protections and raise awareness about women’s rights (Campaignolle et al. 2018).

Costa Rica

IPU ranking: 9th (46% women in the lower house)

Costa Rica, alongside 32 other Latin American and Caribbean governments, belongs to the “Quito Consensus” (2007) rejecting “structural violence” against women in a number of social, economic and political arenas. A key commitment of signatories was to:

adopt legislative measures and institutional reforms to prevent, sanction and eradicate political and administrative harassment of women who reach decision-making positions through electoral means or by appointment at national and local levels as well as in political parties and movements (quoted in UN Women 2017:71).

Since then, Costa Rica has attempted to pass national-level legislation to address VAW-P, introducing a draft law (Draft Law 18.719) in March 2013. The 2013 draft bill builds off of the successful Bolivian law and adopts its definitions of violence (“physical, sexual, or psychological death, harm and suffering”) and harassment. In particular, the Costa Rican draft bill divides harassment into three separate categories – political harassment; psychological harassment (including bullying and “systematic humiliation of female politicians”); and verbal political violence (UN Women 2017:75). Potential victims covered under the draft bill are women serving in formal elected or appointed office and interestingly in Costa Rica the range of potential women victims has been extended to include women in “movement politics, social organizations and labour organizations” (*Ibid* 76).

The draft bill also identifies specific penalties for those convicted under the law depending on their roles. For example, members of party directorates convicted would be subject to “penal sanctions” and could be removed from their posts (*Ibid*). Others would be forbidden from running for office in the future after being forced to resign from their current elected or appointed positions (NDI 2017; Krook and Restrepo Sanin 2016:133). This bill is still in draft form, is still being “debated” and to date not been passed (Krook and Restrepo Sanin 2016).

France

IPU ranking: 14th (40% women in the lower house)

The issue of sexual harassment in politics came to light in France before the #MeToo era. In the spring of 2016, the Deputy Speaker of the French National Assembly and leader of the Green Party, Denis Baupin, was forced to resign after several news organizations reported a series of sexual harassment allegations against him. A number of women came forward with concerns, including four who did so publicly, although Baupin has denied all allegations. A few weeks later, 17 former women ministers came out to discuss their experience of sexism and sexual harassment in French politics.

In the midst of the #MeToo movement in October 2017, women who worked in the French Parliament spoke about keeping a “blacklist” of MPs they regarded as sexual predators. Rather than being a written list, this informal system was used to warn women about potential threats to their well-being and safety. The existence of a ‘whisper network’ to warn and protect other women in the absence of clearly defined rules and policies on VAW in the political sphere is a recurring feature of several other national legislatures (e.g. Canada and the United Kingdom). ‘Whisper networks’ such as these clearly demonstrate the lack of faith women have that current policies are sufficient to deal with serial offenders, and that they are willing to take ‘matters into their own hands’ to keep their female colleagues safe.

In early 2018, budget minister Gérald Darmanin was accused of the rape of a woman who sought his legal help in 2009. He remained in his position and the case against him was dropped in February 2018. At the time, however, he remained under investigation for other complaints, including from women who say the Minister has used his position to ask for sexual favours. A second minister, Environment Minister Nicolas Hulot, is also facing accusations of rape. Despite not having clear rules or policies that

prevent sexual harassment in French politics, the National Assembly does provide legal aid and psychological support to victims. These victims may also be referred to an ethics officer of the Assembly. Further, staff in the National Assembly are trained on issues of sexual harassment and must sign a pledge to respect the Criminal Code.

Mexico

IPU ranking: 4th (48% women in the lower house)

Mexico is a signatory to the 2007 “Quito Consensus”, which is discussed above in the Costa Rica summary. Similar to Costa Rica, Mexico has attempted to pass national level stand-alone VAW-P legislation in 2013 (same year as Costa Rica) but this law only passed the Mexican Senate and continues to be debated in the Chamber of Deputies and to date has not been passed (UN Women 2017). The national level draft law in Mexico again follows the lead of definitions of VAW-P and harassment from the Bolivian example. One interesting distinction in some of the draft proposals in Mexico is the inclusion of language addressing “electoral propaganda” indicating the potential that the law would include perpetrators from the news media as well as political parties (UN Women 2017:76). Another distinction in one Mexican proposal being debated is the use of sentencing ranges for convicted perpetrators – prison sentences from three months to six years – but no minimum or maximum sentences tied to specific acts as in other jurisdictions (Honduran and Costa Rican proposals) (Ibid 74). Mexico enacted a broad-based 2007 VAW law (General Law on Women’s Life Free from Violence) that addressed community and public spheres but not “politics” specifically (Ibid 77). However, the general law was amended in 2013 with a wider definition of VAW to include gender-based political violence as: “those acts that seek to impose gender stereotypes, or limit women’s ability to exercise a political role” (article 21) (NDI 2017: 22).

At the municipal level, the City of Mexico passed an amendment to the local application of this law (the Local Law on Women’s Access to a Life Free of Violence) in 2017 to include a more fulsome definition of political violence as “any action or omission that has the purpose or result to bias, impede, restrain, suspect, impair, nullify, obstruct, exclude or affect the recognition, access, enjoyment or exercise of political or electoral rights of a woman, as well as access to full exercise of the duties inherent to her position or function in public office.” The amendment covers the pre-election, campaign, and election periods as well as the time a woman spends in office (UN Women 2017: 77).

Recent initiatives have been taken to amend existing electoral laws to further address VAW-P issues. The focus on electoral law reform follows some high profile VAW-P incidents during electoral contests including: in 2004 when Guadalupe Avila Salinas, a female municipal presidential candidate, was shot by the sitting male municipal president in broad daylight; in 2007, the municipal president of Oaxaca tore up ballots certifying the election of new municipal president Eufrosina Cruz citing indigenous ‘customs’ forbidding women from holding positions of political power (Krook and Restrepo Sanin 2016). An example of an electoral law amendment during the 2015-2016 election is the addition of a “Protocol to Address Political Violence against Women”, which was created and implemented in Mexico reflecting recent consensus which defines the problem alongside potential opportunities for successful interventions (NDI 2017:22). At present, Mexico appears to be more willing to push for amendments to existing laws as opposed to pushing ahead with a new national-level law that has remained in limbo since 2013.

New Zealand

IPU ranking: 19th (38% women in the lower house)

New Zealand is unique for its lack of attention to VAW-P, especially when compared to other Westminster parliaments (e.g. Canada and the United Kingdom). Despite its lack of action, we include it in this report due to its on-going public discussions and debates on this issue. A number of articles in recent newspapers have posed the question of 'why' New Zealand hasn't yet had its #MeToo moment and also 'when' will it have one, as it appears comparatively behind the times (eg. Your NZ 2017). At the same time, New Zealand has some of the higher rates of violence against women in OECD countries according to 2011 and 2014 UN Women survey data (Otego Daily Times 2011).

The issue of violence against women recently arose in the national parliament when women opposition MPs stood up in the House in 2015 to disclose their past experiences of sexual assault (not related to politics) in protest of then Prime Minister John Key's claim that opposition parties were 'protecting' rapists and child molesters (in reference to the policy which saw ex-convicts who return to New Zealand routinely detained at Christmas Island and in particular opposition MP challenges to this policy). Two of the women MPs who stood up in the House to speak of these past sexual assaults were expelled from Parliament by the Speaker and eight others left in protest. The incident made national and international headlines and illustrated the lack of attention to sexual violence in the country writ large (Pearlman 2015).

At a 2018 panel to commemorate 125 years of suffrage in New Zealand, women MPs openly discussed their experiences of violent threats, bullying and harassment they experienced as women politicians. Representatives from the Labour and Green parties recounted how they had received specific death threats, while another woman MP recounted how she had been told to take her top off at a politicians' dinner (FutureLearning 2018).

As far as protections for MPs and political staffers, there are some formal protections for the latter but not for the former. In fact, New Zealand is anomalous in the world as a Westminster parliament that lacks a formalized code of conduct for its MPs. Instead, it embeds rules of conduct on parliamentary procedure inside the Standing Orders and the Speaker's Rulings. These include guidelines on "restrictions on speech or behaviour that insults or intimidates another member, shows disrespect to the Parliament or the presiding officer" and other related procedural guidelines (New Zealand Parliament 2007). However, the scope of these rules is limited and the lack of a Code of Conduct has been an issue that routinely is raised by backbench MPs and has been put forward via private members' bills, but to no avail. Unsurprisingly, the rules of conduct in the Standing Orders and the Speaker's Rulings do not directly deal with VAW-P.

New Zealand's, 2015 *Prevention and Response to Sexual Harassment Policy Guideline* covers all public service employees including "chief executives," "contractors, visitors, volunteers or members of the public" that visit Parliament. This guideline is quite detailed in how it should be adopted in each departmental setting and the scope of the policy covers workplace harassment as well as harassment that may occur outside of the actual workplace, but in work-related settings. The policy defines sexual harassment as "unwelcome or offensive sexual behaviour that is repeated or is significant enough to have a harmful effect on an individual's employment, job performance or job satisfaction. Unwelcome means behaviours that are not solicited or invited and are regarded by a person as undesirable or offensive at the time" (State Services Commission 2015:2). The definition includes a number of examples from staring, sexual insults/taunts, to stalking, touching or kissing – but the definition does

not cover sexism more broadly and specifically identifies “occasional appropriate compliments” as an example of what would not be construed as sexual harassment (Ibid 3).

Confidentiality is key to the process of initiating a complaint under the staff policy, along with accessibility, fairness and efficiency (Ibid 6). Options for internal resolution include: “Self Help” where a complainant deals with the issue themselves; “Informal Solution” where a complainant’s manager resolves the issue by speaking to the alleged harasser or the harasser admits guilt and the complainant is happy with this admission; and “Formal Complaint” which involves a formal investigation through either an internal or external actor who is “skilled and experienced” and can only be launched if deemed necessary by the Chief Executive and/or Human Resources officer (Ibid 7-9). It is not clear how often this policy is used or whether or not it is deemed effective. In a recent interview, the process was defended by Minister for Women Julie Anne Genter but she also admitted it could be better advertised to public servants “to ensure that employees working in Parliament understand their rights, and of course, employers and all of us as parliamentarians, other people who are working as managers in Parliament need to understand your obligations and responsibilities to ensure that people feel safe” (Your NZ 2017).

Switzerland

IPU ranking: 37th (33% women in the lower house)

Switzerland’s main VAW-P measures have also come into effect since the fall of 2017, after criminal allegations emerged of sexually inappropriate actions against a woman by MP Yannick Buttet, the vice-president of the country’s Christian-Democrat Party (CDP). Media reports followed that Buttet had acted “inappropriately” with several women, including journalists and politicians, in his political activities in Bern. After initially denying he was a “harasser” and refusing to resign, Buttet ultimately submitted his resignation in December 2017 and publicly stated he would be receiving counselling for alcoholism. Two months later, Buttet returned to his role as president of the Collombey-Muraz commune in the canon of Valais, a position he had occupied while he was an MP.

Consequently, in December 2017 the Administrative Delegation of the Federal Assembly circulated a directive to the Swiss Parliament in which it stated that sexual harassment has no place in Parliament. All MPs were further provided with a ‘good conduct guide’. The delegation includes the President of the National Council Dominique de Buman (PDC / FR) and the President of the Council of States Karin Keller-Sutter (PLR / SG). The guide provides definitions that clarify the difference between “flirting” and “sexual harassment”. According to the guide, flirting evolves in a “reciprocal manner and is mutually desired, constructive, respects personal boundaries, boosts self-esteem and is a source of joy.” Conversely, sexual harassment “involves a one-sided approach that is unwanted by the other person, is degrading, annoying, harms self-esteem and violates personal boundaries” (The Local, 2017). The delegation also established a specialized, independent body based in Berne and Zurich, to allow for any elected representative to seek confidential advice in the event that they are sexually harassed.

United Kingdom

IPU ranking: 38th (32% women in the lower house)

While the problem of sexual harassment in British politics did not suddenly appear with #MeToo, the events in the fall of 2017 accelerated the UK response to sexual harassment. After a series of high-profile allegations and a survey of more than 1,300 of those who work at Westminster that detailed the

systemic sexist climate in Westminster, Prime Minister Theresa May directed House of Commons Speaker John Bercow to establish a new grievance procedure. In February of 2018, a Cross-Party Working Group was formed and chaired by House Leader Andrea Leadsom.

The [Working Group](#) was comprised of Members of both Houses and of all parties, union representatives, journalists, and staff representatives. Based on the recommendations from the Group, in July 2018, the British House of Commons adopted the Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme Delivery Report, a 113 page comprehensive new, parliament-wide anti-harassment scheme. Included within the report is a new behaviour code for the entire parliamentary community and two separate policies, one on bullying and harassment and another on sexual misconduct.

The 2018 Scheme is a significant departure from the status quo, as prior to the scheme there were no independent channels for those who work at Westminster to raise concerns or make complaints. Previous policies, such as the 2007 'Valuing Others' and the 2011 and 2014 'Respect Policy' were also regarded with suspicion by staffers and employees. The new scheme established a one-year pilot for a new full-time Independent Sexual Violence Advisor to provide support and guidance to those coming forward with a complaint. It sets a mandatory review of the policy at 6 and 18 months, although no provisions are made to review it beyond that timeframe. It also allows for the independent Parliamentary Standards Commissioner to investigate claims of sexual harassment against MPs; however, in the case of a finding of sexual harassment, she may only recommend 'lower-level' sanctions (e.g. apologies or additional training) to a House Committee comprised of elected members and lay persons (members of the public). Although this committee includes members of the public, this is not a fully independent process as politicians will still be involved in investigating and/or deciding upon punishments over their colleagues.

After a BBC Newsnight show in March 2018 revealed troubling allegations of gendered bullying of female Clerks by male MPs, a subsequent independent inquiry was launched to look into the bullying of staff specifically in the House of Commons. Dame Laura Cox QC's inquiry relating to House staff was released in October 2018, and made several recommendations to Parliament, including allowing those with historical complaints to access the new Scheme as well (currently, they cannot). The report also recommended greater independence over the new process, in which MPs would no longer have final say over the process. An on-going investigation by Gemma White QC is considering allegations of bullying and harassment by past and present MPs not included in the Cox inquiry, which will include MPs and their staff.

U.K. women politicians have also been active in efforts to stop the online abuse of politicians. In 2016, a cross-party group launched the "Reclaim the Internet" campaign which seeks to raise awareness about this problem. After #MeToo, Labour supporters launched the [@LabourToo](#) Twitter account and [Labour Too](#) websites which have been set up to collate members' anonymous stories of harassment, abuse and assault in the Labour Party. Thus far, a similar, coordinated public party-specific campaign in Canada has not emerged.

A March 2018 U.K. Committee on Standards in Public Life [report](#) also recommended the creation of a new offense embedded in electoral law on the intimidation of political candidates and party campaigners.

United States

IPU ranking: 75th (24% women in the lower house)

Proposed changes to the United States' sexual harassment provisions on Capitol Hill came to the fore in the aftermath of the #MeToo and the #TimesUp movement. The latter movement came shortly after #MeToo and was also initiated by Hollywood insiders and included a launch of the [Time's Up Legal Defense Fund](#). The fund was established to help survivors – especially low-income and racialized minority women -- of sexual harassment and retaliation. #TimesUp connects those who have experienced sexual misconduct with legal and public relations assistance.

In the fall of 2017, a number of high-profile Congressmen resigned after allegations of sexual assault or harassment against them, including Senators Al Franken (Democratic), Reps. John Conyers (Democratic), Blake Farenthold (Republican), and Trent Franks (Republican).

Similar to other legislatures globally, the problem of sexual harassment in American politics predates #MeToo. In 2016, a [Congressional Quarterly](#) survey found that 4 in 10 women believed that sexual harassment was a problem in Congress, while a further 1 in 6 had been victimized personally. When the #MeToo movement exposed the widespread nature of violence against women, women politicians across the United States began speaking out about their own experiences (e.g. #MeTooCongress).

Furthermore, was the shocking revelation that male politicians had been secretly drawing on public funds to pay for settlements in cases of sexual harassment. In November 2017, the Office of Compliance disclosed that since 1997, it has paid out more than \$17 million USD to victims across 260 settlements; the data is not disaggregated based on sexual harassment claims and includes those based on sexual, age, and race. This equates to approximately 13 settlements made per year.

In 2017-2018, the House and Senate passed separate bills to reform the current legislation that deals with sexual harassment on Capitol Hill, but were unable to agree to similar legislative changes (as is required under US legislative rules). In an effort to pressure Congress to act, in September 2018 1500 former congressional staffers signed a public letter detailing their experiences of harassment and implored Congress to enact meaningful reform of the Congressional Accountability Act, 1995.

Just a month later in October 2018 -- and almost 29 years to the day of Professor Anita Hill's appearance before the Senate Judiciary Committee^{vi}-- , Dr. Christine Blasey-Ford appeared before the same committee, alleging that she had been sexually assaulted years before by Brett Kavanaugh, a presidential nominee for the judiciary. This event was likely a catalyst for Congress to finally take action on dealing with sexual harassment within its own workplace, as up until that point both houses had been unable to agree to common legislation.

EXCERPT FROM
LETTER TO U.S.
CONGRESSIONAL
LEADERS (SEPT.
2018):

"We are former congressional staffers who, like so many before us and since, arrived on Capitol Hill with big dreams and excited to be a part of the improbable story of America. But each of us was harassed or assaulted while working for members of the United States Congress....[t]hese true stories of harassment, abuse and discrimination are a stain on the institution we love...Time is running out, but there is something you can do – right

The [new bill](#) (sponsored by Senator Amy Klobuchar (D)) streamlines the complaints process that had been in place since 1995 for “covered employees” who work within the federal legislative branch of government, making it easier for victims to file complaints. It eliminates the mandatory counseling requirement and further makes mediation optional. Earlier in 2017, both houses agreed to adopt anti-sexual harassment training for representatives, senior leaders and employees.

The new law requires lawmakers to be held personally financially responsible if they pay out settlements related to harassment and retaliation (although not for discrimination cases). Further, the bill requires that any settlements must be publicly disclosed and include the name of the lawmaker involved. (Prior to this change, lawmakers had used federal funds for such purposes confidentially). The new provisions now also cover interns and fellows, but they do not protect Members in either House themselves from sexual harassment. At the same time, the bill does not guarantee an independent investigation (only a ‘hearing’) or include access to legal counsel for complainants. It also provides for an automatic referral of all awards and settlements to each houses’ respective ethics committees. Although overall a positive step forward, in the U.S. Members (Representatives or Senators) continue to hold the ultimate authority and power to investigate sexual harassment cases, which means there is very little independent oversight in sexual harassment cases involving members or senior staff. Again, these are similar problems we’ve identified with Canada’s VAW-P approach.

Part IV: Civil Society Organizations

A number of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations have done extensive work on the problem of Violence Against Women in Politics. This work is crucial to raising awareness about the scope and depth of this problem amongst decision makers and the general public.

Below, we include a brief description of some of these organizations and include a sample of some of their most recent work.

Atalanta

[Atalanta](#) is a UK-based social enterprise dedicated to increasing the number of women holding senior government positions worldwide and accelerating programmes that tackle the root causes of gender inequality. Atalanta’s main areas of focus are political campaign strategy and execution, advisory services for political leaders, and communications support for NGOs and corporate clients. Atalanta considers violence against women in politics as threats of death, rape, beatings, and abduction, sexual violence, physical violence, and humiliating sexist or sexual remarks. Atalanta positions violence against women in politics in the broader context of electing more women globally and identifies it as one of a number of barriers to women’s representational equality.

Atalanta’s primary publication dealing with violence against women in politics online is [“\(Anti\)Social Media: The benefits and pitfalls of digital for female politicians”](#) published in March 2018. The report analyses the ways in which gender affects online political discourse, the impact that it has on women who run as candidates and politicians, and what can be done to mitigate online harassment and abuse. The report’s key findings are that women politicians experience a significantly larger volume of online conversation about their physical appearance and family life and were three times more likely to see derogatory comments directly related to their gender compared to their male counterparts. Online sexism and violence have political effects: they delegitimize and depersonalize women leaders, they

distract women leaders from their substantive work, they instill fear in women and they discourage other women from considering running for public office.

To combat online sexism and violence against women leaders, Atalanta provides recommendations for a collaborative solution involving a broad range of actors: male candidates and politicians, governments, political parties, police, social media companies, and journalists.

Key among these include:

- ❖ Encouraging female politicians to raise awareness about the scope of the problem both in media and during parliamentary debates;
- ❖ Encouraging male allies to not remain silent or 'fuel the fire';
- ❖ Encouraging states to uphold or adopt new laws and regulations on hate speech, intimidation and threats of violence that apply to online spaces;
- ❖ Shifting liability to social media companies for illegal content and imposing fines when they do not comply;
- ❖ Encouraging political parties to establish investigative bodies;
- ❖ Asking social media companies to develop automated techniques to identify and remove abuse content;
- ❖ Asking social media companies to improve filtering tools for their users;
- ❖ Asking social media companies to provide training and updates to political parties; and,
- ❖ Asking media companies to develop and enforce codes of conduct for journalists.

The report further notes that government action can help. Following pressure from the European Commission in 2016, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Microsoft signed a code of conduct pledging to review their policies dealing with hate speech. However, three years later, these policies remain insufficient in combatting the vast majority of online abuse on these platforms.

Inter-parliamentary Union (IPU)

The [Inter-parliamentary Union](#) (IPU) is a membership organization established in 1889, and presently comprised of 178 member Parliaments, 12 associate members, and is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland. The mandate of IPU is to promote, protect and strengthen democracy around the world. IPU is focused on strong Parliaments, gender equality, human rights, sustainable development, peace and security, global governance, and youth. IPU's work on violence against women in politics is under its gender equality mandate, and IPU uses the NDI (see below) definition of violence against women in politics.

IPU adopted a resolution in 2006 dealing with how Parliaments can promote effective ways of combating violence against women in all fields, and in 2008 launched a campaign and program addressing violence against women in politics focused on i) building a legal framework ii) implementation of legislation, and iii) awareness, sensitization and visibility of violence against women. Activities have included a series of regional and national seminars on the issue and technical assistance to Parliaments. In 2016, the IPU published an issue brief on sexism, harassment and violence against women parliamentarians addressing the definition and scope of the issue as well as some suggested courses of action.

As stated earlier in this report, the 2016 issue brief found that VAW-P is ubiquitous globally, with 81.8% of women politicians reporting psychological abuse, while 44.4 percent had received death, rape, beating, or abduction threats (IPU 2016).^{vii} A 2018 international study of sexism, harassment and

violence against women in European parliaments showed widespread evidence of violence against women politicians in these legislatures. This report is widely cited by civil society organizations, non-governmental actors and across academic literature on VAW-P to date. An updated version of the report was released in October 2018, in partnership with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. The 2018 report focuses on sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments in Europe (IPU 2018). The IPU is planning an additional series of regional studies on violence against women in parliaments.

The IPU further participated in the UN Expert Group on violence against women in politics and the report from the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women also incorporated data from IPU. Additionally, the Inter-parliamentary Union is part of a joint project of iKnow Politics – which includes the IPU, International IDEA, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), which was formed in 2007.

Between November 26th to December 21st 2018, iKnow Politics launched an e-discussion on violence against women in politics that sought to “raise awareness on the issue of gender-based violence against women in politics and expand the dialogue on how to make political spaces safer and more inclusive for women” (iKnow Politics 2018). The [e-discussion](#) included a list of reflection questions, which respondents could answer and send to an iKnow politics’ email address.

Fawcett Society

The [Fawcett Society](#) is a UK-based charity campaigning for gender equality and women’s rights by publishing research, bringing together politicians, academics, grassroots activists and wider civil society actors to develop innovative, practical solutions and campaign for change. The Fawcett Society does not have a specific campaign or definition of violence against women in politics, but positions it in the broader context of barriers facing women’s access to, and work inside of, Parliament.

In 2015 it launched #ViewsNotShoes, a social media campaign to monitor sexism in media coverage of women politicians. In an issue briefing for the September 2017 UK Parliament debate on “barriers for women in standing for Parliament,” the Fawcett Society identified sexist behaviour in Parliament and abuse and harassment (including online) of women MPs as major barriers to women’s participation in elected life.

In the report “[Does Local Government Work for Women?](#)” the Fawcett Society found that sexism is widespread in city government in England, with 38% having reported sexist comments from council colleagues and 10% of women councillors reporting having experienced sexual harassment in local government in the UK. It further found that disabled and Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) women face additional discrimination.

In 2017, the organization joined the “[Reclaim the Internet](#)” campaign founded by Yvette Cooper MP and supported by a cross-party working group of women parliamentarians in the UK. After publicly challenging Twitter to remove a number of vile tweets directed towards UK politicians who were women. This campaign also encourages members of the public to tweet @Twitter asking social media companies to be more transparent on how they handle abusive content.

To commemorate the 100-year anniversary of UK women winning the right to stand as MPs, in November 2018 the Fawcett Society issued a new report, “[Strategies for Success: women’s experiences](#)”

[of selection and election in UK Parliament](#)” which found that a continued barrier women face to entry into elected politics is resistance and discrimination within political parties. According to the report, the problem of harassment is compounded by the lack of strong party will to address the problem, with internal party bullying reported in all parties. As a consequence, “tolerating this [problem] will affect the pipeline of candidates willing to stand for selection and that parties seeking to increase women’s representation should actively challenge this behaviour” (Fawcett Society 2018, 38).

In February 2019, the organization launched a new report, “[Sexual Harassment in Parliament – Protecting MPs, Peers, volunteers and staff](#)” (Culhane 2019). This report is based on a public opinion survey of attitudes towards sexual harassment in British politics and on interview data of politicians. It reveals that 73% of women and men believe there needs to be a change in how sexual misconduct cases are handled in British politics. It also found strong support for sanctioning MPs, with 70% supporting removal from office or banning them from running for a period of time. 80% of respondents supported fully independent investigations into allegations of sexual harassment in British politics. A similar Canadian public opinion survey might help reveal how Canadians think and feel about this issue at home.

International Foundation for Electoral Systems

The [International Foundation for Electoral Systems](#) (IFES) engages with critical issues in democracy, governance and elections. Although historically focused on electoral violence against women, IFES has recently begun to address violence against women in politics, with a particular focus on electoral violence specifically. On its [website](#), the IFES write that it “recognizes that violence against women in elections is a threat to the integrity of the electoral process – it can affect women’s participation as voters, candidates, election officials, activists, and political party leaders, and it undermines the free, fair, and inclusive democratic process.”

In February 2018, Gabrielle Bardall (senior specialist to IFES) authored a publication on ‘[Violence, Politics and Gender](#)’ which distinguishes between gender-motivated and gender-differentiated political violence. Gender-motivated political violence is: “harm that violates an individual’s or groups’ political rights on the basis of their gender identity. This distinct form of violence is motivated by a desire to repress, deter, control, or otherwise coerce the political rights of the victims because of the victim’s gender.” In contrast, gender-differentiated political violence includes the analysis of how different types of politically motivated violence is gendered, such as how civil war, terrorism and genocide are experienced differently by women and men. Bardall further investigates why these gendered forms of violence occur and corroborates previous knowledge that it is the result of multiple factors, including backlash to the rise of women in politics, structural inequalities, broader patterns of violence and different risk factors, all of which are unique to specific countries (Bardall 2018a, 10-11).

The organization has also formed partnerships with technology activists to provide ‘bystander interventions’ for violence against women in elections that occurs online. This includes the creation of a space where survivors can report an incident on a web-based platform, and can ask for support should they need it.

The organization has developed a “[VAWE-online](#)” (Violence against women in elections) tool to measure VAW-P on social media globally. The tool seeks to identify and analyse patterns of violence made towards women who are active in civic and political life. Thus far, the tool has been used in elections in Zimbabwe, Sri Lanka, and Ukraine. Additionally, its “Male Allies for Leadership Equality

(MALE)” training module puts into practice a systemic and practical approach to work toward the understanding that gender equality and women’s empowerment are linked.

#Not the Cost:
The problem of violence against women needs to be exposed in all its forms. It must be acknowledged globally, validating the realities that many women face, and empowering them to speak frankly about their experiences. Action must be taken to define, mitigate and prevent this violence, to record and count it when it does occur, and to increase accountability for perpetrators.
-Not the Cost Program Guidance 2017, 23.

In May 2018, the IFES co-authored a policy brief, “[Violence Against Women in Politics: A Barrier to Peace and Security](#)” with the U.S. Civil Society Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, which identifies violence against women in politics as a major barrier to women’s political participation, examines U.S. legislation and engagement with the issue, and makes recommendations (Bardall and Myers 2018).

In May 2018 the IFES provided a [submission](#) to the OHCHR Special Rapporteur on violence against women in politics. This report several actions to be taken to address this problem, and emphasizes the importance of holding offenders to account for their actions not only as a matter of individual rights but also to help protect electoral justice and integrity (Bardall 2018b).

National Democratic Institute (NDI)

The [National Democratic Institute](#) (NDI) is a non-profit, nonpartisan, nongovernmental organization working to support and strengthen democratic institutions worldwide through citizen participation, openness, and accountability in government. Headquartered in Washington D.C., NDI has an international scope and covers 132 countries and territories.

Under its Women, Gender, and Democracy program, NDI has identified violence against women in politics as a key focus area, and defines violence against women in politics as having three distinct characteristics: “it targets women because of their gender, in its very form it can be gendered, as exemplified by sexist threats and sexual violence; [and] it discourages women in particular from being or becoming politically active. (NDI 2017). In 2016, NDI launched a global campaign [#NotTheCost: Stopping Violence Against Women in Politics](#). #NotTheCost refers to the fact that being subject to violence should not be a pre-requisite to women’s participation in the political process. The campaign identifies three key areas of focus: (1) to educate and raise awareness among stakeholders and citizens to create new norms and standards against this behavior; (2) to create processes at the institutional and national level for registering and responding to complaints; and (3), to provide services for assisting women who are victims, as well as to

punish the perpetrators of such violence. #NotTheCost is comprised of a print, television, and social media campaign. Madeline Albright, former U.S. Secretary of State and chairman of NDI’s board, and Sandra Pepera, Director for Gender, Women and Democracy, have been the main public faces of the #NotTheCost campaign, appearing on television, writing op-eds, and hosting events.

NDI actively works with governments and international organizations on the issue of violence against women in politics. At the launch of the #NotTheCost campaign, Madeline Albright called for an examination of violence against women in politics by the United Nations. The United Nations Special

Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, H.E. Dubravka Šimonović incorporated data from NDI in the United Nations report presented at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in October 2018.

NDI's main research initiative focuses on violence against women in political parties and has released pilot data on four countries; Côte d'Ivoire, Honduras, Tanzania and Tunisia, as well as detailed reports on Côte d'Ivoire and Honduras. NDI is also a founding partner of [iknowpolitics](#), an online information portal covering women in politics (also mentioned above).

NDI has released a program guidance document, including information on how to research and measure violence against women in politics, as well as potential interventions. In collaboration with the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, NDI launched an online incident reporting system allowing the safe and secure reporting of incidents against politically active women. Its "[Win With Women](#)" political party assessment tool provides guidance on measuring levels of, and strategies aimed at dealing with, the violence women face within their parties.

In October 2018, NDI launched "[#Think10](#)" a new planning tool for politically-active women. The tool provides guidance to women around the world on how to enhance their personal security by allowing women to calculate their risk from individual and country-specific data collected by NDI from 172 countries around the world, including Canada. Participants (activists, voters, party members, electioneers, civil servants, or elected officials) can go online and fill out a confidential survey and a personalized safety plan will be generated for them.

NDI has also worked with other governments, including making submissions to parliamentary committees of both the UK and [Canadian Houses of Commons](#) on the issue of violence against women in politics as well as on barriers to electoral office (Canada). In its Canadian briefing report, NDI proposed key recommendations to prevent VAW-P in Canada, focusing in particular on the role of political parties.

These include:

- ❖ strengthening internal party dispute resolution mechanisms and enforced sanctions for perpetrators
- ❖ developing mechanisms for greater transparency about the allocation of resources to candidates;
- ❖ a review of party meeting times and locations;
- ❖ consistent monitoring of party social media accounts for abusive or hate speech; and,
- ❖ the need for attention to be paid to the privacy and security of members' databases.

Organization of American States (OAS)

The [Organization of American States](#) (OAS), founded in 1889, is an organization of 35 states of the Americas. The four main pillars of the OAS are democracy, human rights, security and development. The OAS's violence against women in politics work is carried out by the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM), a specialized organization within OAS focusing on parity, political violence, and leadership. OAS/CIM positions violence against women in politics in the broader context of the Inter-

Organization of America States: Defining Violence Against Women in Politics

Political harassment and violence against women may include any action, conduct, or omission among others, based on their gender, individually or collectively, that has the purpose or result of undermining, annulling, impeding, or restricting their political rights, violating the rights of women to a life free of violence and to participate in political and public affairs on an equal footing with men.

American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women, known as the Convention of Belém do Pará adopted in 1994, as well as the Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention, a consensus-based and independent system to examine the progress towards the fulfillment of the Convention.

OAS/CIM's main strategy is convening member states through a series of expert group meetings and roundtables. The main output has been a Declaration on Political Harassment and Violence Against Women released in 2015, which represents a member state consensus on the situation, definition of violence against women in politics, and suggested actions to prevent, punish and eradicate political violence against women. Also in 2015, the OAS/CIM hosted a [roundtable](#) focused on two main themes – legislative initiatives to prevent and punish acts of violence against women in politics (drawing on the Bolivian Law as an example); and the key role political parties must play to help ensure that VAW-P is eliminated.

ParlAmericas

Based in Ottawa, [ParlAmericas](#) promotes parliamentary democracy in the inter-American system, and is composed of 35 National legislatures from North, Central and South America and the Caribbean. ParlAmericas' mission is to improve and enhance national and hemispheric democratic processes by providing a leadership forum that channels a continuous conversation on key issues of common concern throughout the Americas.

ParlAmericas has hosted a series of meetings dealing with violence against women in politics, convened by the Group of Women Parliamentarians, a permanent working group within ParlAmericas. It has also produced an [Action Plan for Parliamentarians](#) at its 2015 gathering in Argentina. The Action Plan focuses on multi-sectoral approaches, engaging men, holding political parties accountable, creating environments where political harassment and violence can be debated, and policies, bills and reforms and institutional compliance. ParlAmericas also created an incident tracking tool in 2016 called "[Mapping gender-based political harassment: Parliamentarians speak out](#)", which is an interactive space where parliamentarians can submit video testimonials of their experience with political harassment and violence. The address to submit a video is: parlamericasgen@parlamericas.org.

At its 2016 Saint Lucia meeting of women parliamentarians from over 10 Caribbean countries (as well as from Canada), ParlAmericas held sessions aimed at curbing harassment and promoting gender-sensitive parliaments, including tackling issues surrounding media representations of women candidates and politicians. The [sessions](#) promoted 'gender neutral coverage' and included media strategies from the "[Name it; Change it](#)" campaign created by the US-based non-partisan, non-profit, [Women's Media Center](#). The strategy sets out actions that women parliamentarians could employ to combat sexual harassment in the media as well as to encourage fairer and more objective media treatment overall.

PARLAMERICAS GENDER-BASED HARASSMENT:

Gender-based political harassment is intimidation, coercion or violence targeting women and other marginalized groups for their activity in political and public life, in ways that exacerbate gendered discrimination. In parliamentary politics, this can manifest as sexist language on the floor of legislatures, biased media coverage undermining women's leadership, pressure to renounce elected office, or physical assault, among others (2014, 9).

SPOTLIGHT: THE OAS DECLARATION ON POLITICAL HARASSMENT AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

In a 2015 Declaration on Political Harassment and Violence Against Women, the Organization of American States reflects the significant impact of VAW-P.

The OAS recognizes:

- ❖ That political violence and harassment against women prevent them from being recognized as political subjects and thus discourage many women from entering or continuing political careers;
- ❖ That the tolerance of violence against women hides political violence and harassment, which impedes the formulation and application of policies to address the issue;
- ❖ That the use of symbolic violence as an instrument of political discussion gravely affects women's exercise of their political rights;
- ❖ That political harassment and/or violence against women have become more visible due to the increased political participation of women, especially as political representatives, which in turn is the result of implementation of gender quotas and parity policies, measures that have been adopted by a large number of countries in the Americas;
- ❖ That political violence and harassment against women can occur in any area of public and political life: in government institutions, in polling booths, in political parties, social organizations and in trade unions, and through the media, among others;
- ❖ That political harassment and/or violence against women are of particular gravity when perpetrated by public authorities;

The Declaration also focuses on the responsibility of states to address VAW-P directly.

The OAS recognizes:

- ❖ That it is the responsibility of the State, citizens, political parties, social and political organizations, and trade unions, to foster legal and cultural changes in order to guarantee the substantive equality of women and men in political spheres, according to the recommendations of the United Nations Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women and the commitments assumed through the Convention of Belém do Pará;
- ❖ That the problem of political harassment and/or violence against women highlights that to achieve political parity in a democracy, it is not enough to adopt quotas or ensure electoral parity; instead, it requires a comprehensive approach that on the one hand, ensures equal access of women and men to all government institutions and political organizations and, on the other hand, ensures that the conditions for exercising that access are free of discrimination and violence against women at all levels and in all arenas of political life;
- ❖ The efforts of women in politics in the Americas to foster public policies in terms of political harassment and/or violence against women;

Westminster Foundation for Democracy

The [Westminster Foundation for Democracy](#) (WFD) is a UK based non-profit that partners with UK political parties, parliaments, electoral, and financial audit institutions to help over 30 developing countries make their governments fairer, more effective and accountable.

In March 19-20 2018, in partnership with political parties in the UK, the WFD hosted an International Summit on Violence Against Women in Politics. The conference highlighted key issues related to VAW-P globally, including how women pay a higher price and must meet higher standards in politics compared to men and how social media platforms are facilitating a growing level of threats against women. Conference participants encouraged political parties to adopt clear codes of conduct and to discipline members who perpetrate violence. They also encouraged all Parliaments and other legislative bodies to develop and enforce clear codes of conduct for elected members and senior staff.

The conference was accompanied by an online report, '[Violence Against Women in Politics: Global Perspectives of a Global Issue](#).' The report provides a global overview of the violence women in politics experience on a regular basis. Focusing specifically on the online abuse women receive, the report notes how common it is for women to receive rape threats in particular (WFD 2018, 13). In the UK as elsewhere, perpetrators of online abuse are seldom sanctioned for their abusive behaviour from social media companies. WFD has also issued a series of case study reports on violence against women in politics, including in the United Kingdom and Ukraine.

In its [study of the U.K.](#) written by Delyth Jewell, violence against women in British politics is found to be pervasive and a serious issue. The report cites the case of Jo Cox MP who was murdered in her constituency in 2016; Cat Smith MP whose campaign office windows were smashed in during the 2017 general election, and the credible death threats made against Rosie Cooper in 2017 in the name of a neo-Nazi group (Jewell 2018, 6). More recently, in February 2019 a man was arrested for credible threats against Yvette Cooper MP and for making threats against her children and grandchildren.

The report echoes previous findings that in order to combat violence against women, a collaborative effort between parliaments, political parties, social media companies, police and members of society is required.

In the next section of the report, we collate these actions and provide concrete steps and recommendations that can be taken to address this problem in Canada in the #MeToo era.

Part V: Comprehensive and Sector-Specific Recommendations

The preceding parts of this report highlight how several national legislatures and civil society organizations have responded to the problem of violence against women in politics to date. Drawing on the data collected in this report and in consideration of the current context of Canadian politics, we propose the following as steps that would help combat violence against women in Canadian politics. Importantly, our recommendations should not be considered as a final, definitive list but rather, as starting points for a broader, nation-wide discussion on how different actors, organizations, and institutions must work together to combat this problem.

Enabling Factors:

To fully address the issue of violence against women in politics, we must first acknowledge the broader historical, societal, and institutional rules, cultures, and norms that work in tandem to contribute to the problem of violence against women in politics and in society. These are varied and complex, but we encourage all actors working to end VAW-P to situate their efforts within these broader contextual factors:

- ❖ How historically embedded androcentric, colonialist, racist, homophobic, transphobic, sexist, ableist, and ageist belief systems reinforce and perpetuate violence in public workplaces and in private spaces. Societal power asymmetries and imbalances are often exacerbated in workplaces that are hierarchical, competitive, and male-dominated, like legislatures. Institutional **culture change** that uproots these belief systems must occur alongside other avenues of change.
- ❖ The highly **partisan** nature of legislatures was identified in our report as a contributing factor to a sexist culture that is prone to gendered/racialized bullying and harassment. Hyper-partisanship creates a competitive atmosphere of cutthroat politics where quick jabs and put-downs are commonplace. It also reduces a sense of shared comradeship, collaboration and mutual respect and ultimately dehumanizes political actors. Efforts to reduce VAW-P require a fundamental change to the dominance of partisan politics in Canadian legislatures.
- ❖ The chronically low **representation** of women, racialized minorities, LGBTQ and disabled persons in Canadian legislatures is well documented. Efforts to increase the diversity of Canadian legislatures will have the added effect of facilitating positive culture change, thereby creating safer legislatures for all.

Recommendations FOR GOVERNMENTS:

Recommendation #1: We call on the Government of Canada to immediately adopt the U.N.'s December 2018 73/148 resolution that affirms its efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, including sexual harassment in politics. The adoption of this policy needs to be followed by concrete steps and actions taken by both governments and legislatures, including those outlined in these recommendations. These should include new initiatives and not simply reference to past actions in these areas.

- a. **A new offense should be embedded in Canada's electoral laws that would prohibit the intimidation of political candidates and party campaigners.** The law should encompass threats of violence, explicitly including threats of sexualized violence. Online threats should

be treated seriously, both to the health and safety of the victim, but also to the opportunity to participate.

- b. Undertake research to explore how social media companies can be part of the solution to online VAW-P, including developing laws and regulations over these spaces.** Social media cannot remain the wild west of harassment without penalties, social media accountability from social media companies is a necessity. These directives could be rolled into current discussions on cyber-security and the role that social media companies play in spreading misinformation and 'fake news' to the Canadian public particularly in the lead up to electoral contests.

Recommendations FOR LEGISLATURES:

Legislatures across Canada, and at all levels (federal, provincial/territorial, and municipal), must address the systemic barriers and institutional cultures that create obstacles to participation and that give rise to violence against women in politics.

***Recommendation #2:* We call on legislatures across Canada to immediately adopt explicit policies and procedures that prohibit sexual harassment in their workplaces. Jurisdictions which have policies in place must undergo a thorough review of these processes to ensure they are comprehensive and that they reflect best practices. Gaps and limitations should be addressed and resolved immediately.**

These policies should:

- ❖ **Be overseen by an independent, non-elected third party.** Canadian politicians and parties must not control the process or have influence over any case dealing with sexual harassment. To that end, we propose the creation of an arm's length, independent body who would be responsible for overseeing all codes, rules, and procedures dealing with behavioural and workplace conduct in Canadian legislatures, including sexual harassment, at all levels of government. The officer should be independently appointed with a fixed-term, have full investigatory powers, and the ability to impose a full range of sanctions when sexual harassment (and/or other harassing or violent behaviour) has occurred. This independent office must be accessible as a starting point for a complainant. Alternatives to a new position include expanding the role of an Ombudsperson or similarly neutral third party. Clerks, Whips, and Speakers are not appropriate roles for this position.
- ❖ Include full, frank and clear definitions of harassment, sexual harassment, consent, respect and professionalism in the political workplace.
- ❖ Similar to the U.K. Parliament's new scheme, all anti-harassment codes and policies must cover and protect the entire parliamentary community including (but not limited to): administrative and political staff, contractors, interns and fellows, elected officials, volunteers, lobbyists, social movement actors, journalists and all visitors to parliamentary precincts.
- ❖ **Be inclusive of non-work place environments.** As elected officials and staff frequently engage in work-related activities after regular work hours and outside usual work environments; these spaces and events are often requirements of the job.
- ❖ **Explicitly include online harassment.**
- ❖ **Recognize power dynamics and inequities between elected officials and staff.**
- ❖ Have **clearly defined investigative processes**, including steps for complainants and respondents and explicit and reasonable timelines.

- ❖ Include provisions that ensure complainants can access free specialist services for counselling as well as legal representation from an expert on gender-based violence.
- ❖ **Guarantee and accommodate ongoing employment** and prevent retributive actions or threats.
- ❖ **Have reasonable practices for dealing with unsubstantiated cases** that are based on facts and not on rape-culture stereotypes and myths. A tiny percentage (approximately 2%) of unproven or unsubstantiated incidents of harassment and VAW are 'vexatious'; including such provisions in anti-harassment policies reproduces these harmful stereotypes and myths.
- ❖ **Outline plans for the communication of findings and results to the complainant, the respondent, and to the public.** While the confidentiality of all complainants must always be ensured and protected, in the event that there is a finding that sexual harassment has taken place, the names of the respondent/offender should be made available in a public registrar and available online for the Canadian public to see.
- ❖ **Require yearly, mandatory in-person training** for all management and employees led by a knowledgeable outside expert in the area of sexual misconduct/harassment. **Online training should also be available, but it is not sufficient.** The training should be preventative in nature and should include a direct discussion of the problem of by-standers and designed to ensure all parties involved have an understanding of the policy and the procedures for dealing with a complaint. Finally, training should be situation-based, and not just focused on process, so that everyone is able to recognize what is sexual harassment and what isn't.
- ❖ **Include mandatory, regular review mechanisms:** all policies and procedures should have an automatic, mandatory review process every 2 years. These should not be one-time reviews as it is vital to observe how they will interact with older rules and be interpreted by actors within institutions that have deeply embedded sexist cultures. A mandatory review process will help ensure effectiveness of the policies over time.

Recommendation #3: We call on all legislatures across Canada to develop and use a clear and fulsome definition of violence against women in politics in order to help raise awareness and identify the problem more clearly.

Our definition is: Violence against women in politics is part of the spectrum of gender-based violence that includes physical, psychological, economic and symbolic actions or threats against women that result in, or are intended to result in, harm or suffering against women simply because they are women. It is intersectional, as racialized minorities, members of the LGBTQ community, the poor, religious minorities, disabled persons, and younger women tend to experience violence in politics disproportionately based on their social identities and diverse characteristics.

Recommendation #4: We call on all legislatures to review how parliamentary rules and norms that govern procedures and acceptable forms of behaviours within meetings and debating chambers contribute to a wider sexist culture.

- ❖ Parliamentary leaders (e.g. House leaders, Speakers, and other Presiding Officers) should collectively undertake a study of how the culture can be changed utilizing a gender-based analysis plus (GBA+) lens. Options might include the adoption of new ethical guidelines on behaviour or real enforcement of rules that currently exist but are not adequately enforced,

such as the recording and naming of MPs who utter sexist comments in the chamber or in committee meetings (in camera or public).

- ❖ Speakers should exercise the responsibilities bestowed upon them by their Houses to prohibit sexist, racist, homophobic or otherwise demeaning language during parliamentary debates. In the event that such language is used, Speakers should punish members and/or parties accordingly. This could include, for example, disallowing a party from asking a question in a subsequent Question Period or naming and asking a Member to leave the chamber for a period of time.

Recommendation #5: We call for the development of a broad strategy to ensure that legislatures are both inclusive and safe places to work. Efforts to boost the number of women, LGBTQ2, racialized, differently abled, and other marginalized people will contribute to a changing workplace culture. Consideration should be given to:

- ❖ Changes that make legislatures more family friendly, including parental leave, family rooms, and provisions which allow babies on the floor of the Chamber;
- ❖ Inclusive, gender-neutral bathroom options for gender-neutral honorifics;
- ❖ Evaluation of building accessibility and a plan to address physical barriers;
- ❖ Bolder, more proactive and direct efforts to increase the number of women elected, including tying per-vote subsidies to the gender of the candidate, which has recently been adopted in New Brunswick.

Recommendations FOR POLITICAL PARTIES:

Recommendation #6: We call on all political parties across Canada to immediately adopt internal policies and provisions that prohibit sexual harassment within their ranks. These should include:

- ❖ Clear, independent provisions and procedures as discussed above.
- ❖ Comprehensive definitions of violence against women in politics as discussed above.
- ❖ Clear and consistent guidance and 'best practices' to party volunteers, staff, candidates, and elected officials on safety measures when canvassing, attending public events, or working in constituency offices.
- ❖ In the interests of full transparency and openness, all parties should publish these policies on their websites.

Recommendation #7: We call on all political parties across Canada to take a public stand against violence against women in politics in all settings, including on social media platforms, and to show leadership on this issue by forbidding known sexual harassers from running for their parties in elections or sitting as members of their parties in legislatures. As the first federal election since #MeToo, Canadian parties should be expected to take a public leadership position on how they plan to tackle violence against women in politics during the 2019 national campaign.

Recommendation #8: We call on all political parties to implement strategies for recruiting and retaining more diverse candidates and elected members.

- ❖ Training, resources, and support should be made available to a new diverse pool of candidates.
- ❖ Women, with a particular focus on racialized and indigenous women, should be encouraged and facilitated to run in competitive and winnable ridings.

Recommendations FOR NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS:

Recommendation #9: *We call for more robust and intersectional research on this issue.* As the United Nations' Special Rapporteur's 2018 report indicates, there is insufficient data or standard indicators for measuring violence against women, including in Canada. This research must be intersectional in nature and combine qualitative and quantitative measures to better understand the scope and nature of the problem.

Recommendation #10: *We call for more collaborative, cross-sector partnerships within and across the broader VAW advocacy community that includes public servants, government actors, academics, and other non-governmental actors.* As capacity is an on-going challenge in the sector, the ability for broader groups of actors to share resources and knowledge and to collectively help disseminate their messages to wider communities, both within and outside of Canada, would be beneficial to everyone engaged in anti-violence work across a multiplicity of areas.

Cross-sector collaboration could include:

- ❖ A public campaign to inform decision-makers at all levels of government and the public about the scope of the problem.
- ❖ Asking political candidates running for office in 2019 (and other elections) to publicly sign a pledge (and Tweet out a photo of them doing so) committing themselves to fight against sexual harassment in politics and to supporting equality policies if elected (see MeTooEP discussed above).
- ❖ Conducting public opinion survey(s) on this issue to be used to inform future advocacy work that is fully informed by Canadians' expectations on VAW-P in the #MeToo era.

Recommendations FOR SOCIAL MEDIA COMPANIES:

Recommendation #11: *We call on all social media companies operating in Canada to take ownership over, and responsibility for, their part in the need to stop the proliferation of violence against women in politics online.* This should include:

- ❖ Developing automated tools to identify and remove abusive content;
- ❖ Providing training and updates to political parties and their members on how to use these tools (e.g., filtering and blocking options);
- ❖ Taking threats of violence against politically-active women seriously and blocking and removing users as necessary;
- ❖ Connecting with elected women and candidates, particularly racialized, minority, and Indigenous women, to understand their experiences with online violence, to inform evidence-based solutions.

Recommendations FOR THE CANADIAN PUBLIC:

Recommendation #12: *We encourage all Canadians to pledge their support to end violence against women in politics and in Canadian society as a whole.* Men and women must speak out when they witness violence against women in any form. This should include public attacks made against elected women on social media platforms.

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Endnotes

ⁱ Declaration on the elimination of violence against women, UN General Assembly resolution 48/104, 1993.

ⁱⁱ They are: Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Slovakia and the United Kingdom.

ⁱⁱⁱ Women gained access to the federal franchise in Canada in 1918, but Indigenous men and women, for example, were not granted this right until 1960.

^{iv} Only the staff version of the Code requires public reporting of statistics on how the Code is used. No such reporting expectations are linked to the MP-to-MP Code of Conduct.

^v The Inter-Parliamentary Union rankings for each country can be found here:

<http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>. Current as of February 2019.

^{vi} In 1991, Anita Hill accused former supervisor and Supreme Court nominee, Clarence Thomas, of sexual harassment. Despite compelling testimony and confirmation via a polygraph test (which Thomas refused to take himself), the predominantly male Senate Judiciary Committee raised questions about Hill's motivations to testify alongside her credibility. The televised hearings were an early example of the difficulty in bringing sexual harassment complaints forward against powerful male actors. Thomas was subsequently confirmed, despite Hill's allegations.

^{vii} While an important first study on the issue, this qualitative and quantitative research project only involved 55 women respondents. While it included women parliamentarians from across the globe (39 countries), it underscores the need for further studies to document the depth, scope and variations associated with the problem world-wide.