

WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

- Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) is proud to be a new implementation partner of Canada's third National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security.
- Being an implementation partner will strengthen VAC's relationship with like-minded departments and agencies like the Department of National Defence (DND)/Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), and it will also provide VAC with the opportunity to influence the strategic direction of the third National Action Plan.
- Canadian women Veterans face more challenges than men, both in and after military service. Accordingly, VAC needs to tailor its programs, services, and benefits to meet the unique needs of women Veterans.
- Acknowledging, elevating and supporting women's meaningful participation in peace and security, both domestically and internationally, is integral to their health and well-being.
- As part of Canada's Action Plan for the Implementation of United Nations Security Council

Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security, we are collaborating with Veterans, key stakeholders, subject matter experts and other government departments to help identify and address systemic issues specific to sex, gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation of equity-deserving groups within the Veteran community.

- On March 28, 2024, the Honourable Mélanie Joly, Minister of Foreign Affairs, along with eleven other federal Cabinet ministers, issued a joint statement on the release of Foundations for Peace: Canada's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security - 2023 to 2029.
- GAC will highlight VAC's involvement as a new implementation partner in the bridging year report, due in Parliament by March 31, 2025.

WHEN PRESSED:

Q1 – What is Canada’s third National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2023-2029?

In 2000, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) unanimously adopted Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), which reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction, and stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security.

Subsequently, the UNSC has adopted a series of resolutions on the WPS agenda, calling on member states to develop and implement a National Action Plan to address the differential impact of conflict situations on women and girls, and support their participation in peace and security efforts. Canada launched its first National Action Plan in 2010, its second in 2017, and its third in 2023 for the period of 2023-2029 (one bridging year is added on top of the five-year plan).

The main focus of Canada’s first National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security was on conflict areas abroad. However, the United Nations recognized that in order to maintain peace and stability in the world and to maximize the role of women and girls in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and post-conflict state-building, domestic issues also deserve due attention. In the second National Action Plan, Canada publicly acknowledges that “women in Canada face a variety of challenges including gender-based violence. Indigenous women and girls in particular face intersecting discrimination and violence based on gender, race, socioeconomic status and other identity factors, as well as underlying historic causes—in particular the legacy of colonialism and the devastation caused by the residential school system.” Canada’s third National Action Plan will further increase the attention to domestic issues.

Q2 – Why VAC agreed to be an implementation partner of Canada’s third National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2023-2029?

Being an implementation partner will position VAC in a global context of WPS while elevating and supporting women’s meaningful participation in peace and security, both domestically and internationally. CAF is targeting to increase the percentage of women in the Canadian military by 1% per year, to achieve the desired goal of 25% by the end of the fiscal year 2026. DND/CAF is committed to increasing the number of uniformed women deployed on international operations and in decision-making positions. RCMP also sets a goal to meet or exceed their target that 20% of deployments are composed of women to peace operations/missions under the International Police Peacekeeping and Peace Operations (IPP) Program, including in senior and/or influential positions.

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Source: Commemoration and Public Affairs Date: 2024/11/22

Based on these targets, VAC is expecting to see an ongoing increase in the number of women who have been deployed abroad, making it critical to ensure VAC has inclusive policies, programs, and services that equitably meet the specific needs of women Veterans.

Being an implementation partner will strengthen our relationships with DND/CAF and RCMP. It will further elevate the credibility of VAC and will boost strategic data linkages between VAC and DND/CAF, thus enabling VAC to provide better services to women Veterans. It will also influence the alignment of common objectives and measures across partnering departments, and further strengthen horizontal Government of Canada national action plans, such as:

- The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action (2015)
- Canada's Anti-Racism Strategy (2019 – 2022)
- The National Action Plan: Ending Violence Against Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People (2021)
- The Federal 2SLGBTQI+ Action Plan (2022)

Q3 – What are the unique challenges that actively serving women CAF members and women Veterans face?

Research shows that in CAF, overall, women are under-represented in senior leadership and combat roles. Generally speaking, serving CAF women earn less than serving men, often because of their shorter lengths of service. They are more likely to have repetitive strain injuries, joint pain, and chronic illnesses, and are about twice as likely as their men counterparts to have an acute injury from military training and hence are medically released more often than men. Women CAF members are more likely than their men counterparts to have suicidal ideation and attempts. CAF women more often have a difficult adjustment to civilian life than men, and relatedly, women Veterans find losing their military identity challenging more often than do men. Women CAF Veterans experience activity limitations and require assistance with activities of daily living more often than men Veterans. Women members and Veterans of the CAF report mental health problems more often than their men counterparts. CAF Veterans found that women had significantly lower levels of social support than men. Women Veterans are approximately 2% more likely than men Veterans to experience episodic homelessness. Research has found that gender-blind or gender-neutral programs and services for Veterans best serve men because they are in the majority, as such, there is an urgent need for VAC to offer programs and services tailored to the specific and unique needs of women Veterans.

Q4 – What is new in this National Action Plan?

It is the first Canadian National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security ratified by Cabinet. Veterans Affairs is added as a new partner. In this National Action Plan, the

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Government of Canada commits to addressing some new issues such as 1) the emerging or non-traditional threats to peace and security; 2) institutional changes within the Canadian Armed Forces to promote the recruitment and career progression of diverse women, and gender-responsive planning of domestic and international military operations; 3) outcomes for women Veterans; and 4) growing protection needs of women peacebuilders and women human rights defenders. This National Action Plan has an expanded domestic focus, adds a new focus on crisis response, and aligns with other national policies and plans. It pays more attention to intersectionality – specifically the needs of women and gender-diverse people who face multiple forms of oppression and discrimination. With less cumbersome reporting processes, implementing partners will prioritize key indicators and incorporate more qualitative and narrative reporting. The new evaluation framework will also enhance transparency and help demonstrate the impact of this important work.

Q5 – Is there a budget for Canada’s third National Action Plan?

As in the previous two plans, there is not a full cost estimate or budget associated with the entirety of the National Action Plan. Instead, elements are reflected in the planning and budgets of respective federal partners.

BACKGROUND — WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) adopted Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) in 2000, it later called on member states to develop and implement a National Action Plan to address the differential impact of conflict situations on women and girls, and support their participation in peace and security efforts.

Canada launched its first National Action Plan in 2010, its second in 2017, and its third in 2023 for the period of 2023-2029, which will further increase the attention to domestic issues.

VAC's implementation plan will be addressing four of the six focus areas in the National Action Plan, namely:

- Focus Area 3: Crisis Response
- Focus Area 4: Sex and Gender-Based Violence
- Focus Area 5: Leadership and Capacities
- Focus Area 6: Inclusion

In VAC's first implementation plan, we will NOT address the following two focus areas:

Focus Area 1: Building and Sustaining Peace

Focus Area 2: Security, Justice and Accountability

There are opportunities to leverage current and planned departmental initiatives/activities/programs to support these four focus areas. Additionally, VAC is building relationships with stakeholders in the Women Peace and Security Network Canada (WPSN-C) to better understand the grassroots efforts of women Veterans in this community.

VAC will apply existing indicators from the current Departmental Plan and/or develop new indicators to track the progress in implementing the plan.

VAC is expecting to see an ongoing increase in the number of women who have been deployed abroad, making it critical to ensure we have inclusive policies, programs, and services that equitably meet the specific needs of women Veterans.