



SUPPORTING SURVIVORS
OF ABUSE AND BRAIN INJURY
THROUGH RESEARCH

Department of Finance Canada
90 Elgin Street
Ottawa ON
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August 26, 2025

Dear Members of the Standing Committee on Finance,

On behalf of Supporting Survivors of Abuse and Brain Injury through Research (SOAR), I'm writing to urge the Government of Canada to make urgent and sustained investments in Budget 2025 that address gender-based violence, brain injury, and femicide.

SOAR is a registered charity, and the only organization in Canada focused exclusively on intimate partner violence (IPV) and brain injury (BI). SOAR explores the intersection of IPV and BI, educates frontline workers on how to recognize and respond, and empowers survivors to get the supports and services they need to thrive.

Given almost half (44%) of women in Canada will experience violence at the hands of a partner in their lifetime, and as many as 92% of those may sustain a brain injury through concussion or strangulation as part of that abuse, governments and health systems have a duty to address this public health crisis. These injuries are often left unrecognized and untreated, leaving survivors with lasting cognitive, physical, and emotional impacts, including memory loss, dizziness, fatigue, difficulty regulating emotions, and challenges with parenting, working, and maintaining safe housing.

Moreover, femicide continues at alarming rates. Every two days, a woman or girl in Canada is killed by a current or former partner. Strangulation is one of the clearest predictors of lethality and is still too often minimized as part of a "domestic dispute," rather than the urgent public safety threat it represents. To address these issues, SOAR calls on the federal government to take the following actions in Budget 2026:

1. **Sustain and Strengthen Funding for Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE):** Community-based organizations like SOAR rely on stable, multi-year funding to deliver survivor-informed training, education, resources, and support programs. Ongoing investment in WAGE is an ongoing investment in the safety and wellbeing of women, girls and gender-diverse people in Canada.
2. **Advance a National Strategy on Brain Injury:** Bill C-206, *An Act to establish a National Strategy on Brain Injury*, provides an opportunity for leadership. This strategy must recognize IPV as a leading cause of brain injury in women, fund survivor-informed research, and create trauma- and brain-injury-informed pathways to care that are accessible and culturally safe.

3. **Recognize Femicide as a Distinct Criminal Offence:** Naming femicide in law acknowledges the gendered nature of this violence, improves data collection, and ensures targeted prevention. This must include automatic incarceration with no option for bail.
 - **Expand Reverse-Onus Bail Provisions:** Strangulation and assault by choking are clear red flags for lethal violence. The presumption of detention must apply in all such cases, placing the burden on the accused to justify release—not on survivors to prove their need for protection.
 - **Treat IPV as a Public Safety Crisis:** IPV must no longer be minimized as a private matter. More specialized laws, trauma-informed responses, and survivor-centered approaches are required to prevent further harm.

These measures are not only urgent but preventative. Addressing IPV, brain injury, and femicide through stable funding, national coordination, and legal reform will save lives, reduce long-term health and justice costs, and ensure survivors are not left behind.

SOAR stands ready to offer our expertise, consultation, and support in advancing these priorities. This written submission urges the Standing Committee on Finance to ensure Budget 2025 reflects the urgent need for sustained federal investment in addressing intimate partner violence, femicide, and brain injury.

Yours truly,



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