



AWHsome

Newsletter of Advancement of Women Halton

AWH is a collaborative of twenty women's groups and social agencies that advocate and amplify the voice of women. The monthly meetings give us an opportunity to hear about the activities and challenges of member organizations. This newsletter is another avenue for readers to learn about AWH member activities during the previous month.



January 2026

Happy New Year!

IN THIS ISSUE:

DECEMBER HAPPENINGS

*Orange the World Vigil
From Burlington
Halton Multicultural Connection
December 6 National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence
Against Women
CCAH Holiday Concert
HMC Connections*

COMING SOON

*Black History Month
Halton Equity & Diversity Roundtable Storytelling
HMC Connections*

ISSUES FROM AWH, OUR MEMBERS and PARTNERS

*Basic Income
Disability – without poverty
Environment
Funding
Gender-based Violence
Gender Equality
Senior Strategy*

NEWS FROM LOCAL POLITICIANS and LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

INFORMATION FROM ALLIES

*Feed Ontario
Stephen Lewis Foundation
Pearson Centre
Right to Learn Afghanistan*

OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST

FINAL WORD

This is What Democracy Looks Like in 2026!



**ADVANCEMENT
OF WOMEN
HALTON**

Like most organizations this year has been busy and very concerning – one leadership campaign, two elections, the temporary loss of the Minister of Women and Gender Equality, the Federal Budget, the extension of the Canada Wide Early Learning and Child Care agreement, the increase in Intimate Partner Violence, and locally housing and the Maplehurst Correctional facility.

Concerning the elections: for first one, Ontario, we sent letters with questions to all of the candidates but only received answers from four of them. So instead for the federal election, we limited our work. The Gender-Based Violence Committee contacted the candidates to sign the Elect Respect pledge.

After the federal election, we sent letters of congratulations to the successful MPs which also included our AWH concerns: the social infrastructure and care economy which provides the necessary social safety net, and the continuation of the national action plan to end gender-based violence.

This was our theme in both the Ontario and federal Budget consultations.

Letters of thanks were sent to Jagmeet Singh for his contribution to our democracy, to the Hon. Karina Gould, thanking her for running for the Liberal leadership, to Premier Wab Kinew for his work re MMIW, to Prime Minister Carney for his stand on Gaza. We have also thanked Pam Damoff for her work as she retired from public office.

The extension of the Canada Wide Early Learning and Child Care agreement involved multiple letters, meetings with MPPs, sometimes their staff, Regional staff and the community, and even an opinion piece in the Hamilton Spectator. Finally the CWELCC agreement was extended but only for one year!

Housing both for (especially Home Suite Hope & Burlington's plans) and against (Ontario's plan for Oakville Go station) involved many of our members with discussions continuing into 2026.

Our Health Committee attended Ontario Health Coalition rallies, meetings as well as sharing valuable information to our members on a monthly basis.

The Gender-Based Violence Committee continued its work on Intimate Partner Violence, sending a letter to the new Minister for WAGE concerning it.

The Empowering Elders committee prepared an information report for services for seniors available to Halton residents.

Along with letters, we have done multiple sign-ons this year - national pharmacare, improved EI benefits, Campaign 2000 brief concerning poverty, Demand Better from Action Canada.

Two of our members have been continuing delegates to other meetings: Oakville's Community Leaders Roundtable and to CRIAW's research project "Countering the Rise of Anti-Feminism".

It's been a busy year — and add to it our monthly AWHsome sharing valuable information sent to our members and the community. Wishing you all the best for 2026 – we need it!!

Teri & Maureen

DECEMBER HAPPENINGS

December 1st **Orange the World Vigil**

Linda Rafuse and Elizabeth Rennie of Ubuntu, the Burlington branch of the Stephen Lewis Grandmothers to Grandmothers campaign.

In the middle of 16 days of activism to end gender based violence against women and girls, the Ubuntu Grandmothers gathered at Burlington's City Hall for their annual Orange the World Vigil. The yearly is usually held by candlelight, outside in the dark and cold but this year the Mayor and councillors invited everyone into City Hall. There were shocking statistics from Halton police and passionate speeches by middle and high school students.



From Burlington:

December 4th Burlington's mayor Marianne Meed- Ward received **Mayor of the Year Award**



Earlier in November

A huge congratulations went to **Victoria Mboko** for receiving the Key to the City of Burlington. Victoria, a proud North Oakville-Burlington resident, is an extraordinary athlete whose talent, discipline, and determination have made her a standout in the international tennis world. She continues to inspire young people across our community and all of Canada with her remarkable achievement. We are so proud of you Victoria!



Halton Multicultural Connections

Thursday, December 4, we held a Special English Conversation in partnership with Appleby College! The session was both educational and enjoyable, giving participants the chance to practice English through interactive language-learning exercises and fun, engaging activities.



December 6 National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women

We remember their names:

Geneviève Bergeron
Hélène Colgan
Nathalie Croteau
Barbara Daigneault
Anne-Marie Edward
Maud Haviernick
Barbara Klucznik-Widajewicz

Maryse Laganière
Maryse Leclair
Anne-Marie Lemay
Sonia Pelletier
Michèle Richard
Annie St-Arneault
Annie Turcotte.

In recognition of the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, flags at town facilities were lowered to half-mast on Saturday, Dec. 6, 2025. The day is the anniversary of the 1989 École Polytechnique massacre in Montreal, in which an armed male student murdered fourteen women and injured ten others.

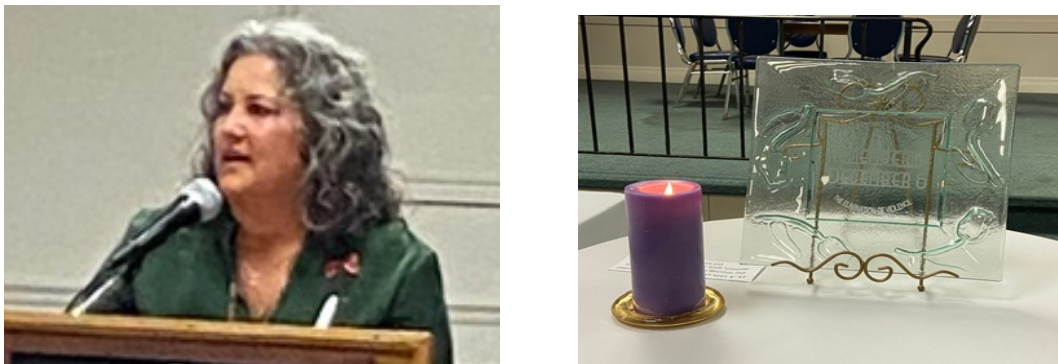
In a statement to Oakville News, Mayor Rob Burton said, "I believe it is every person's fundamental right to live in safety and security in their community. On The National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, I believe it is important to acknowledge that ending abuse is everyone's issue."



At Unifor Galaxy 707



Shifra Homes and SAVIS Executive Directors and young women with stories to tell



Grandmothers Voice Jodi Harbour and the remembrance plaque

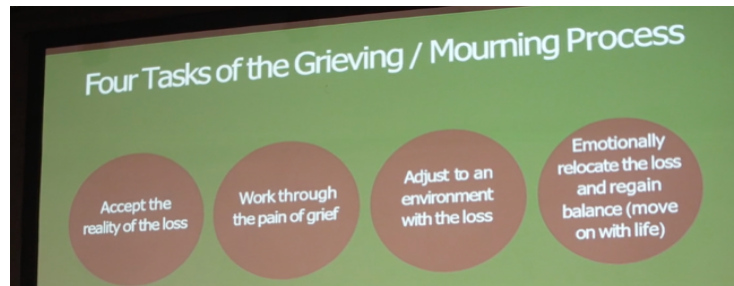
Jodie Harbour of **Grandmothers Voice** shared a video of the latest session of Land-Based Focusing-Oriented therapy, with Dennis Wendigo.

This very successful therapy is based on four tasks:

We are healing.

Indigenous Wisdom in Trauma Recovery- Land Based Focusing Oriented Therapy

<https://vimeo.com/1144943306>



CCAH Holiday Concert - December 7



Our Annual Holiday Concert on Sunday December 7 celebrated the end of 2025 with entertainment presented by our music program students. The concert featured performances by our Steelpan and parang students along with our official CCAH Steelband and a welcome from MPP Stephen Crawford and with songs like Joy to the World, Good King Wenceslas, and Silent Night being performed for their audience.

"It's magical," said Williams on the holiday concert. "It's brings the entire community together under one roof and our steel pan group gets to show all the hard work they have put in every Sunday."

Friday night, December 13, our Christmas party at HMC Connections



reminded us of one beautiful truth: Christmas is all about family — and family means everyone.

It was a night filled with laughter, connection, and unforgettable moments. Our space came alive with joyful games, delicious food, and smiling faces. What made the evening even more special was seeing families come together — children, friends, and volunteers, all celebrating as one big family.

Volunteers joined us with open hearts, bringing warmth and positive energy to the night. There was music, dancing, and so much fun that you could feel the happiness in every corner of the room. From cheerful conversations to shared meals and lively dance moments, the evening truly captured the spirit of togetherness.



Christmas is not just about gifts or decorations — it's about togetherness, kindness, and creating memories with people who feel like family. And that's exactly what we experienced that night.

Thank you to everyone who came, celebrated, volunteered, danced, laughed, and made this fantastic night so meaningful. Moments like these are why our community is so special.

COMING SOON

February 1-28: **Black History Month Art Exhibit**

Celebrate Black History Month through art at the Queen Elizabeth Park Community and Cultural Centre (QEPPCC) Main Gallery in Oakville and the Holcim Gallery in Milton. The exhibit will run from February 1 to February 28, curated by the renowned [Francesca Durham](#).

Join us for an opening reception on Sunday, February 1 at the QEPPCC Main Gallery, to meet the artists, learn more about their work, and listen to music by the talented harpist [Pearl Schachter](#). Later in the month, join us again for a reception on February 21st at Holcim Gallery.

February 15: Burlington Concert Band and CCAH Concert. Join us on February 15th at The Holiday Inn Burlington Conference Centre by ING as CCAH steelpan and parang members team up with the Burlington Concert Band for a one of a kind performance blending traditional, classical and Caribbean music. Don't miss this vibrant musical celebration!

February 18 Black History Month film screenings

Join us on February 18th at Film.Ca in Oakville for an exciting film screening presented in partnership with the Oakville Festival of Film and Art. The evening will; continue with a panel discussion and audience Q&A, offering deeper insight into our Black History Month theme.





Halton Equity & Diversity Roundtable

Empower Your Organization with

Storytelling that Honors Dignity, Consent, and Cultural Safety

Stories have the power to shape how communities are understood, valued, and supported. In the non-profit sector, the stories we choose—and how we choose to tell them—carry deep responsibility. This full-day workshop equips non-profit leaders, communicators, and frontline staff with the skills to create storytelling practices that are ethical, equity-centred, and trauma-informed.

Participants will explore how identity, power, and culture influence storytelling; learn practical tools for interviewing and narrative development; and build confidence in sharing stories across writing, visual media, and live formats.

February 27, 2026. 9.00 am to 4.00pm at 255 Morden Road, Oakville

[Registration](#) and more information



New programs from Halton Multicultural Connections

[For more information](#)

- Pension Clinic at HMC Milton
 - Intermediate computer Training at HMC Burlington Office
 - Advanced Computer Training at Oakville Library Woodside Branch
 - Safe Winter Driving Information
 - “Know the land, Know the people” learn about indigenous history
-

Basic Income

UBI Works

Their **2025 Year-In-Review**. To UBI Works this document is the clearest snapshot they've ever produced of what this community has built together and why it matters.

A few of the points:

- Guaranteed Basic Income continued its shift from a fringe idea to a serious, evidence-based policy discussed openly in Parliament and the Senate.
- We expanded our work beyond income alone, tackling the deeper structural drivers of poverty and housing insecurity — especially the role of land and unearned wealth.
- We launched a **first-of-its-kind research partnership with Statistics Canada** to model, at household-level detail, how shared wealth could fund a Basic Income and fix housing affordability.

[Read More](#)

Disability – without poverty



On *International Day of Persons with Disabilities*, **Disability without Poverty** launched their [3rd Annual Disability Poverty Report Card!](#) during their research symposium.

From the Report, “Last year, this report card gave the federal government a failing grade (F). This year, the grade has risen only slightly to D. While the Canada Disability Benefit (CDB) began its rollout in July 2025, the \$200 per month payment remains too little for too few, leaving one and a half million people below the poverty line, with many barriers to access remaining.”

Much more has to be done.

Also the federal government released its annual [Disability Inclusion Action Plan](#) update and ministerial statements marking IDPD 2025, reaffirming commitments to disability inclusion and the rollout of the CDB.

Environment



GASP (Grandmothers Act to Save the Planet) has as usual been busy on multiple fronts.

[Read More](#) of their actions and advocacy.

- Thirteen GASP members called Liberal MPs in December. We don't support the recent Alberta-Canada MOU regarding a pipeline. We noted the worsening extreme weather events and called for stronger environmental protections to slow down the damage being done to the planet by fossil fuel pollution.
- Auditor General of Ontario sounded the alarm: Highway 413, Bill 68 and Bill 60 are examples of the Ford government attacking environmental protections in an undemocratic way. In its [2024 Annual Report](#) – the Auditor General of Ontario concluded that Ford government ministries are increasingly relying on exemptions that allow environmentally significant decisions to proceed without public input.
- Ontario wants to wipe out legislation requiring it to set targets on emissions. GASP member Victoria Creese joined the press conference in which Doug Ford was given (in absentia) the 2025 Climate Betrayal Award



Funding



The **Canadian Caribbean Association of Halton** received a **grant of just over \$11,000 from the Ontario Trillium Foundation.**

"The Ontario Trillium Foundation's investment is a strategic boost for the Canadian Caribbean Association of Halton, enabling critical technology upgrades that strengthen program delivery and community outreach," said Oakville MPP Stephen Crawford. This grant will help the organization purchase new technology such as laptops and computers.

"It will bring us into the 21st century," said President Sheldon Williams on receiving the grant. "We have been around with old materials and old technology and now we have better technology which can serve the community better ."

The CCAH has been a pillar of the Oakville community and this grant will help improve their current technology and allow them to purchase updated electronics to help all their members.

The Ontario Federation of Labour is thrilled to launch the 2026 International Women's Day March 8 Project with the powerful theme:

WOMEN POWER WORK

Celebrating 50 Years of the OFL Women's Committee

For five decades, the OFL Women's Committee has been at the forefront of resilience, resistance, and progress, fighting for social and economic justice for women and gender-diverse workers across Ontario. This milestone isn't just history, it's a call to action.

AWH supports or is affiliated with most of these organizations.

Why This Matters:

The 2026 theme artwork features a vibrant circle of women and gender-diverse workers from construction, health care, transportation, public administration, arts, retail, and education. It reflects intersectional identities: Black, Racialized, Indigenous, 2SLGBTQIA+, disabled, Muslim, young and senior workers. A full spectrum of solidarity.

Together, we honour the past and build the future.

Where Your Support Goes in 2026:

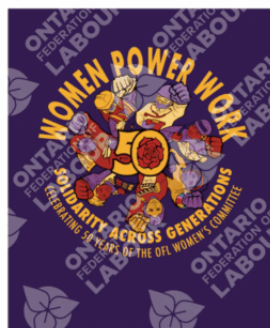
- Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres
- Equal Pay Coalition – Ontario
- Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care
- Rainbow Health Ontario
- Ontario Native Women's Association
- Plus, a Black-led / survivor-led organization

ORDER DEADLINE: January 23, 2026

Orders must be placed by January 23, 2026, to guarantee delivery in advance of International Women's Day.



IWD 2026 t-shirt



IWD 2026 Poster



IWD 2026 Lapel Pin



Gender-based Violence

From Brad Park:

The Numbers Speak Volumes

More than 44% of women in Canada report experiencing intimate partner violence in their lifetime. In 2024 alone, 187 gender-related homicides were reported across the country. That means a woman was killed every two days.

Here in Ontario, many of the femicides reported between late 2024 and mid 2025 involved intimate partners or family members. These are people who should have been sources of trust and safety.

But those numbers don't capture the full story. So many survivors never come forward. Fear, stigma, privacy concerns, or a lack of trust in the systems that are supposed to protect them, keep them silent.

And for some, the barriers are even greater. Indigenous and racialized women, women with disabilities, trans and non-binary individuals, and women facing homelessness or unstable housing are all at higher risk. These layers of complexity demand thoughtful, compassionate, and sustained responses.

Gender Equality



Three projects of interest:

- AWH was part of CRIA W's consultation on the growing resurgence of regressive movements and anti-feminism in Canada and its impacts.
They have released a [document summarizing our initial findings](#) on how feminist and women's rights organizations are experiencing and resisting regressive movements across the country.
 - As the Secretariat of the Canadian [Beijing+30 Network](#), the Network released a [delegate report](#), an [Info Sheet](#) on Institutional Mechanisms, and other [resources](#) on the monitoring of the implementation of the [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action](#) (BPfA) and progress on women's rights and gender equality in Canada.
 - Instrumental in creating the [joint statement](#) concerning WAGE.
-

Senior Strategy



RTOERO calls for seniors strategy and care tailored to aging Ontarians

RTOERO (Retired Teachers of Ontario, soon to be Entente Education Canada) hosted its annual Queen's Park advocacy event, meeting with nearly 40 Members of Provincial Parliament and policy staff to call for coordinated, long-term planning to support Ontario's rapidly growing seniors population. Key meetings were held with senior advisors in the Premier's Office and the Ministry of Seniors and Accessibility, as well as with opposition critics for seniors and health care. By 2030, seniors will outnumber those 20 years and younger in the province, underscoring the need for a clear seniors strategy that can get ahead of everyday challenges, including mounting pressure on the healthcare system.

[Read More](#)

NEWS FROM LOCAL POLITICIANS and LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

News from MPP Effie Triantafilopoulos

[Bill 33](#), which aims to strengthen the support systems students rely on, improving access to mental-health resources, enhancing special education services, modernizing school safety measures, and ensuring families receive the help they need. It's about giving every child in Ontario the chance to succeed.

I spoke in support of this Bill last week and it has now received Royal Assent.

\$1.4 Billion committed to supports and shelters

I was pleased to join colleagues in support of the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses who were at Queens Park for the [Wrapped in Courage](#) campaign, Ontario's longest-running effort to end gender-based violence.

Key government initiatives include:

- Investing \$26.7 million over two years to expand shelter spaces for survivors and strengthen the Family Court Support Worker program.
- Enacting Keira's Law through the Strengthening Safety and Modernizing Justice Act, ensuring judges and JPs are trained in intimate partner violence and coercive control. Launching Ontario-STANDS, a plan focused on prevention, early intervention, culturally responsive supports, and safer transitions for survivors.
- Committing \$1.4 billion over four years to gender-based violence services, including crisis lines, counselling, and transitional housing.

- Supporting community-led, culturally safe programs through a Call for Proposals with about \$100 million in funding.

We are committed in working with OAITH, survivors, and community partners to build a safer Ontario focused on courage, healing, and hope.



INFORMATION FROM ALLIES



The number of people using food banks in Ontario has reached another record high with over one million people accessing emergency food support last year, according to a new report.

In its annual [Hunger Report 2025](#), Feed Ontario — a collective of hunger-relief organizations — said this is the ninth year in a row that food bank usage has increased, marking a “deeply concerning” affordability crisis across the province

Between April 1, 2024 and March 31, 2025, 1,007,441 people accessed food banks during a total of 8,712,897 visits.

[Read More](#)



Last month, leaders from **Stephen Lewis Foundation (SLF)** partner organizations were in Canada for two weeks to meet with members of parliament, Global Affairs Canada and SLF supporters. They were here to talk about the importance of community-led organizations in the HIV response, especially in the context of a new Canadian federal budget that imposes significant cuts to international development and global health.

[Read More](#)

Spiwe Chakawa, Executive Director of Chiedza in Zimbabwe, and Mpumi Zondi, Clinical Director at Sophiatown Community Psychological Services in South Africa, meeting with Campaign members.



Putting Women and Girls **First: The Case for Canada's** **Feminist Foreign Policy**

In 2017, Canada officially committed to a feminist foreign policy. That commitment made sense, and still does, as women and girls worldwide continue to suffer disproportionately from discrimination, poverty, gender-based violence, and a wide range of human rights abuses. As then-Minister of Foreign Affairs Chrystia Freeland stated: "This is a matter of basic justice and also basic economics. We know that empowering women, overseas and here at home, makes families and countries more prosperous."

There is no universally accepted definition of a "feminist foreign policy" (FFP). But a basic tenet of FFPs is that they are more than an obligation; they are an opportunity to stimulate progress for everyone, as the status of women and progress in other areas are directly related. Former US Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues, Melanne Verwee, noted: "There is a wealth of research and data to show that investing in women is critical for economic, social and political progress. A foreign policy that puts women at its core – whether explicitly called feminist or not – helps tackle the most pressing global challenges."

Pam Damoff, CEO the Pearson Centre



The Pearson Centre believes in a rights-based approach to foreign policy; such an approach must necessarily include attention to women's rights. That does not mean we must ignore or set aside other foreign policy goals. On the contrary, other policy and development objectives are more likely to be met if women's rights are prioritized. Moreover, if Canada failed to focus on protecting and uplifting women and girls through our foreign policy, we would be hard pressed to meet our international obligations in relation to the status of women, such as those spelled out in the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

[Read More](#)



For women and girls in Afghanistan, this year brought more restrictions, fewer spaces, and deeper silences. Classrooms were closed, voices were pushed into silence, and futures deliberately narrowed. These realities are painful, and they are real.

And yet, there is another truth we witness every day: *Afghan women and girls continue to choose learning against all odds.*

This year, over 650 girls from across Afghanistan, as well as Afghan students in Turkey and Pakistan, joined our online school, Darakht-e Danesh Classroom, and continued their education. Among the many ways we support women and girls, this year we also helped over 1,400 stay connected to their education by providing internet access and essential devices, enabling them to continue or complete online learning programs.

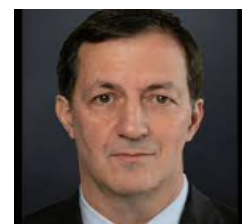
[For more information](#)

OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST

Something is wrong with Canadian democracy. *Andrew Coyne*

The Globe and Mail, Dec. 10, 2025

There is a creeping pattern across the country featuring contempt for the powers of parliament, the rule of law and the rights of the individual. Recently in Canada...



Alberta suspended Charter protection for transgender people, prevented political rivals from using certain words or information in their campaigns, attempted to pre-empt a judicial ruling that the referendum question proposed by a separatist organisation is in violation of the Premier's own referendum legislation

B.C. Conservative party leader refused to quit as demanded by his party, and was only persuaded to step down after months of chaos and drift.

Quebec Polls showed PQ headed for landslide majority (with little more than one third of the vote)

Ottawa Feds Launched Bill C15 which, at 634 pages is an **omnibus bill**. It creates 4 new acts, repeals 6 old ones and amends 45 others. All must be considered and voted on as a whole. But the devil is in the details.

Buried within Amending Sections 11 and 12 of the Red Tape Reduction Act , a clause allows any minister to exempt any “entity” from any provision of any law for which the minister is responsible, for a period of 3 years or more (The only exception is Criminal Code) This has become known on The Hill as the Henry VIIIth clause. **Is anyone, anywhere, discussing it?**

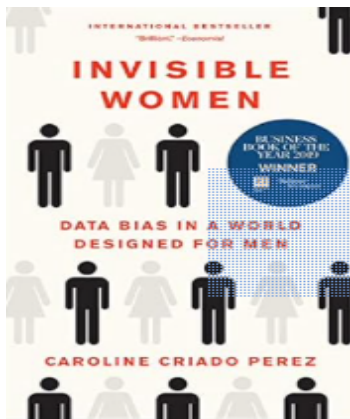
Bill C2, combines limits to rights of refugee claimants with police warrantless access to personal internet information

Bill C4 combines cuts to lowest rate of income tax with exempting political parties from privacy legislation,

Bill C5 combines removing barriers to interprovincial trade with allowing ministers to exempt projects from regulatory requirements ,

And Bill C9 makes it far too easy to prosecute people for a broad range of ill-defined “hate crimes”

What we have right now in Canada is MPs unable to hold their leader to account, Parliament prevented from properly scrutinising legislation, the Charter neutered and the courts muzzled for partisan purposes, and a wildly unrepresentative electoral system. Happy New Year Canada!



Invisible Women: Data bias in a world designed for men

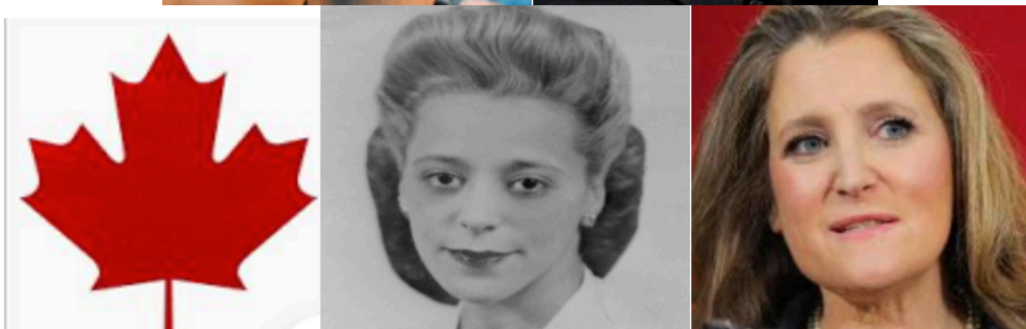
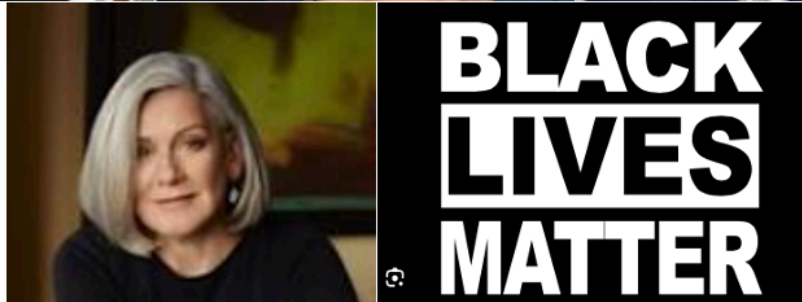
By Caroline Criado Perez.

An interesting book for the new year, on how the whole world, from kitchen shelves to medications, is designed by and for men.

Data is fundamental to the modern world. From economic development, to healthcare, to education and public policy, we rely on numbers to allocate resources and make crucial decisions. But because so much data fails to take into account gender, because it treats men as the default and women as atypical, bias and discrimination are baked into our systems. And women pay tremendous costs for this bias, in time, money, and often with their lives.

Celebrated feminist advocate Caroline Criado Perez investigates the shocking root cause of gender inequality and research in *Invisible Women*, diving into women’s lives at home, the workplace, the public square, the doctor’s office, and more. Built on hundreds of studies in the US, the UK, and around the world, and written with energy, wit, and sparkling intelligence, this is a groundbreaking, unforgettable exposé that will change the way you look at the world.

This Is What Democracy Looks Like in 2026





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