

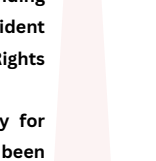
**From our family to yours,  
Happy Holidays**



Dear friends of the Canadian Hispanic Congress,  
Thank you for the opportunity to share our December 2024 newsletter.  
Your continuous support is greatly appreciated.  
Warm regards,  
Monique Forster  
President  
Canadian Hispanic Congress

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**CHC's 14th Conference Pro-Empowerment of Women**



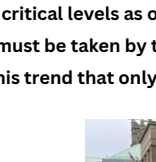
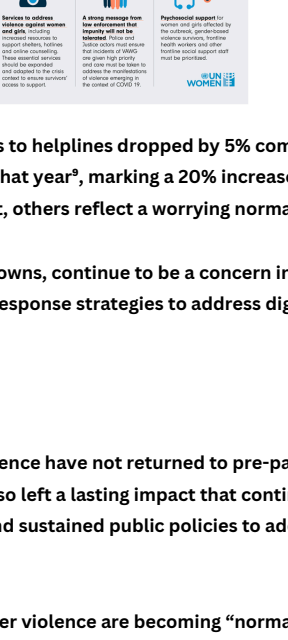
November has been recognized as Intimate Partner Violence Month, providing once again the opportunity for reflection about our advances or lack thereof in our universal goal of eradicating violence against women in Canada and around the world.

The 14th Conference Pro-Empowerment of Women, organized by the Canadian Hispanic Congress, took place on November 10, 2024. Again, this year, we were honored to welcome important advocates for women's rights, including Ms. Julie Dzerowicz, Member of Canadian Parliament; His Excellency Mr. Esteban Crespo Polo, Ecuadorian Ambassador to Canada; Her Excellency Ambassador Marisol Nieto; Ms. Berna Bolaños, Manager of Women's Support Services in the Region of Peel; Psychotherapist Dr. Cecilia Jaramillo, Director of Health for the CHC; Ms. Elvira Sanchez de Malicki, Founding Member of the CHC; and Ms. Monique Forster, President of the Canadian Hispanic Congress and Women's Rights Advocate.

Over the past four decades, the universal outcry for action to end violence against women and girls has been taken up by women around the world. There have been many women's marches to protest violence against women, and vigils had been held to honor the women whose lives have ended prematurely because of it.

And yet, the statistics tell the story not of a problem that is going away but of crimes against women that are on the rise in many places around the world, or in best-case scenarios, are maintaining their past, brutal statistics. Crimes such as femicide are more of a concern today than they were when we held our first conference pro-empowerment of women.

We are ready to see solutions that deal with the issue of violence against women at its roots. There need to be political will and decisions made that speak directly to the problem and protections for women against all these forms of violence against them. It is time to develop a collective plan that educates everyone about the benefits to individuals, families, and society, of eradicating violence against women.



**The Impact of the Pandemic on Gender-Based Violence in Canada**

Gender-based violence is a global issue that affects millions of women and girls worldwide, taking various forms such as physical, psychological, sexual, economic, and digital abuse. Rooted in structural gender inequalities, this phenomenon has been exacerbated in recent years by global crises like the COVID-19 pandemic.

Canada is no exception to this reality. During the pandemic, lockdowns and restrictions intensified risk factors, leaving many women exposed to increased violence and limited access to support networks. This article specifically examines the evolution of gender-based violence in Canada from the onset of the pandemic to the present, highlighting its impacts and the latest trends.

The COVID-19 pandemic marked a turning point in gender-based violence in Canada. Before 2020, violence levels were already concerning. In 2019, for instance, 160 femicide<sup>1</sup> were reported, a consistent indicator of extreme violence against women. Additionally, while domestic violence reports were significant, they showed a stable trend. However, lockdowns and restrictions during the pandemic alarmingly exacerbated these figures.

**Levels During the Pandemic**

Lockdowns exposed many women to high-risk situations, as they were forced to stay home with their abusers. During this period, calls to helplines increased by 20% compared to 2019<sup>2</sup>, with some regions seeing a rise of up to 30%. This increase reflects not only a worsening of domestic violence but also the intensification of other forms of abuse. For instance, cases of digital violence against women rose by 40%, illustrating how abusers used online platforms to maintain control and harassment.

The mental health impact on victims was equally concerning. A 2021 study found that 45% of women who experienced violence during the pandemic reported symptoms of anxiety and depression. Moreover, access to support services and shelters became limited, affecting 35% of women seeking help. This combination of factors left many women in untenable situations.

Economic violence also intensified during the pandemic, affecting 25% of women<sup>3</sup>. This form of abuse included controlling income and restricting access to essential financial resources, further entrenching economic dependence, and complicating escape from abusive situations.



**Post-Pandemic Levels**

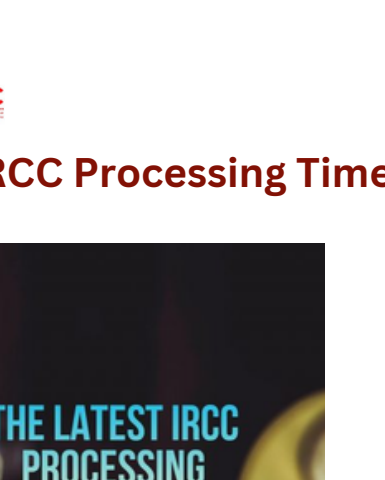
As restrictions were lifted, violence levels showed a slight decrease. In 2021, calls to helplines dropped by 5% compared to 2020. These figures indicate that while some indicators show slight improvement, others reflect a worrying normalization of extreme violence.

Furthermore, cases of cyber violence, which increased significantly during lockdowns, continue to be a concern in the post-pandemic environment. This trend highlights the need to adapt prevention and response strategies to address digital violence, which has become increasingly relevant in recent years.

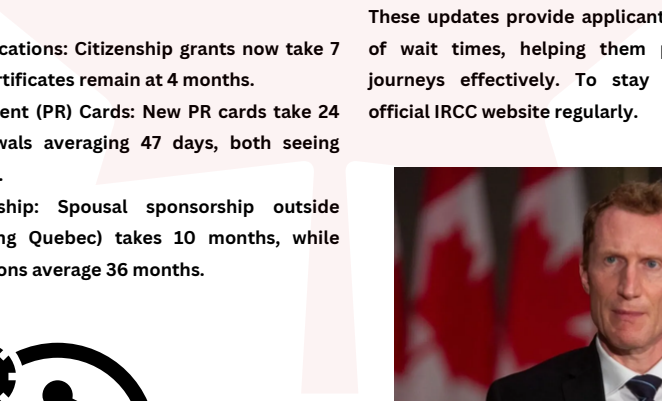
**Connecting Pre-, During, and Post-Pandemic Levels**

Despite minor reductions in some indicators, current levels of gender-based violence have not returned to pre-pandemic standards. The data reveals that the pandemic not only intensified abuses but also left a lasting impact that continues to affect women in Canada. This situation underscores the urgent need for more robust and sustained public policies to address this critical issue.

Similarly to the rest of the world, where higher than pre-pandemic levels of gender violence are becoming "normalized" post-pandemic, in Canada, gender-based violence remains at critical levels as one of the prolonged effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Immediate action to protect victims of gender violence must be taken by the various levels of government in combination with the institution of preventive strategies to begin to reverse this trend that only worsened during the pandemic.



**Canada's Counterpunch: Goods Targeted in Retaliation to Trump Tariffs**



According to Global News, as Canada anticipates potential tariffs under Donald Trump's upcoming presidency, questions arise about whether the federal government will respond with retaliatory tariffs, as it did during the 2018 trade dispute. At that time, Trump imposed a 25% tariff on steel and 10% on aluminum during the NAFTA renegotiations. In response, Canada levied tariffs on U.S. imports worth \$16.6 billion, targeting a diverse range of goods.

The Canadian countermeasures went beyond steel and aluminum, encompassing everyday items like yogurt, ketchup, chocolate, maple syrup, and soups. Beverages such as orange juice and whisky, along with household essentials like toilet paper, dishwashers, candles, and bedding, were also included. Moreover, industrial and agricultural products, including herbicides, plywood, and refrigerators, faced tariffs. This broad spectrum highlighted Canada's strategic approach to countering U.S. economic policies, affecting multiple industries and consumer markets.



As trade tensions loom again, the government's willingness to reintroduce such measures is under scrutiny. The 2018 response showcased Canada's ability to defend its interests while emphasizing the economic interconnectedness of the two nations.



**Check Out the Latest IRCC Processing Times**



Immigration News Canada reports that Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) has released its latest processing time updates for November 2024. These updates are crucial for applicants navigating their immigration processes amid ongoing backlogs. Processing times are revised monthly for citizenship, family sponsorship, and economic immigration, while weekly updates are provided for temporary residency and PR cards.

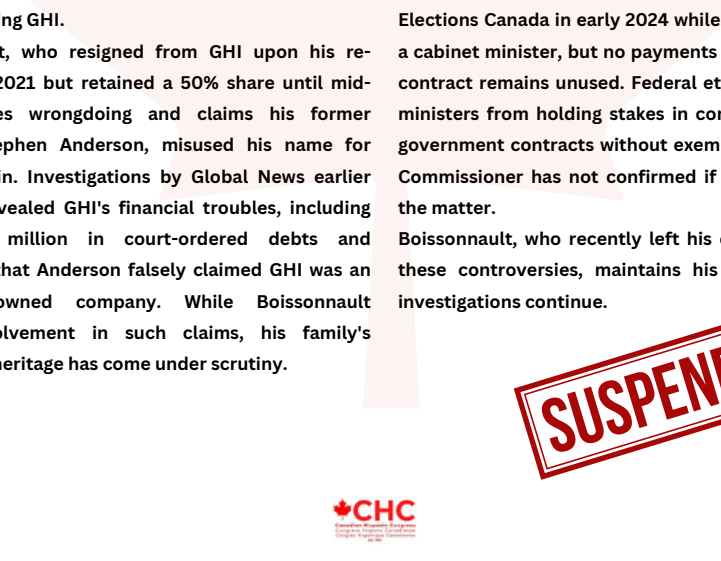
**Key updates include:**

- Citizenship Applications: Citizenship grants now take 7 months, while certificates remain at 4 months.
- Permanent Resident (PR) Cards: New PR cards take 24 days, with renewals averaging 47 days, both seeing minor reductions.
- Family Sponsorship: Spousal sponsorship outside Canada (excluding Quebec) takes 10 months, while Quebec applications average 36 months.

- Economic Immigration: Programs like the Canadian Experience Class (CEC) and Federal Skilled Worker Program (FSWP) remain at 5 months, while the Quebec Skilled Workers program has increased to 11 months.
- Temporary Residency: Visitor visa processing varies by country, from 25 days for U.S. applicants to 114 days for India. Study permits have seen significant reductions, especially for Indian applicants (3 weeks). These updates provide applicants with a clearer picture of wait times, helping them plan their immigration journeys effectively. To stay informed, consult the official IRCC website regularly.



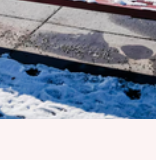
**What to Do With Your Money After Trump's Tariffs Warning**



Donald Trump's proposed 25% tariffs on Canadian and Mexican imports have raised financial concerns. Here's how to respond wisely:

- Exchange Rate: The Canadian dollar recently dipped to pandemic-era lows. To save on conversions, use services like Wise, Knightsbridge Foreign Exchange, or the Canadian Snowbird Association. For credit card purchases abroad, choose cards with no foreign transaction fees, such as those from Scotiabank, Wise, or Wealthsimple.
- Investments: Don't overreact. Markets adjust quickly to news, says Benjamin Felix of PWL Capital. Avoid impulsive decisions based on assumptions about Trump's presidency—investors who pulled out in 2016 missed years of strong returns. Stick to your long-term plan.

- Mortgage Rates: Tariffs could impact bond markets and inflation, creating conflicting effects. A recession might lower mortgage rates, but inflation could push the Bank of Canada to increase rates, says mortgage broker David Larock. Wait for clearer outcomes before acting.
- Emergency Funds and Spending: Maintain an emergency fund covering 3-6 months of expenses, or more if you work in a trade-reliant industry, suggests Evan Parubets. Cut unnecessary spending if you're uneasy, but otherwise stick to your budget.



**Government Suspends Boissonnault's Former Company from Federal Contracts**



Global News reports that the federal government has suspended Global Health Imports (GHI), a medical supply company co-founded by Edmonton Centre MP Randy Boissonnault, from bidding on or obtaining federal contracts. The suspension, effective November 22, was enacted by Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) due to an active investigation by Edmonton Police Service (EPS) into allegations of fraud involving GHI.

Boissonnault, who resigned from GHI until his reelection in 2021 but retained a 50% share until mid-2024, denies wrongdoing and claims his former partner, Stephen Anderson, misused his name for personal gain. Investigations by Global News earlier this year revealed GHI's financial troubles, including nearly \$8 million in court-ordered debts and allegations that Anderson falsely claimed GHI was an Indigenous-owned company. While Boissonnault denies involvement in such claims, his family's Indigenous heritage has come under scrutiny.

PSPC stated that GHI's suspension is part of its new Office of Supplier Integrity and Compliance (OSIC) program, which broadens authority to act against suppliers exhibiting misconduct. Under current rules, companies no longer need to face criminal charges for PSPC to intervene. The suspension will last 90 days but may be extended.

Notably, GHI secured a \$28,000 contract with Elections Canada in early 2024 while Boissonnault was a cabinet minister, but no payments were made as the contract remains unused. Federal ethics laws prohibit ministers from holding stakes in companies receiving government contracts without exemptions. The Ethics Commissioner has not confirmed if it is investigating the matter.

Boissonnault, who recently left his cabinet role amid these controversies, maintains his innocence while investigations continue.



**Traditional Winter Weather on its Way**



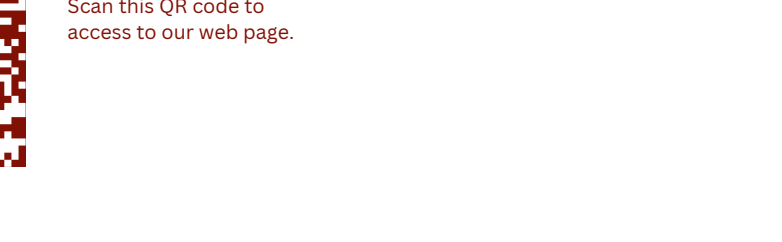
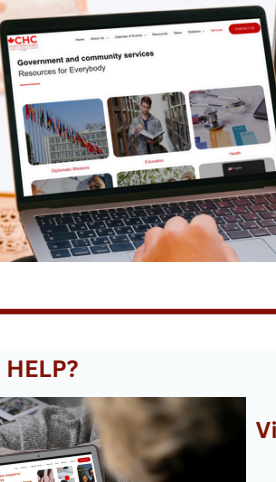
According to The Globe and Mail, this season promises a colder and more impactful shift, according to Chris Scott, chief meteorologist for The Weather Network. While it won't be a winter for the history books across the country, Scott says it will try to "salvage its reputation."

Western Canada is expected to face the brunt of the cold, with lower-than-average temperatures and higher snowfall anticipated. This is good news for ski destinations such as Banff and Lake Louise, which should see favorable conditions lasting well into spring. In Ontario and Quebec, December is shaping up to be a significant departure from last year, potentially packing as much winter weather into three weeks as the entirety of the previous season. However, January and February are forecasted to be milder overall, with above-average precipitation.

Manitoba and Saskatchewan are looking at a more typical winter. While cold, it won't stray far from the norm, and the snowmelt could offer relief for farmers struggling with drought. Meanwhile, Atlantic Canada may experience a drier and warmer winter than usual, as storm systems are expected to track more through the Great Lakes region, sparing the east. In the territories, Yukon and the western Northwest Territories are forecasted to be colder than average, but Nunavut is expected to remain warmer.

The trajectory of the winter depends heavily on the behavior of La Niña, a natural climate phenomenon that typically cools the Prairies and boosts precipitation in central and eastern Canada. Its delayed emergence has added uncertainty to the seasonal forecast. Scott notes that climate change has also shifted what is considered normal. Canada's winter temperatures have risen by 3.6°C since 1948, and record cold is now incredibly rare.

Despite this, Scott assures Canadians that this winter will bring more traditional weather than last year's unprecedented warmth. "We've got more winter weather this year, and it's on the way," he said.



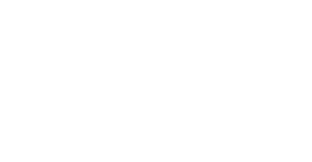
**Resources for Everybody**

The Canadian Hispanic Congress displays details about government and community services available to all. From health and employment to free language courses and immigration assistance.

For more information, visit:  
<https://canadianhispaniccongress.com/education/>

**CHC Community Services**

The Canadian Hispanic Congress invites you to visit our website and learn about the different resources and support made available by the government and community organizations!



**NEED HELP?**

**Visit our Webpage**

Learn about the different resources and supports for the entire family.

To sign up for our newsletter please email us at: [membership@canadianhispaniccongress.com](mailto:membership@canadianhispaniccongress.com)

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Edited by: Valentina Barragán and Monique Forster



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