

**Why Calling It “Femicide” Matters:**  
**Why Canada Should Embed the Term in the Criminal Code**

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“One woman or girl is killed every 48 hours in Canada—most often by a man she once trusted.”  
(Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability)

Earlier this month, Justice Minister Sean Fraser signaled he is open to formally recognizing femicide in Canada’s Criminal Code, either as a standalone offence or as a sentencing aggravator. The term, defined internationally as *the killing of a woman or girl because of her gender*, has long been championed by advocates and was prominently recommended by the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

The term itself is not rhetorical flourish. Internationally, femicide is defined as the *intentional killing of women or girls because of their gender* and is most often committed by current or former intimate partners. Globally, intimate partners or family members are responsible for almost 40 per cent of all femicides. The concept therefore captures the systemic misogyny that differentiates these deaths from other homicides and makes the gendered motive explicit.

***A National Pattern, Not Isolated Tragedies!***

Canadian data underline the urgency. The Canadian Femicide Observatory recorded 187 women and girls killed in 2024, 93 per cent by male accused. ([pathssk.org](https://pathssk.org)) That is roughly one woman or girl every 48 hours; a grim cadence that has risen steadily since 2019. ([canadianwomen.org](https://canadianwomen.org)) Statistics Canada analysis shows 1,125 gender-related homicides of women and girls between 2011 and 2021; two-thirds were perpetrated by intimate partners and a further 28 per cent by other family members. ([www150.statcan.gc.ca](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca)) These numbers confirm that intimate-partner femicide is not an aberration but a predictable, patterned form of violence.

***Why naming it “Femicide” matters:***

1. **Visibility and precise data / data integrity.** Without a legal definition, femicide cannot be tracked with precision. A specific offence would standardize data collection and help uncover risk patterns across regions and demographics.
2. **Prevention through risk assessment.** Most femicides are not unpredictable. Recognizing the act as gender-based can improve risk assessments in law enforcement, health care, and social services; especially when signs like coercive control or recent separation are present.
3. **Victim-centred justice.** Naming the gendered motive honours victims’ realities, counters victim-blaming narratives and affirms to families that their loved ones were not “random” casualties but targets of misogynist violence.

“Femicide is not a private matter - it is a public crisis. The law must reflect that.” (Battered Women’s Support Services)

***Why embed “Femicide” in the Canadian Criminal Code:***

Legal recognition carries real-world impact. Other countries, including Argentina, Mexico, and Italy, have introduced femicide legislation to underscore its distinct severity and bolster deterrence.

Adding femicide to Canada’s Criminal Code would:

- Create consistency in how gender-based killings are prosecuted.
- Allow for enhanced sentencing, where appropriate.
- Align Canada with international human rights standards, including the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence Against Women.
- Honour Indigenous voices, as multiple inquests and the MMIWG Inquiry have explicitly called for femicide to be codified.

***A Law that names the Truth:***

Words alone will not stop the killings, but law shapes how societies perceive, and prevent violence. Adopting femicide as an independent criminal conviction would give Canada a sharper tool for accountability, data collection and, ultimately, prevention. In the wake of the Minister’s openness, Parliament has a rare opportunity: name the crime for what it is and make clear, in statute, that gender-based killing is an egregious violation demanding its own place in Canadian law.

It’s time the law told the truth.