



NATIONAL ADVOCACY.  
COMMUNITY ACTION.



February 12, 2026

**To All Members of the Senate of Canada**

Senate of Canada Building  
Ottawa, Ontario  
Canada  
K1A 0A4

Via email: [sencom@sen.parl.gc.ca](mailto:sencom@sen.parl.gc.ca)

**Bill C-12 Endangers Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse Migrants**

Dear Honourable Senators,

On behalf of **YWCA Toronto**, a nonprofit organization that provides vital services, supports, and advocacy for women, girls, and gender diverse people, we write today to urge the Senate of Canada to **reject Bill C-12, the *Strengthening Canada's Immigration System and Borders Act***.

At YWCA Toronto, we envision a world where all women, girls, and gender diverse people can thrive. Our advocacy includes national, provincial, and municipal priorities while being community-led and driven. YWCA Toronto is Ontario's largest multi-service organization serving women, girls and gender diverse people. While our work has spanned decades, we also know how much still needs to be done to achieve gender equality, equity, and justice

As frontline service providers, we see firsthand how immigration policies affect safety, autonomy, and well-being, particularly for women, gender diverse people, survivors of violence, migrant workers in feminized sectors, and those living with precarious or temporary status. Bill C-12 would significantly exacerbate these vulnerabilities and indicate a step backwards for gender equity and human rights in Canada.

We are grateful the Senate still has the opportunity to vote against the passage of Bill C-12, in turn protecting the rights and lives of women, girls and gender diverse people across the country.

As you consider how you will vote, we would like to share some of the gendered implications of this Bill.

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## 1. The one-year refugee claim deadline

Bill C-12 would make refugee claimants ineligible if they apply more than one year after entering Canada. This deadline is misaligned with the lived realities of the communities we serve and will disproportionately harm women, girls, and gender diverse migrants. For example:

- **Survivors of intimate partner violence and gender-based violence** often need time to reach safety, disclose trauma, and seek support.
- **Women and gender diverse individuals working in sectors where their immigration status is dependent on an employer** may face coercion, misinformation, or threats that make it harder for them to file a refugee claim right away.
- **Language barriers, financial precarity, isolation, or distrust of institutions** commonly delay people from learning about the refugee system.

Punishing delayed disclosure – often a result of trauma, abuse, or systemic barriers – undermines the purpose of the refugee system.

## 2. Mass permit cancellation powers

Bill C-12 would enable the Minister of Immigration to cancel or suspend visas, work permits, study permits, or permanent residency applications without individual review or procedural fairness.

For women and gender diverse migrants, who predominantly occupy female-dominated, low-wage and care sectors, this poses significant risks, including increased risk of labour exploitation, coercion, safety and economic insecurity. This would also create greater instability for families who rely on temporary permits.

These mass cancellations repeat concerning historical patterns in Canada, where broad administrative immigration powers have led to discrimination and exclusion. We urge the Senate to exercise its authority to prevent the repetition of such harms.

## 3. Removal of privacy protections

Bill C-12 expands information-sharing at the federal, provincial, and territorial levels. For many migrants, this is a safety issue. Allowing greater personal information sharing creates particular and serious safety concerns for survivors of gender-based violence and those targeted for their sexual orientation or gender identity. For these individuals, increased data sharing could:

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- Divulge their location to abusive partners
- Put family members at risk
- Deter individuals from seeking services or reporting violence
- Lead to greater misuse or unintended disclosure of sensitive personal information

Confidentiality is essential for safety, and this bill jeopardizes it.

**We respectfully urge all members of the Senate to uphold gender equity, justice, and human rights by:**

- Voting against Bill C-12
- Condemning narratives that blame migrants for systemic issues such as the housing crisis
- Supporting permanent immigration status for all

Your role in ensuring stability and safety for people living and working in Canada is critical. The Senate has long been the institution tasked with preventing unjust, unconstitutional, and/or harmful law from coming to fruition. Bill C-12 poses clear, predictable risks to those already facing multiple barriers and systemic marginalization.

Thank you for your time, care, consideration and commitment to the public good. We would welcome an opportunity to share more about the gendered impacts of Bill C-12 with you at your convenience. Please contact our Director of Advocacy and Communications, Sami Pritchard, at [spritchard@ywcatoronto.org](mailto:spritchard@ywcatoronto.org) should you wish to arrange a meeting.

Sincerely,

Heather M. McGregor  
Chief Executive Officer  
YWCA Toronto

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