

All Words, Little Action, No Money for Women

New York, le 29 février 2008- The Canadian government is taking “a more focused approach” to achieving equality between women and men with the goal of “achieving real and measurable results”. At least that’s what the Government of Canada’s said to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW) during its February 28 2008 statement.

But the Canadian government’s actions speak otherwise.

True, the federal budget released on February 26 includes a commitment for an Action Plan to advance women’s equality. While women’s organizations and trade unions think it’s too little too late, we will be monitoring it closely, and expect to be an integral part of the process from the beginning.

But overall, the federal budget is a disaster for women given its focus on the wealthy. Women are mentioned six times in the budget document compared to 119 times for corporations. Most women will never benefit from the Tax Free Savings Account, since four out of ten women tax filers are too poor to even pay taxes. Women earn an average of 71 cents of what men make and comprise the majority of low income earners.

The choices to use the surplus toward debt reduction and cuts to corporate taxes mean less revenue for important public services for women and their families. The budget does nothing to address coverage and benefits under the EI program, and provides no funding for child care. There is no evidence of a gender analysis of any of the budgetary measures.

Women’s organizations are key to advocating for and achieving equality, and holding our governments accountable – a fact recognized even by the Secretary General of the United Nations.

Yet Status of Women Canada continues to exclude funding for lobbying which significantly constrains the work of women’s advocacy organizations. Canada’s statement to the UNCSW makes no mention of the contribution of women’s organizations and non-governmental organizations to advancing women’s equality.

The Government of Canada must ensure that full equality is the “real and measureable” result. Women in Canada aren’t there yet. Many women remain marginalized because of their economic and social realities. Only 21% of Members of Parliament in the House of Commons are women. Canada has plummeted downwards on virtually every international gender equality index.

Internationally, Canada has been reprimanded for its lack of action on achieving full equality for all women. It's time to translate words into action. It's time to go from accountability to results. It's time for full equality, once and for all.

Business and Professional Women of Canada
Canadian Teacher's Federation
Canadian Union of Public Employees
Canadian Union of Postal Workers
Confederation of National Trade Unions
Canadian Federation of University Women
Canadian Labour Congress
Canadian Voice of Women for Peace
Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women
Centre for Northern Families
Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada
Code Blue for Child Care
DAWN Canada
Fédération Interprofessionnelle de la Santé du Québec
Fédération des femmes du Québec
Feminist Alliance for International Action
Indigenous Women's Network
New Brunswick Child Care Coalition
Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses
Oxfam Canada
National Council of Women
National Association of Women and the Law
Public Service Alliance of Canada
University Women's Club of Winnipeg
Témiskaming Native Women's Support Group
Regroupement provincial des maisons d'hébergement et de transition pour femmes victimes de violence conjugale
YWCA

- 30 -

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