



***BPW Canada Shocked at Status of Women Office Closings
2006-12-03 Press Release***

The Canadian Federation of Business & Professional Women's Clubs (BPW Canada) is dismayed with the announcement that Status of Women Canada will close 12 of its 16 regional offices across the country next April.

This move follows an announcement earlier this fall that the department's budget had been cut by \$5 million, almost 40%. This, despite Prime Minister Stephen Harper's statement during the January 2006 election campaign that *"If elected, I will take concrete and immediate measures, as recommended by the United Nations, to ensure that Canada fully upholds its commitments to women in Canada."*

BPW Canada is shocked with the Prime Minister's seeming change of heart, especially given that the closures will mean few women across Canada will then have access to or information about Status of Women programs.

In contrast, the United Nations High-Level Panel on System-Wide Cohesion in the Areas of Development, Humanitarian Assistance and the Environment recently released a report, recommending that the UN create an independent women-specific agency at the UN to address issues of women's health, equality and security.

This recommendation followed lobbying efforts by Canadian Stephen Lewis, Special Envoy to the UN on HIV/AIDS, who has consistently argued that the UN has not fulfilled its mandate in addressing gender equality issues.

December 10, 2006 will mark the 25th anniversary of the signing of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), of which Canada was a signatory. CEDAW goals have yet to be met.

BPW Canada finds it curious that while international organizations are moving in one direction – towards greater equality for women in the world – the Canadian government is moving in the other – cutting budgets and closing offices that have promoted efforts towards gender equity.

Moreover, we are shocked that the Conservative government seems prepared to walk away from its international commitments, like CEDAW.

BPW Canada finds this situation totally unacceptable. Our national Board of Directors, along with our membership across the country, plans to work hard to put these issues on the agenda in the next federal election. The women of Canada deserve better.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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