



**Urgent Resolution 2007**

**FUNDING AND MANDATE CHANGES TO THE STATUS OF WOMEN CANADA**

**Submitted by BPW North Toronto and East Toronto BPW**

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**WHEREAS** on October 3rd, 2006 the Government of Canada removed the word "equality" from Status of Women Canada's (SWC) mandate; and

**WHEREAS** on October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2006 the Government of Canada changed the funding objectives so that women's groups can no longer apply for federal funding through SWC to do advocacy or lobbying; and

**WHEREAS** on September 25, 2006, the Government of Canada announced a 5 million dollar cut to the Status of Women Canada (SWC) administrative budget which is the portion of the budget that is used for advocacy and lobbying; and

**WHEREAS** this takes place nine months after Prime Minister Harper, in his election promises, committed to take concrete and immediate steps to increase women's equality in Canada.

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Business and Professional Women's Clubs of Canada strongly urge the Government of Canada to re-instate the original mandate and budget of the Status of Women Canada.



## Background

### Tories to cut off funding for women's lobby groups

Last Updated: Thursday, October 5, 2006 | 9:34 PM ET The Canadian Press

The federal Conservative government says it will no longer fund women's groups that do advocacy, lobbying or general research.

The drastic change to the mandate and operation of Status of Women Canada also drops the word "equality" when listing the agency's goals.

Previous objectives such as helping women's organizations participate in the public policy process and increasing the public's understanding of women's equality issues have been eliminated from government literature.

Organizations that receive funding from the Trudeau-era agency were stunned. "When you look at this Conservative government's policy it's like, 'Be good girls, be quiet.' It's shocking really," said Monica Lysack of the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada.

Groups initially thought the agency's core program had escaped the axe during a government-wide spending review announced last week, when only the administrative side of Status of Women Canada was cut.

But they were told this week by Status of Women Minister Bev Oda that they would no longer be able to receive funding for projects that involved advocacy work, lobbying of the government or general research, as part of new terms and conditions for grants. Oda was not available for comment Wednesday. The changes are consistent with program cuts the government made to policy branches and advisory committees in several departments. Government watchers say it's indicative of a move away from "government-funded lobbying," in favour of results-oriented projects.

Alia Hogben, executive director of the Canadian Council of Muslim Women, argues that without the funding the government provided her group, it would never have successfully struck down the use of Muslim shariah law in Ontario family court cases.

"That makes it very difficult, because if you don't lobby and you don't advocate, you're not going to make systemic changes," said Hogben.

Also in the new terms and conditions for grants is a general statement of objectives for the women's program. - 'Facilitate women's participation.'

The last document, published in 1993, said the program supported organizations that sought to "advance equality for women by addressing women's economic, social, political and legal situation."

It also had a list of four other key objectives that included women's involvement in the decision-making or public policy process.

The new, shorter stated objective is to "facilitate women's participation in Canadian society by addressing their economic, social and cultural situation through Canadian organizations."

Michele Asselin, president of la Federation des femmes du Québec — the largest women's organization in the province — said Canadians expect their government to do what's necessary to uphold Charter equality rights, and sometimes that includes funding outside groups to raise issues.

"It's fundamental to Canadian democracy because all groups and lobbyists aren't all equal. There has to be financing that supports independent groups that can question and analyze and give different perspectives to government," said Asselin. "That's part of a democratic society to finance groups that defend rights."

Links:

Women's Status Report: [www.statusreport.ca/](http://www.statusreport.ca/)

Status of Women Canada: [www.swc-cfc.gc.ca](http://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca)

Care to Connect: [www.care2.com/c2c/share/detail/80486](http://www.care2.com/c2c/share/detail/80486)

Coalition for Women's Equality: [www.canadaelection.net/info6.html](http://www.canadaelection.net/info6.html)

[www.canada.com/topics/news/politics/story.html?id=36c5e253-0db8-46e9-81cb-c49817673564&k=33019](http://www.canada.com/topics/news/politics/story.html?id=36c5e253-0db8-46e9-81cb-c49817673564&k=33019)