



# BPW Canada

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*Working towards improving  
the economic, political, social  
and employment conditions  
for women.*

*Notre but : améliorer les  
conditions économiques,  
politiques, sociales et  
d'emploi des femmes.  
Women working  
for working women.*

**The Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs**  
**La Fédération Canadienne des Clubs de Femmes de Carrière Commerciales et Professionnelles**

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**Sue Calhoun**

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February 8, 2010  
The Honourable Stephen Harper  
Prime Minister  
Ottawa, Ontario

Dear Mr. Harper, As the president of the Canadian Federation of Business & Professional Women's Clubs (BPW Canada), an organization that has advocated for democratic rights for 80 years, I am writing to express our dismay about the current troubles at the organization Rights & Democracy.

As you know, Rights & Democracy was established by an act of Parliament in 1988, under a previous Conservative government, and is intended to be a non-partisan organization.

We have followed recent events, through the media as well as our contacts in Ottawa, and are saddened by the death of President Rémy Beaugard. We are also very concerned that the organization's independence and non-partisanship is seemingly being challenged, according to a significant majority of staff, at least two former board members and all the former presidents.

Recent staff expressions that some Board members are obstructing the organization's work and preventing staff from fulfilling their human rights mandate are worrisome, to say the least. Among other things, we are concerned about media reports of proposed cuts or limits placed on the violence against women campaign in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a country where rape is endemic and a fact of life for many women, especially those in the eastern part of the country.

As part of the International Federation of BPW Clubs, which has Category I Consultative Status at the United Nations, BPW Canada participates each year at the Commission on the Status of Women at the UN in New York. We are very familiar with the impressive reputation that Rights & Democracy has enjoyed on the international level, at least until recently.

We call on the Government of Canada to act immediately to ensure that Rights & Democracy remains an independent and non-partisan institution.

Sue Calhoun  
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