

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2007: LET'S PUT EQUALITY BACK ON TRACK

On IWD 2007, the Ad Hoc Coalition for Women's Equality and Human Rights asks you to join with women everywhere in Canada and Quebec in opposition to the anti-equality policies of the federal Conservative government. Here's why!

For the last few months, women across the country have been speaking out for women's equality. From Yellowknife to Corner Brook, from Vancouver to Moncton, from Halifax to Quebec City, women have organized rallies, letter writing and post card campaigns, meetings and demonstrations, and even bra burnings and mock funerals for equality. Women have written to newspapers and participated in talk shows, called and written and lobbied their federal and provincial members of parliament, set up websites and equality hotlines to get the message out.

At the pan-Canadian level, an Ad Hoc Coalition for Women's Equality and Human Rights has been working constantly to raise women's equality concerns with Cabinet Ministers and the federal opposition parties, organized a rally on Parliament Hill on December 10th and worked with national media and local groups across the country.

Why all this activity?

Women are responding to a series of bad decisions by the Harper government which, if not reversed, will set women's equality back twenty years. The Harper government began with the cancellation of the federal provincial child care agreements - in a time when 70% of women with children under the age of five are working. They moved on to totally eliminate funding to the Court Challenges Program which was the major base of support for those fighting to ensure their equality rights under the Charter. And they announced that they will not implement the recommendation of the federal Pay Equity Task Force to introduce a proactive pay equity law. Instead, they say they will educate people about pay equity and instruct labour inspectors to investigate workplaces to make sure equal pay practices are followed....something that was tried thirty years ago and failed.

They cut funding to Status of Women Canada, the federal department responsible for advancing women's equality, by \$5 million dollars or 40% of the budget. They are closing 12 out of 16 regional Status of Women offices and cutting 61 out of 131 jobs. They also eliminated Status of Women's independent policy research fund which has provided a useful resource to government and women's groups for years. And, they then eliminated "equality" from the mandate of Status of Women Canada. They also changed the rules so that women's groups which do research or advocate for equality are no longer eligible for federal financial support.

It's no wonder the women are angry.

And women are beginning to be heard. Recent polls indicate that the federal Conservatives are rapidly losing support among women voters. The federal opposition parties have all declared their support for women's equality and their opposition to all of the anti-equality measures introduced by the Harper government. In fact, they have rallied together to support a progressive bill which would clearly make the provision of child care a national concern. The Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Status of Women has been holding meetings on the impact of the cuts and the changed funding policies on women's groups. It should issue its report this spring. And the provincial and territorial Ministers for the Status of Women are meeting without the federal Minister because they are so concerned at the implications for women's equality in their regions.

We need to keep the momentum going.

On International Women's Day let's **Put Equality Back on Track**. Everywhere across the country, women are organizing events around March 8th to celebrate our past victories, to recommit our energies and to fight for change.

As part of your activities, the Ad Hoc Coalition for Women's Equality and Human Rights is asking that you add your voices to the thousands of women who are working to reverse the bad decisions of the federal Conservative government.

We have prepared a short popular pamphlet on the issues. We have also produced stickers "**Put Equality Back on Track**". Please consider ordering quantities of these materials for distribution in your communities. (Contact the Canadian Labour Congress at: nadani@clc-ctc.ca to place your orders.)

We want to use our website www.womensequality.ca to advertise as many of your IWD events as possible. (Site available February 9,2007) Please send us your information and check out the website to find out what other women across the country are doing. More in-depth analysis of the issues and news about lobbying initiatives can also be found on our site.

Together we can make sure that women's voices are heard. Together we can **Put Equality Back on Track!**

Members of the Ad Hoc Coalition for Women's Equality and Human Rights include:

Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes;
Alliance des femmes de la francophonie canadienne;
Canadian Council of Muslim Women;
Canadian Federation of Students;
Canadian Federation of University Women;
Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action;
Canadian Labour Congress;
Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women;
Canadian Women's Community Economic Development Council;
Canadian Women's Foundation;
Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada;
Fédération des femmes du Québec;
MATCH International;
National Association of Women and the Law;
National Council of Women of Canada;
New Brunswick Advisory Council on the Status of Women;
Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses;
Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women, Newfoundland and Labrador;
Regroupement provincial des maisons d'hébergement et de transition pour femmes victimes de violence conjugale;
Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada;
Women's Space;
YWCA Canada.

SG:gna:ll*cope225
H:\Women's committee\2007\IWD Campaign\IWD 2007 Eng.wpd