

5 Demands for Women's Equality in Canada



Submitted to:
Federal/Provincial/Territorial Meeting of
Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women

September 30, 2004

What do we want? ...*Equality!*
When do we want it? ...*Now!*

Contributors to these demands include:

Newfoundland and Labrador Advisory Council on the Status of Women
Bay St. George Women's Council / Centre
Provincial Association Against Family Violence
Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action
National Association of Women and the Law
Corner Brook Women's Council / Centre
St. Anthony Women's Group
Gateway Women's Council / Centre
Regional Coordinating Coalition Against Violence
Cartwright Women's Group
Labrador West Women's Council / Centre
Mokami Women's Council / Centre
St. John's Women's Council / Centre
National Action Committee on the Status of Women
Women In Resource Development Committee
Women's Legal Information and Action Fund
Newfoundland and Labrador Sexual Assault Crisis and Prevention Centre
Nipavut Women's Action Group
Torngait Inuit Annait
Gander Women's Council / Centre
Central Newfoundland Women's Council / Centre
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Honourable Lisa Frulla and
Honourable Joan Burke
Federal / Provincial / Territorial Meeting of
Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women

September 30, 2004

Dear Ministers Frulla and Burke,

This list of demands is a work in progress. Women's equality-seeking organizations in Newfoundland and Labrador are very concerned about the state of women's equality and the work necessary to advancing women's social, legal, economic, cultural and political equality. In the past week we have been joined by national, provincial and community-based feminist groups as we discussed women's equality and our expectations of provincial and federal governments in our mutual quest to advance the status of women. The enclosed list, "Five Demands for Women's Equality in Canada," is an important starting point if our governments are serious about moving forward on equality. We expect that individual women and women's groups throughout our country will support and add to this list of demands for actions that will advance women's equality in Canada.

We ask that you, as Federal / Provincial / Territorial Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women, discuss the enclosed demands and begin involving national, provincial and local women's equality-seeking organizations in making an action agenda for moving forward on advancing the equality of women.

We would be pleased to work with you in our mutual quest for equality and to that end we await your response.

Respectfully,

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Lorraine Sheehan, Newfoundland and Labrador Women's Councils / Centres

Shelagh Day, Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action (FAFIA)

Lorraine Michael, National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC)

Bonnie Diamond, National Association of Women and the Law (NAWL)

5 Demands for Women's Equality in Canada

1. Strengthen the Federal Government Structure for the Status of Women

- Enact a Status of Women Act to legislate the government's commitment to realizing equality for all women;
- Establish a Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Status of Women to monitor implementation of the Status of Women Act. It is necessary, in the short term, to have a committee to oversee SWC;
- Designate a full, senior Status of Women Minister to work with other Cabinet colleagues to bring the issue of equality for all women in Canada to the Cabinet table from the inception of every policy discussion;
- Create an adequately resourced Status of Women Department headed by a full Deputy Minister to support the implementation of the Act;
- Require the Auditor General to conduct a full audit of the government's performance on women's equality on an appropriate cycle.

2. Restore and Strengthen the Federal and Provincial/Territorial Grassroots Advocacy Mechanisms to Improve the Status of Women

- Restore an arms-length, independent Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women;
- Work with provinces and territories to restore and/or adequately resource arms-length Provincial and Territorial Advisory Councils on the Status of Women;
- Provide sustained funding to national women's umbrella advocacy and lobbying organizations;
- Open the meetings of the Federal / Provincial / Territorial Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women to the participation of national feminist organizations.

3. Fully Implement the Recommendations of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

We are asking that governments in Canada take the following steps to meet their obligations under the Convention on the Elimination on All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW):

- Create a federal / provincial / territorial mechanism for developing an action plan to implement the UN CEDAW Committee's recommendations;

- Create cabinet-authorized, cross-departmental processes inside each government to develop an action plan for implementing the UN CEDAW Committee's 2003 recommendations;
- Use and develop a feminist integrated analysis to create this action plan;
- Ensure a role for women's non-governmental organizations and appropriate experts in the development of the action plan;
- Establish a time frame for the development of the plans that will not exceed May 2005;
- Ensure adequate funding to support the CEDAW follow-up process and the implementation of the United Nations CEDAW Committee's recommendations.

4. Restore Core Funding for Equality-Seeking Women's Advocacy and Anti-Violence Organizations

- Allocate sufficient ongoing resources to independent and feminist women's equality-seeking groups, such as rape crisis centres, shelters, transition houses and women's centres committed to improving the status of women and ending violence against women;
- Respect the knowledge women have of their communities and regions, and resource projects and/or programs identified and developed by these feminist organizations. Funding for such programs must be complementary to funding for women's organizations, and not reduce funding for front-line services and centres in any way;
- Provide annual resources at community, provincial, regional and national levels to allow women's equality-seeking organizations to meet, learn from one another and share analysis and strategies for advancing women's equality.

5. Improve Government Accountability and Transparency for Advancing Women's Equality

- Require the application of feminist integrated analysis within all stages of the development and implementation of all federal / provincial / territorial policies, programs, budgets, practices, services and legislation. This means governments must assess the impacts of laws, policies, programs and budget allocations on women. This is needed because our roles, relationships, and economic and social circumstances are different from men's, and women have unequal access to power and resources. Furthermore, governments must consider the diversity of women, and in their analysis take into account the disadvantages women experience due to race, class, age, ability, ethnicity, sexual orientation or other factors that often compound inequality;
- Attach conditions to the federal transfer of dollars to provinces and territories under the new Canadian Social Transfer, including specific designations for social assistance, and family and civil law legal aid;

- Develop mechanisms in collaboration with women's organizations to ensure for women's equal representation in all political parties, governments, agencies, boards, commissions and institutions.
- Begin a process immediately to collaborate and consult with grassroots women and women's organizations to determine the current state of women's inequality in Canada, and to identify solutions that will advance the equality of women in our provinces, territories and country.