

MEDIA RELEASE

Federal Conservatives Betray Commitments to Women's Equality: Provincial Advisory Council Responds to Cuts to Status of Women Canada

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For immediate release:

The Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women is alarmed by the federal government's decision to cut 1 billion dollars in spending. "The federal government signaled its intention to make these cuts last spring, and our worst fears are being realized," says Leslie MacLeod, President. "They are eliminating 1% of their overall spending by eliminating or reducing critical social programs."

The Advisory Council denounces the decision to cut the federal Department of Status of Women Canada by \$5 million over two years. These cuts will be taken from its modest budget of \$13 million per year. It is one of the smallest federal departments but has a huge role in advancing women's equality. This department provides critical analysis of the effect of policies and programs on women.

"Status of Women Councils and other equality-seeking women's groups in our province also receive project funding from Status of Women Canada. We are very concerned they will no longer have access to the funds they need to continue their important work," says Ms MacLeod.

The Advisory Council also condemns the decision to shut down the Court Challenges Program of Canada. Yesterday, federal Treasury Board President John Baird stated, "I just don't think it makes sense for the government to subsidize lawyers to challenge government's laws in court." The Advisory Council disagrees.

Ms. MacLeod stated, "The Court Challenges Program has provided women with their only access to courts when their rights are violated. The decision to eliminate this vital program is a clear signal that advancing equality rights is not a priority of the federal government. Mr. Baird's comment in and of itself defies both the spirit and intent of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms."

Prior to the 2006 federal election, Stephen Harper stated to Canadian women 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." However, yesterday's cuts are proof that the Prime Minister has no intention of upholding his commitments to Canadian women.

According to Ms. MacLeod: "The reduction in funding to Status of Women Canada and the elimination of the Court Challenges Program of Canada, along with other social spending cuts, fly in the face of recommendations made by equality-seeking groups and the United Nations. This is certainly not what Canadian women or the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women had in mind."

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Contact: Leslie MacLeod, President: 753-6124