

Media Release – For Immediate Release
November 30, 2006

Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women
Newfoundland and Labrador

“Advisory Council Appalled at Closure of Status of Women Canada Regional Office!”

The Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women is absolutely appalled by federal Status of Women Minister Bev Oda’s decision to close regional Status of Women offices, including the office in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The closure of the Newfoundland and Labrador regional office means women will no longer have access to a Status of Women Canada Program Officer for collaboration and assistance in examining the issues, developing proposals, and implementing projects. Women’s Program Officers with years of expertise on women’s equality issues are receiving their pink slips today. This decision is completely unwarranted, and will destroy a vital federal link and role in advancing the status of women in our province and country.

“We are devastated by the short-sightedness of this federal government,” stated President Leslie MacLeod. “Social development work is critical to advancing women’s equality. The Minister defends her decision by saying she wants women to have better access to direct services and programs. The regional offices provided exactly that - a direct link for women and women’s groups seeking the assistance of knowledgeable and experienced staff. The closures are a clear sign that the federal government intends to dismantle Status of Women Canada and roll back women’s equality in our province and country.

In a correspondence to her colleagues, Minister Oda announced that only four of the regional offices will remain in place: Edmonton; Montreal, Ottawa and Moncton. Women will no longer be able to access experienced, well-informed Program Staff in Newfoundland and Labrador, having to rely instead on the Moncton office for assistance.

According to Ms. MacLeod, “Minister Oda claims that these draconian measures will ‘ensure more accountability in federal government spending.’ Our Advisory Council says that this is unacceptable. The Minister Responsible for the Status of Women is mandated to protect women in our province and country, and work with her colleagues to advance women’s social, legal, cultural, economic and political equality. In our view, she is doing the exact opposite. “

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