



NEWS RELEASE

March 7, 2008

MEDIA BACKGROUNDER

REPORT: “STILL WAITING FOR JUSTICE: Provincial policies and gender equality in BC 2001-2008”

Authors:

Gillian Creese, Phd. Director and Professor, Centre for Women's & Gender Studies Sociology, UBC
Veronica Strong-Boag, Phd., FRSC, Professor, Educational Studies & Women's Studies, UBC

Poverty

- British Columbia, particularly metropolitan Vancouver, has the highest poverty rates in Canada
- The poor are disproportionately single parents, low-wage workers, recipients of social assistance, elderly residents living alone, those with disabilities and chronic health conditions-all predominantly women

Wages

- 2006: two-thirds of BC workers earning less than \$10 an hour were women
- 2005: women in Vancouver earned 73 percent of men's incomes in management (\$52,600 versus \$71,800), 58 percent in sales/service (\$21,500 versus \$36,700) and 54 percent in education/government service (\$37,800 versus \$70,600)

Childcare

- Liberal government cut \$24 million from daycare in their first term in office
- Two-thirds of BC women with children under age three were working for pay in 2006, however in 2004 Statistics Canada reports only 80,230 supervised childcare spaces in BC; Quebec, with double the population, has four times as many childcare spaces

Employment Standards

- Particularly detrimental changes for women include:
 - Reductions in minimum shifts from four to two hours
 - Overtime averaging that can result in longer and less predictable work week
 - Changes to statutory holiday pay that makes it more difficult for part-time workers to qualify
 - An entry level minimum wage of \$6 an hour for the first 500 hours of employment, \$2 lower than the regular minimum wage of \$8 an hour
 - Increased difficulty enforcing these rules

Public Sector Cuts

- In their first term, the Liberal government cut more than 20,000 jobs in the public sector, three-quarters of all staff cut were women

Education

- From 1999 to 2005 undergraduate university fees rose almost 85 percent in BC, the highest in any province. Student loans are consistently higher for women than men

Home Support

- From 2000 to 2005 the number of British Columbians with home support was cut 24 percent even as the number of seniors, the majority of whom are women, increased

Agency Cuts

- The elimination of the Ministry of Women's Equality, The Minister's Advisory Council of Women's Health, the Women's Health Bureau, the Human Rights Commission, much Legal Aid, and the Seniors' Advocate has devastated reporting and research on equality issues.

Political Participation

- Only 17 of 79 MLA's in the BC Legislature are women
- Only five members of Gordon Campbell 23 member Cabinet are women
- Only nine of 35 BC Members of Parliament are women

Retirement

- Average income of women over 65 years of age is \$10,000 less than men's
- Women who never worked outside the home do not receive Canada Pension benefits, and those who do receive an average of \$2,000 less per year than men.
- Twice as many senior women (9 percent) as men (4 percent) live below Statistics Canada's low-income cut-off, a figure that rises to 19 percent for women living alone.

- 30 -

ES/smo
0500-8pr-ES IWD Mar 08 PR Backgrounder

