

# EXPECT

SUPPORT FOR WOMEN WORKING TOWARDS EQUALITY

QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE & EDUCATION

IMPROVED MATERNITY & PARENTAL BENEFITS

MORE FEMALE POLITICAL LEADERS

EQUAL RIGHTS FOR ABORIGINAL WOMEN

LEGAL SUPPORT FOR FAMILY BREAK-UPS

NO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

**Expect Equality Every Day**

LIVABLE INCOME FOR WOMEN & FAMILIES

WOMEN'S REPRODUCTIVE CHOICE

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

**2008**

REINSTATED COURT CHALLENGES PROGRAM

SUPPORT FOR WOMEN'S EQUALITY WORLDWIDE

**JANUARY**

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# CANADIAN WOMEN EXPECT EQUALITY EVERY DAY

**Some actions women expect our federal government to take in 2008:**

## **Fund quality early childhood care & education**

- Support women to participate equally in the workforce and economy by supporting families with publicly funded childcare.
- Invest in a nationwide system for early childhood care and education that is built on principles of quality, universal access, affordability, and focus on children's development.
- Recognize that the current Universal Child Care Benefit does not provide equitable access to childcare for families.
- Face it: when 67% of Canadian women with children under six work outside the home, a national childcare system is non-negotiable.

## **Ensure livable income for women & families**

- Enhance women's economic equality and support citizens to attain livable income for their families.
- Enact pay equity.
- Recognize the diversity of work that contributes to society, including women's non-paid work.
- Understand that livable income means recognizing the right of small, rural, and remote communities to retain their young people and maintain families and social support networks. It requires far-seeing, appropriate economic development that looks beyond the next election and that benefits both women and men. It requires an appreciation for work, workers, and excellence in the workforce.
- Acknowledge that income is the most important social determinant of health, so livable income must be recognized as a pillar of healthcare in Canada.
- Play an important role in funding and setting national standards for social programs.

## **Commit to affordable housing**

- Commit to meeting citizens' housing needs by extending affordable housing programs and anti-homelessness programs beyond 2008.
- Implement a comprehensive national housing strategy, coordinated across all provinces and territories, with goals to build universally accessible social housing units, increase housing subsidies, and meet Aboriginal people's needs both on- and off-reserve.
- Acknowledge women's specific, gendered housing needs, especially in cases where violence and abuse have compromised the safety of women's "homes."
- Address immediately the urgent issue of women's homelessness north of 60.
- Integrate housing policy with other social policy.

## **Eliminate violence against women**

- Declare violence against women and girls unacceptable.
- Recognize that women and girls experience violence due to inequality.
- Invest in violence prevention.
- Listen to women who have experienced violence and learn from them.
- Support funding increases for the equality-seeking organizations that are experts and leaders in eliminating violence in our communities.
- Include in decision-making workers, and especially front-line workers, in women's centres, shelters, and transition houses.

## **Fund legal support for family break-ups**

- Fund access to family law and other civil legal aid. The majority of clients for family law legal aid are women. Criminal law legal aid, accessed mostly by men, is cost-shared by federal and provincial governments. Meanwhile, women across the country have varied and unequal access to family law legal aid, depending on where they live.
- Dedicate federal funding specifically for family law legal aid, to be transferred to provinces and territories.
- Hold all provinces and territories to national standards.
- Amend the Divorce Act to protect the best interests of children and the equality and safety of all women.

## **Improve maternity & parental benefits**

- Improve the current Employment Insurance-based system for maternity and parental benefits by increasing access to benefits for parents who are self-employed or in non-standard work arrangements.
- Improve the value and duration of benefits for families that welcome children into their families by birth or adoption.
- Implement the Standing Committee on the Status of Women's recommendations on parental benefits.

## **Act for women's reproductive choice**

- Ensure that women in all regions of Canada have access to medical care, as promised in the *Canada Health Act*. It is unacceptable that hospitals in some regions will not provide abortions when needed, and clinic-based abortions remain difficult or expensive to access in many places across the country.
- Give women's health and gender analysis high priority in government's planning for the healthcare system.

## **Reinstate Court Challenges Program of Canada**

- Reinstate the Court Challenges Program of Canada, which funded equality-seeking groups to bring cases to court to advance the language and equality rights guaranteed under Canada's Constitution. Former court challenges included cases seeking equal marriage for same-sex couples, pay equity for women, maternity benefits, the right of women to say no to sexual assault, and many other rights-based issues necessary to women's equal participation in our society.

## **Increase female political leaders**

- Take immediate measures to support women to run for and serve in elected office. We expect more than 21% of MPs to be women.
- Select women to be equally represented in the most influential Cabinet portfolios.
- Work proactively among all political parties to get women's names on ballots.
- Examine democratic and legislative processes to eliminate barriers to women.
- Undertake electoral and democratic reform.

## **Ensure equal rights for Aboriginal women**

- Ensure Aboriginal women's rights keep pace with the rights of non-Aboriginal women.
- Ensure matrimonial property rights and take immediate action on Bill C-31, to allow Aboriginal women to pass Indian status to their children even if they "married out" in the past.
- Sustain Aboriginal women's rights by supporting women's role in Aboriginal self-government.

## **Support women's equality worldwide**

- Take leadership among nations in promoting women's equality and eradicating poverty.
- Meet commitments under the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.
- Meet the UN Millennium Development Goals.
- Commit at least 0.7% of Canada's Gross National Income to international aid.
- Play a part in improving the lives of women and girls worldwide.

## **Support women working towards equality**

- Fund organizations that work for women's equality.
- Make equality a priority in the federal budget, with serious attention to recommendations women's organizations bring forward through FAFIA's gender budgeting project.
- Make equality central to Status of Women Canada's mandate again.
- Increase Status of Women's funding for equality-seeking work.
- Make research and advocacy projects eligible for support again.
- Commit to maintaining the Standing Committee on the Status of Women and taking up their recommendations.

**Issues that affect Canadian women are important all year long.**

