



**HOUSE OF COMMONS
CANADA**

THE IMPACTS OF FUNDING AND PROGRAM CHANGES AT STATUS OF WOMEN CANADA

**Report of the Standing Committee on
the Status of Women**

**Yasmin Ratansi, MP
Chair**

**MAY 2007
39th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION**



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THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON STATUS OF WOMEN

has the honour to present its

EIGHTEENTH REPORT

Pursuant to its mandate under Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the Committee on November 7, 2006, your Committee has undertaken a study on the Potential Impact of Recent Funding and Program Changes at Status of Women Canada and has agreed to report the following:

TABLE OF CONTENTS

BACKGROUND TO THIS STUDY	1
CHANGES TO THE BUDGET OF STATUS OF WOMEN CANADA	2
CHANGES TO THE WOMEN'S PROGRAM	3
Outline of changes to Terms and Conditions of the Women's Program	3
AREAS OF CONCERN.....	4
A. IMPLICATIONS OF REDUCED OPERATING BUDGET AT STATUS OF WOMEN CANADA	5
1. Regional Office Closures.....	5
2. Elimination of the Policy Research Fund (PRF)	7
B. CHANGES TO THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF THE WOMEN'S PROGRAM.....	8
1. The change in the mandate of the Women's Program which eliminates the goal of seeking to advance equality for women.....	8
2. Limitations on Funding for Advocacy Activities	11
3. Limitations on funding for Research Activities.....	14
C. CHANGES TO ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR THE WOMEN'S PROGRAM.....	15
CONCLUSION	16
RECOMMENDATIONS.....	17
APPENDIX A: LIST OF WITNESSES	19
APPENDIX B: LIST OF BRIEFS	21
REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE	25
DISSENTING OPINION: CONSERVATIVE PARTY	27

THE IMPACTS OF FUNDING AND PROGRAM CHANGES AT STATUS OF WOMEN CANADA

There is work still to be done, and we are asking you not to abandon us, we in the regions who are working so hard to improve the rights of women.¹

BACKGROUND TO THIS STUDY

Status of Women Canada (SWC) is the federal government agency which promotes gender equality and the full participation of women in the economic, social, cultural and political life of the country. Over the fall of 2006, a number of significant changes were announced to the department. The most significant of these were a decrease in the administrative budget of the department and the introduction of new terms and conditions for the department's grants program, the Women's Program (WP). While these changes were favourably received by some organizations, they elicited concern among many women's organizations. In November, the Standing Committee on the Status of Women decided to "hold extended meetings to assess the impact the cuts to Status of Women Canada and the extensive changes to the Terms and Conditions of the Women's Program have had on the ability of Status of Women Canada to carry on its important work on behalf of women in Canada".²

Between December 6, 2006 and February 14, 2007, the Standing Committee on the Status of Women held four meetings with individuals and organizations. The organizations chosen to appear had either been proposed by members of the Committee, or been selected from among the groups which had submitted briefs to the Committee. The groups which appeared represented all geographic regions of Canada; rural and urban communities; national and local organizations; groups which received the majority of their funding from the Women's Program and groups which received no funding. They brought to the table a great diversity of experiences.

The Standing Committee on the Status of Women issued a call for briefs on the potential impact of changes to funding at Status of Women Canada and to the terms and conditions relating to the Women's Program in that department in November. It was hoped that this call for briefs would reach the widest possible representation of Canadians. Over 70 organizations and individual Canadians responded. Like the witnesses appearing before the Committee, submissions were made by a wide range of groups, including those from rural and urban areas; Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities; northern Canada, and

¹ Testimony. Stéphanie Lalande, Representative, Outaouais Region, Réseau des tables régionales des groupes de femmes du Québec, February 7, 2007.

² Standing Committee on the Status of Women. Minutes of Proceedings. November 7, 2006 .

communities with a high proportion of immigrants and refugees. Organizations from nine provinces and territories responded. Some had relied heavily on Women's Program funding and others had not received federal funding for their work.

CHANGES TO THE BUDGET OF STATUS OF WOMEN CANADA

The total budget for Status of Women Canada for the 2006-2007 fiscal year was \$24.6 million. Of this amount, \$11.75 million is distributed in grants, leaving the department with an operating budget of approximately \$11.5 million.³ In September 2006, the federal government announced that the budget of Status of Women would be decreased by \$5 million effective April 1, 2007. On March 7, 2007, the Honourable Beverley Oda, Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women, announced that the \$5 million which would be deducted from the department's operating budget would be added to the funding program, the Women's Program. Thus, effective April 1, 2007, the Women's Program would have a budget of \$15.3 million⁴, and the operating budget of the department will stand at \$6.958 million.⁵

When she appeared before this Committee in October, the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women noted that Status of Women Canada would be implementing the \$5 million in savings through "greater efficiencies in the administrative operations at Status of Women."⁶ On 29 November 2006, the Minister announced that twelve (12) of the sixteen (16) regional offices would be closed. In her appearance before the Committee on 1 February 2007, the Coordinator of Status of Women Canada, Florence levers, told the Committee that the department had been looking to find efficiencies in "the research entity of Status of Women, as well as the regional operations of the women's program."⁷ At that meeting, Minister Oda also suggested that the work of the Policy Research Fund, which funds independent policy research, had been altered.

³ The difference (\$1.367 million) is an amount budgeted for contributions to employee benefit plans.

⁴ This amount is quoted from Status of Women Canada, News Release: *Canada's New Government Increases Funding to the Women's Program*, March 7, 2007. This amount does not yet, however, appear in the *Main Estimates* for 2007-2008.

⁵ This budget amount for the operating expenditures of Status of Women Canada appear in the 2007-2008 *Main Estimates*

⁶ Standing Committee on the Status of Women. *Evidence*. Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women). October 5, 2006.

⁷ Standing Committee on the Status of Women. *Evidence*. Florence levers (Coordinator, Status of Women Canada). February 1, 2007.

CHANGES TO THE WOMEN'S PROGRAM

The Women's Program at Status of Women Canada distributes grants to organizations. The Women's Program was renewed for a five-year period in September 2006 with modifications to its terms and conditions. Specific changes to the terms and conditions are outlined below.

Outline of changes to Terms and Conditions OF the Women's Program ⁸

Previous Terms and Conditions	Current Terms and Conditions
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Mandate:</i></p> <p>The Women's Program of Status of Women Canada (SWC) provides technical and financial support to women's organizations and other partners seeking to advance equality for women by addressing women's economic, social, political and legal situation.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Mandate:</i></p> <p>The mandate of the WP is to facilitate women's participation in Canadian society by addressing their economic, social and cultural situation through Canadian organizations.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Objectives:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To promote policies and programs within key institutions that take account of gender implications, the diversity of women's perspectives and enable women to take part in decision-making processes; 2. To facilitate the involvement of women's organizations in the public policy process; 3. To increase public understanding in order to encourage action on women's equality issues; and 4. To enhance the effectiveness of actions undertaken by women's organizations to improve the situation of women. 	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Objective:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To achieve the full participation of women in the economic, social and cultural life of Canada. To do so, the Program supports projects that improve the situation of women in key areas such as women's economic status and violence against women and girls.

⁸ This table has been taken from the Web site of the Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action (<http://www.fafia-afai.org/en/node/381#cuts>) and verified for accuracy by staff at the Library of Parliament.

<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Eligibility</i></p> <p>1. Women’s organizations in Canada whose objectives are to promote equality for women in Canadian society; and</p> <p>2. Other non-profit, voluntary organizations in Canada committed to equality for women in Canadian society.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Initiatives not eligible include:</p> <p>1. Provide direct social or health services;</p> <p>2. Are emotional, spiritual, personal or professional development.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Eligibility</i></p> <p>1. Incorporated not-for-profit and for-profit Canadian organizations whose mandates are consistent with the objectives of the Women’s Program.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Initiatives not eligible include:</p> <p>1. Capacity building for organizations unless related to a clearly articulated need in order to carry out a project that will result in an outcome that would improve directly the situation of women;</p> <p>2. Research and polling activities not directly tied to a project that will result in an outcome that would improve directly the situation of women; and</p> <p>3. Domestic advocacy activities and lobbying of federal, provincial and municipal governments.</p>
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AREAS OF CONCERN

An overwhelming majority of testimonies, both by witnesses and in briefs submitted to the Committee, highlighted concerns about the following:

A. Implications of the reduced operating budget at Status of Women of Canada, including:

1. The effect of regional office closures on local communities and organizations;
2. The loss of the Policy Research Fund, which funds independent policy research; and

B. Changes to the terms and conditions of the Women’s Program, including:

3. The change in the mandate of the Women’s Program which eliminates the goal of seeking to advance equality for women;
4. Limitations on funding for research and advocacy activities arising from changes to the terms and conditions of the Women’s Program; and

5. Changes to the Women's Program that allow for-profit organizations to apply for funding.

In addition to these concerns, many organizations questioned whether the changes to Status of Women Canada were in compliance with Canada's international obligations.

A. IMPLICATIONS OF REDUCED OPERATING BUDGET AT STATUS OF WOMEN CANADA

1. Regional Office Closures

In her presentation to this Committee on 5 October, 2006, the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women, the Honourable Bev Oda, expressed concern about the high administrative costs associated with processing applications through the regional offices, and committed to reducing that cost:

[W]e can reduce that 31¢ cost to deliver \$1. For example, in order to administer and give out \$10.8 million, the administrative cost, the directorate cost, is \$3.3 million.⁹

On 29 November, 2006 department announced that twelve of the sixteen regional offices would be closed effective April 1, 2007. The extensive application process, which had involved consultation and negotiation with Women's Program staff, was replaced with a funding application made widely available on the Web site of the department. By placing the application form for funding under the Women's Program on the department's Web Site, Status of Women Canada is attempting to streamline the application process and to reach a wider pool of applicants.

Witnesses and the testimony in the briefs have provided a detailed look at the application process and the role of the regional offices. Throughout its hearings, the Committee has come to have a greater understanding that the work done by regional staff is not limited to the processing of applications, but includes direct services to organizations to help them develop projects. The testimony of Brenda Murphy, coordinator of the Urban Core Support Network in New Brunswick, captures the spectrum of support services regional offices have provided to organizations in Atlantic Canada:

⁹ Standing Committee on the Status of Women. *Evidence*. Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women). October 5, 2006

I also wish to speak to the administrative cuts by acknowledging the invaluable role played by the regional project officers. They have consistently helped our small organization to clarify goals and objectives. They've linked us with complementary organizations elsewhere. They have provided us with technical support in areas such as evaluation. These regional staff members have helped build momentum and continuity and have kept our work firmly entrenched in the realities of Atlantic Canada. Their loss will be catastrophic to us.¹⁰

The Committee wishes to acknowledge the dedication and hard work of the regional staff in Status of Women Canada offices throughout the country.

The majority of witnesses and briefs raised concerns about the closure of 12 Status of Women Canada regional offices. The Canadian Women's Community Economic Development Council asserted that the closure of regional offices would limit access to staff and resources that "are vital for women's organizations, allowing effective implementations of objectives to promote women's equality." Womenspace and other organizations noted that centralizing support and closing regional offices will make it difficult for those without access to the internet to obtain applications and receive assistance from SWC staff. It was suggested that the women who would be most directly affected by these changes would be those that reside in rural and remote areas, Aboriginal and immigrant women, and those living in poverty. It was noted by several organizations that applicants in remote areas would find it particularly difficult to access assistance because internet availability is limited and offices are too far away to access. For example Charlotte Hrenchuk, coordinator of the Yukon Status of Women Council, suggested that:

The website is not a friendly tool for women living in Beaver Creek, or those without a computer, of whom there are many in the north.¹¹

Witnesses suggested that marginalized groups in urban areas might also have a more difficult time accessing funding under the new application process. Sonja Greckol of the Toronto Women's Call to Action told the Committee:

I want to add to your piece about rural women. The corollary of that in the large urban environment is all of the disenfranchised communities, the marginalized, racialized communities that don't have access. As we cut back outreach and make administration more efficient, in fact, the only people who can grasp at the money are people from established groups and organizations. It's the urban corollary of your rural experience.¹²

Organizations drew attention to the impact of the closure of regional offices on local communities. Several groups observed that project officers in regional offices had provided individualized assistance on projects that addressed issues in local communities. Organizations, like Wish Drop-in Centre from British Columbia, expressed concern that the

¹⁰ Standing Committee on the Status of Women. *Evidence*. February 14, 2007.

¹¹ *Ibid.* February 14, 2007

¹² *Ibid.* February 7, 2007

centralization of administrative support would mean that assistance would be given by individuals who are not familiar with the local circumstances. Some suggested that this would be particularly problematic for groups representing immigrant, refugee, and Aboriginal women, where there may be a need for cultural or ethnic specific project support.

Finally, groups questioned how Status of Women Canada could carry out its mandate with the reduction in staff. The Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF) expressed concern that the closure of the offices would limit the ability of the department to "gather information relevant to its mandate and constituents." Other organizations, like the Public Service Alliance of Canada, expressed concern that the closures would limit the application of gender-based analysis in federal government departments. They also observed that the closures may stall efforts by Status of Women Canada to work with representatives from the territorial and provincial governments on women's issues because of its diminished presence in the provinces.

2. Elimination of the Policy Research Fund (PRF)

Until the end of March 2006, Status of Women Canada manages a Policy Research Fund (PRF) to "support independent, nationally relevant forward-thinking policy research on gender equality issues." This fund has supported research that identifies policy gaps, trends and emerging issues; research that examines the consequences of existing policies; and, research that focuses on concrete recommendations for policies and practices that would improve the status of women.¹³ Based on an annual call for proposals, organizations and individuals submitted research proposals which were adjudicated by an external committee of experts. Once the research was completed, the department has had the final reports edited, translated, printed, distributed, and made available to the public on its Web site.

Many groups stated that they were concerned about changes to the Policy Research Fund that would reduce or eliminate federal funding for research projects on women's issues. When she appeared before the Committee in October, the Minister Oda, confirmed that the Policy Research Fund would be replaced with an internal capacity within Status of Women Canada to identify and manage research.

In a brief submitted to the Committee, members of the External Committee on the Policy Research Fund stated that the program had excellent value for money with only five staff members. They believed that the elimination of the Fund would increase "the risk of seeing new policies being based on 'yesterday's ideas.'" In their briefs, many organizations, including the Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW), described the importance of the Policy Research Fund for research on women's issues. The Alliance

¹³ Web site of Status of Women Canada. Accessed at http://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/funding/prf/prfmandate_e.html March 13, 2007.

believed that eliminating the Fund would produce “a loss in terms of historical understanding of women’s equality movements, research and advocacy collaborations in our country.”

The groups which were in favour of the changes to research activities funded by Status of Women Canada, on the other hand, questioned whether funding had been used appropriately. They were of the opinion that research funded by Status of Women Canada has not provided alternative solutions to women’s problems because the department did not fund research which represented all perspectives.

B. CHANGES TO THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF THE WOMEN’S PROGRAM

1. The change in the mandate of the Women’s Program which eliminates the goal of seeking to advance equality for women

Great strides have evidently been made toward equality since the 1929 Persons Case, when women in Canada were deemed to be persons under the *British North America Act*. In response to a question about the developments which have arisen over the past twenty-five years as a result of women’s advocacy, Andrée Côté, Legislation and Law Reform Director for the National Association of the Women and the Law (NAWL) identified the following:

- 20 or 25 years ago, under the *Criminal Code*, men were allowed to rape their wives.
- Aboriginal women who married non-aboriginal men lost their status.
- Rape victims had to deal with discriminatory provisions on how to prove whether they had effectively been raped or whether they had consented to sexual assault. In the 1990s, defence attorneys started accessing confidential files of sexual assault survivors to discredit them.

- Immigration provisions were explicitly sexist against immigrant women on all sorts of levels. Sponsored women would still be sponsored for over ten years. Now it's been reduced to three years.
- Matrimonial property would not have been redefined in such an egalitarian way in family law.
- The *Employment Equity Act* wouldn't exist at the federal level.¹⁴

Most of the groups who presented to the Committee agreed that great gains have been made in ensuring that women have equal rights under the law, also referred to as *de jure* equality. There was less unanimity on the question of *de facto* equality — the equality of outcomes. The large majority of groups, in defining what they understood by inequality between men and women, pointed to unequal outcomes in terms of income, elected positions and violence. In the words of Barbara Byers, Executive Vice-President of the Canadian Labour Congress:

You're not going to find anyone around this room, a woman, who would say she's not equal, or a man who would dare say that we're not equal. But the reality is we still face discrimination at work, in our community, in Parliament, wherever we go. We still have violence in huge numbers. We don't have economic and social equality.¹⁵

Nathalie Goulet, Director of the *Conseil d'intervention pour l'accès des femmes au travail*, told the Committee that, in Quebec, there is a focus on the equality of outcomes between men and women rather than strictly on equality before the law:

Legal experts now don't even talk about equality in law. They talk about equality in fact. Indeed, the name of the new policy on the status of women that was just passed in Quebec is: "Making equality in law equality in fact". So, equality must be substantive, it must be real, and we must be able to measure it. As a result, legal experts who follow women's issues no longer even refer to equality in law.¹⁶

Most witnesses agreed that men and women are equal, but that certain women face barriers to fully experiencing equality. However, differences arose among witnesses, and among members of this Committee, on the best approach to address those barriers.

¹⁴ Standing Committee on the Status of Women. *Evidence*. December 6, 2006.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* December 13, 2006.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* February 14, 2007

A minority of witnesses felt that support should be targeted toward initiatives which help individual women overcome the barriers which hold them back from benefiting from their full equality rights. In her presentation before this Committee on October 5, Minister Oda emphasized the need to support initiatives which provide services directly to women to overcome barriers:

Barriers such as the need for training and updating skills, the need for personal advice on preparing for job applications and interviews, the need for mentorship in their local communities, or the need for immigrant women to access services, whether those services are provided by non-profit organizations or different levels of government, are the real needs faced by women in communities across the country.¹⁷

This view was shared by Gladys Hayward Williams, past member of the Manitoba Association for Home Schooling:

The fact is that under the Charter of Rights, all Canadians, male and female, are equal. What isn't equal are the barriers and challenges that we each individually face. What makes us who we are and sets us apart from each other is how we deal with those challenges and barriers. I support the fact that by changing the mandate for the Status of Women, we have removed at least one barrier for women and made more funding more available to more women. More front-line groups will now be eligible for funding for their efforts to support women in overcoming their day-to-day barriers.¹⁸

Many witnesses agreed that the direct provision of services is important, however they emphasized the importance of identifying and breaking down barriers rather than helping individuals circumvent them. The testimony of Leslie MacLeod of the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women — Newfoundland and Labrador highlights this perspective:

How on earth are women going to participate fully when we cannot go at the systemic discrimination? The rules of EI, maternity benefits, access to civil legal aid; we can name all of the issues. Women cannot access those, unless laws and policy and programs change, and that requires systemic advocacy. I can't see how this balances out in this plan that is supposed to help individual women in individual communities, when the solutions are systemically based.¹⁹

Many witnesses viewed the work of identifying and breaking down barriers as “research and advocacy” activities which will no longer be funded through the Women’s Program. Ms. Shari Gradon, President of the Women’s Future Fund told the Committee:

¹⁷ Ibid., October 5, 2006.

¹⁸ Ibid. December 13, 2006.

¹⁹ Ibid. December 6, 2006.

Without advocacy as part of what Status of Women funds, the kinds of progress that we have made in the last century will not be replicated. The very removal of the word “advocacy” and the word “equality” suggests that there’s no understanding of how that change happens.²⁰

2. Limitations on Funding for Advocacy Activities

The vast majority of those who submitted briefs or appeared before the Committee were of the understanding that the changes to the terms and conditions of the Women’s Program would prevent research or advocacy work from being funded. The testimony of Jennifer deGroot, of the United Nations Platform for Action Committee Manitoba, echoes the response given by most witnesses who were asked whether they would apply to the renewed Women’s Program:

Our understanding of the new terms and conditions of Status of Women Canada is that the type of work we do with grassroots women no longer fits. We are an advocacy organization, and we have been told that advocacy will no longer be funded.²¹

Many briefs suggested that, because women are under-represented in positions of power, eliminating funding for advocacy activities would limit women’s democratic involvement. They argued that women are not traditionally included in decision-making and that support for advocacy groups that promote women’s issues is required to help rectify this problem. Organizations like the L’R des centres de Femmes du Québec believed that the changes would lead to a decline in the “democratic clout” of women in Canada because of a “loss of access to the tools that make it possible to be heard by decision makers.” Witnesses spoke about the positive impact of advocacy on women in marginalized groups, as the following quotation from Gail Watson, of the Women’s Health Clinic in Winnipeg, demonstrates:

Women who experience poverty and inequality rarely have any opportunity to participate in shaping the programs or policies that affect and influence their lives. Validating their knowledge, experience, and stories, plus involving them in developing the recommendations for policy change, is very powerful, both for the outcomes of the policy change and for their own self-esteem and confidence.²²

In a brief to the Committee, the Provincial Association of Transition Houses of Saskatchewan wrote that there should be increased opportunities for marginalized segments of society to have their views heard:

²⁰ Ibid. February 7, 2007

²¹ Ibid. December 6, 2006

²² Ibid. February 14, 2007

A society that strives for fairness will continually criticize these imbalances and find ways to redress them. A socially responsible government will facilitate these struggles by creating spaces for discourse among all groups. It falls upon government to ensure that everyone can participate in these discussions, and in proposing solutions. Civil society relies on the financial support of government to do this. When governments do not provide the resources for civil society to speak out, then only the business class and government will be heard. These sectors have access to funds which will ensure that their views alone dominate the formulation of policy.

Groups which had been funded by the Women's Program to do advocacy work spoke eloquently about the need for mechanisms which allow the most vulnerable groups to make their needs known. Lucille Harper of the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre told the Committee:

Rural women's organizations work with a broad diversity of women; have developed a valuable expertise on and unique insight into women's social, economic, and justice issues; provide community and region-specific information about women's situations and needs; and amplify the voices of vulnerable and marginalized women to the public and the policy decision-makers. Without social advocacy, the voices of the most vulnerable women go unheard.²³

The Yukon Status of Women Council provided an example of how advocacy in policy work creates positive change for women:

The Yukon Status of Women Council worked with local women's organizations and the Yukon Housing Corporation to create a priority housing policy for women fleeing abusive relationships. That means women and children now have an option other than returning to their abuser. This is making a real difference in Yukon women's lives.²⁴

Several briefs suggested that a greater focus on direct service delivery would result in neglecting the root causes of women's inequality. The National Farmers Union described the importance of direct services, advocacy and research. The Public Service Alliance of Canada also addressed this issue, in its brief to the Committee, by advocating for a multi-pronged approach to obtaining substantive equality:

Achieving women's equality requires coordinated and concrete action on many fronts. It requires women's groups who document women's equality and advocate for change. It requires women's groups on the ground to provide front-line services to women in need. And it requires a strong internal women's machinery to push for women's equality from within government. It's not one or the other. It's all of them together that will make women's equality a reality.

²³ Ibid. February 7, 2007

²⁴ Ibid. February 14, 2007

On the other hand, a small number of witnesses argued that the federal government should not fund advocacy groups, and that there was a need to fund a broader spectrum of projects. Some, such as Gwendolyn Landolt of REAL Women of Canada, felt that the funding under the Women's Program had been used to "promote an agenda that is not a reflection of what Canadian women want or need."²⁵ They argued that funding should not be going to organizations that do not reflect the diversity of women's perspectives. They insisted that such groups should become financially independent from government. REAL Women Canada suggested that federal funding should be allocated to direct service delivery only if it does not interfere with provincial jurisdiction or duplicate provincial or municipal services.

Witnesses told the Committee that there is a need for both front-line service and for advocacy. They noted that, while there exists financial support to service organizations, Status of Women Canada provided one of the few programs which would support advocacy. As Brenda Murphy, coordinator for the Urban Core Support Network in New Brunswick, told the Committee:

[O]ur organization is the only one in our community that has not been providing direct service. There are many that are providing direct service to women. The need is so great, they don't have the opportunity, the time, or the resources to advocate. So when our office closes down because we no longer have the ability, there isn't anyone speaking. No one is speaking any longer on behalf of the women I talk to all the time — the Joannes and the other women — because the organizations and agencies providing direct service are just trying to provide service alone and they don't have the ability to do the advocacy.²⁶

In spite of their serious concerns, however, some of the groups which appeared before the Committee expressed a cautious optimism that they could work within the funding guidelines, as the following testimony from Charlotte Thibault of the Fédération des femmes du Québec demonstrates:

I can tell you that at this time, the women's groups are putting their heads together. They're trying to see how they will submit their grant applications. They are taking a very close look at what Ms. Oda has said so as to understand what will be eligible for funding. It isn't because we don't want to apply for subsidies, it's because things are not yet clear.²⁷

²⁵ Ibid. February 7, 2007.

²⁶ Ibid. February 14, 2007

²⁷ Ibid. December 6, 2006.

3. Limitations on funding for Research Activities

Many organizations felt that changes to the terms and conditions of the Women's Program would eliminate funding for research on women's issues within the Women's Program.

The use of research to educate society and government about emerging issues was raised in several briefs. Many groups, like the Coalition of Provincial and Territorial Advisory Councils of Status of Women, stated that research is key because of the growing recognition of the importance of evidence-based decision making. Many groups provided examples where research funded by Status of Women Canada had been used directly to impact the lives of women. The National Anti-Racism Council of Canada wrote that research funded by Status of Women has been used as supporting documentation in court cases and policy implementation. Lise Martin of the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAOW) told the Committee that many groups use the fact sheets developed by that organization, "including police officers in Calgary and a national association of Canadian priests."²⁸ Witnesses cited instances where decision-makers acknowledged that it was "difficult...for government to gather the same data as community-based organizations, because the relationships of trust between government and women living in poverty are difficult, if not impossible, to cultivate."

The research conducted by national organizations was also deemed to be of great value for smaller organizations or those operating on a limited budget, as Ardith Toogood, President of the Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW) told the Committee:

We definitely need the programs that fund advocacy and research. It's absolutely vital. The CFUW benefits from that research. When you have volunteers out there, there just isn't the money for us to get that kind of research. We need it; we need it to continue.²⁹

Although the renewed terms and conditions of the Women's Program allow for research directly tied to the project, there appears to be a lack of understanding on what forms of research will be funded. This was the cause for uncertainty and concern among some witnesses. For example, Sherry Lewis of the Native Women's Association of Canada told the Committee that:

The Sisters in Spirit initiative has a strong research component that is critical for the development of policy positions and effective advocacy measures. We want to express how concerned we are about the security of the Sisters in Spirit initiative and its staff and the overall capacity that we have gained through this initiative.³⁰

²⁸ Ibid. December 6, 2006.

²⁹ Ibid. February 14, 2007

³⁰ Ibid. December 6, 2006.

C. CHANGES TO ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR THE WOMEN'S PROGRAM

Many individuals and organizations expressed concern about the changes to the terms and conditions of the Women's Program that extend eligibility for funding to for-profit groups. Some suggested that increased competition for limited resources could result in less funding allocated to non-profit women's organizations. The National Action Committee on the Status of Women stated that the changes would reduce funding to small organizations which would lead to fewer women becoming involved in local initiatives. Other organizations noted that some for-profit providers were already receiving funding to deliver services, and emphasized that Women's Program funding should be directed towards local, grassroots organizations.

Some groups suggested that there were few alternative funding sources available to fund the type of work which had been supported by the Women's Program. This is particularly the case for groups such as those in Northern Canada, as Charlotte Hrenchuk, coordinator for the Yukon Status of Women Council told the Committee:

Yukon women's organizations are not operating on a level playing field with those in the south. There are few corporations that are alternate sources of funding. Without a charitable number we are ineligible for funding from charitable foundations, and corporations want a tax receipt.³¹

While the majority of groups were critical of the changes in the eligibility criteria to access funding through the Women's Program, other groups felt that the changes were an opportunity to make the Program more inclusive of the various services needed by women. Organizations and individuals in favour of the changes felt that the terms and conditions had to be modified to give equal opportunity for all groups to be funded by the federal government. REAL Women of Canada wrote that changes to the Program were needed to express the different perspectives held by women which have been influenced by their diverse social, economic, educational, cultural and religious backgrounds. Those who had been ineligible for funding under the old terms and conditions argued that they had been unjustly discriminated against. Ms. Beverley Smith described these circumstances in her brief:

One can imagine the level of frustration many of us have felt when we hit roadblock after roadblock in trying to get government to value unpaid care work, and discovering that even Status of Women which one would hope would understand, actually stood in our way.

Doraine Wachniak, representative of Parents for Healthy Teens noted that her organization, which makes presentations to government bodies to share concerns about the physical, social, and emotional consequences of early sexual activity within the youth population, and collaborates with their local high school to implement an option for parents

³¹ Ibid. February 14, 2007

and students in the area of physical education and health, would now have a chance to access funding through Status of Women Canada.

We are pleased and extremely supportive of the broadened mandate for the Status of Women. This change will provide us with an opportunity to apply to Status of Women for funding if we wish to do so. The previous mandate excluded us.³²

CONCLUSION

Several witnesses suggested that the budget of the Women's Program be increased, so the Committee was particularly pleased to note that, on the eve of International Women's Day, the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women announced that an additional \$5 million would be added to the budget of the Women's Program for 2007-2008. Budget 2007 provides \$20 million over the next two years to Status of Women Canada. In addition, the Minister announced that "as of April 1, 2007, the Women's Program will have two components: the Women's Community Fund and the Women's Partnership Fund." The Committee views these new announcements as an opportune occasion to implement the changes which so many witnesses have been calling for, as contained in our summary of recommendations.

The Committee urges Status of Women Canada to take into consideration the responses of the many groups and individuals who took the time to submit a brief to the Committee or to appear before the Committee to comment on the changes which had been announced to the Women's Program. The recommendations contained in this report reflect an overwhelming majority of the responses received by the Committee. Women's groups hold out a hope that their voices will be heard, and their recommendations implemented, as Sherry Lewis of the Native Women's Association of Canada testified:

We certainly have high hopes that you're going to put forward excellent plans that are going to make those improvements... We certainly have high hopes that we're going to see an excellent plan come forward from your membership, and that we will be able to truly benefit and continue with the work we have.³³

The Committee has heard from a broad perspective of women in Canada and brought forth their voices. The final words are perhaps best left to one of the witnesses who appeared:

³² Ibid. December 13, 2006.

³³ Ibid. December 6, 2006.

Well, I know many women's groups have rallied in order to show their displeasure. There have been many briefs written. I guess at this point it's time for those who make the policies to have the opportunity to perhaps reconsider. Sometimes the right thing to do is to reconsider.³⁴

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on its meetings with witnesses and the briefs received on the funding and program changes at Status of Women Canada, the Standing Committee on the Status of Women recommends:

- **That Status of Women Canada reverse its decision to close the twelve regional offices of Status of Women Canada;**
- **That Status of Women Canada maintain its Policy Research Fund to fund independent policy research;**
- **That Status of Women Canada reinstate the goal of equality in the mandate of the Women's Program;**
- **That Status of Women Canada remove limitations on funding for research and advocacy activities in the revised terms and conditions of the Women's Program; and**
- **That funding through the Women's Program be made available only to non-profit organizations.**

³⁴ Ibid. February 14, 2007.

APPENDIX A LIST OF WITNESSES

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action Leilani Farha, Co-Chair, Human Rights Committee	2006/12/06	28
Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women Lise Martin, Executive Director		
DisAbled Women's Network of Canada Monika Chappell, Chair		
Fédération des femmes du Québec Charlotte Thibault, Member		
National Association of Women and the Law Andrée Côté, Director, Legislation and Law Reform		
National Council of Women of Canada Catharine Laidlaw-Sly, Policy Advisor		
Native Women's Association of Canada Sherry Lewis, Executive Director		
Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women - Newfoundland and Labrador Leslie MacLeod, President		
United Nation Platform for Action Committee Manitoba Jennifer deGroot, Project Coordinator		
Association féminine d'éducation et d'action sociale Mariette Gilbert, President	2006/12/13	31
Canadian Labour Congress Barbara Byers, Executive Vice-President		
Collectif Féminisme et Démocratie Jackie Steele, Spokesperson, Federal Representation		
Manitoba Association for Home Schooling Gladys Hayward Williams, Past member		
Parents for Healthy Teens Doraine Wachniak, Representative		

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Regroupement provincial des maisons d'hébergement et de transition pour femmes victimes de violence conjugale Louise Riendeau, Coordinator of Political Files	2006/12/13	31
Sexual Assault Centre London Louise Pitre, Executive Director		
YWCA Canada Paulette Senior, Chief Executive Officer		
Antigonish Women's Resource Centre Lucille Harper, Executive Director	2007/02/07	35
Métis National Council of Women Sheila Genaille, President		
REAL Women of Canada Gwendolyn Landolt, National Vice-President		
Réseau des tables régionales des groupes de femmes du Québec Stéphanie Lalande, Representative, Outaouais Region		
Toronto Women's Call to Action Sonja Greckol, Founding Member		
Women's Future Fund Shari Graydon, President		
Canadian Federation of University Women Ardith Toogood, President	2007/02/14	38
Canadian Women's Community Economic Development Council Joni Simpson, Director		
Conseil d'intervention pour l'accès des femmes au travail Nathalie Goulet, Director		
Urban Core Support Network Brenda Murphy, Coordinator		
Women's Health Clinic Gail Watson, Coordinator		
Yukon Status of Women Council Charlotte Hrenchuk, Coordinator		

APPENDIX B LIST OF BRIEFS

Organizations and individuals

Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada

Ainslie, Caren

Alliance des femmes de la francophonie canadienne

Antigonish Women's Resource Centre

Association féminine d'éducation et d'action sociale

B.C. Coalition to Eliminate Abuse of Seniors

British Columbia Teachers' Federation

Campbell River Area Women's Resource Centre

Canadian Coalition of Women in Engineering, Science, Trades and Technology

Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs

Canadian Federation of University Women

Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action

Canadian Labour Congress

Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women

Canadian Women's Community Economic Development Council

Canadian Women's Health Network

Child Care Coalition of Manitoba

Chinese Canadian National Council

Coalition of Provincial and Territorial Advisory Councils on the Status of Women

Coalitions for Unpaid Labor

Collectif Féminisme et Démocratie

Community Social Planning Council of Toronto

Organizations and individuals

Conseil d'intervention pour l'accès des femmes au travail

Constantinescu, Daniela

Cotton, Louisa

DisAbled Women's Network of Canada

Douglas, Ann

Downtown Eastside Women's Centre

External Committee on Policy Research Fund

Fédération des femmes du Québec

Funk, Sara

Gander Status of Women's Council

Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women Canada

Grassroots Women

Gvora, Edith

L'R des centres de femmes du Québec

Mann, Ruth

Métis National Council of Women

National Action Committee on the Status of Women

National Anti-Racism Council of Canada

National Association of Women and the Law

National Council of Welfare

National Council of Women of Canada

National Farmers Union

National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women of Canada

Native Women's Association of Canada

Organizations and individuals

Nishnawbe Aski Nation Women's Council

Northwestern Ontario Women's Action Group

Oikawa, Lorene

Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants

Osgoode Hall Law School Women's Caucus

Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women - Newfoundland and Labrador

Provincial Association of Transition Houses of Saskatchewan

Provincial Council of Women of Manitoba, Inc.

Public Service Alliance of Canada

REAL Women of Canada

Regroupement des femmes de la Côte-Nord

Regroupement provincial des maisons d'hébergement et de transition pour femmes victimes de violence conjugale

Relais-Femmes

Réseau des tables régionales des groupes de femmes du Québec

Ridgway, Amanda

Société des femmes philosophes

South Asian Women's Community Centre

Tanner, Gwen

The Women Are Angry

Toronto Women's Call to Action

United Nation Platform for Action Committee Manitoba

University of Windsor Women

Urban Core Support Network

Organizations and individuals

Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre

Wellbeing Thru Inclusion Socially and Economically

Westfall, Marlene

Whelan, Hilda

WISH Drop-in Centre Society

Women Elders in Action

Women's Future Fund

Women's Health Clinic

Women's Legal Education and Action Fund

Womenspace

Wong, Rita

Yukon College

Yukon Status of Women Council

YWCA Toronto

REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the Committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

A copy of the relevant Minutes of Proceedings of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women ([Meetings Nos. 28, 31, 35, 38, 48 and 49](#)) is tabled.

Respectfully submitted,

Yasmin Ratansi, MP

Chair

CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA DISSENTING OPINION

Joy Smith, Kildonan – St Paul

The Conservative Party cannot support the *Report on the Impact of the Recent Funding and Program Changes at Status of Women Canada* and its recommendations as it currently stands for several reasons to be outlined in its dissenting opinion.

The Conservative Party believes that the report, including the very wording of the title is disingenuous and misleading as it implies the report contains the actual impact of the changes made to Status of Women Canada. In fact, a number of the changes made at Status of Women Canada came into effect April 1st 2007, following the testimony of the witnesses therefore some of the testimony and the ensuing Committee recommendations are based on speculation.

1. The recommendation for Status of Women Canada to reverse the decision to close 12 regional offices of Status of Women Canada does not take into account a number of aspects.

- By enhancing the online Status of Women Canada Web site, Status of Women Canada streamlined the application process and the Women's Program is now accessible to a wider pool of applicants.
- With the savings of \$5 million in administrative costs, Status of Women Canada is now able to provide an additional \$5 million in funding to the Women's Program.

2. The recommendation that Status of Women Canada maintain its Policy Research Fund to fund independent policy research fails to acknowledge that Status of Women Canada and in fact, many federal departments and agencies, continue to conduct and fund policy research and integrate the research findings into the policy development process. Research will be continued at Status of Women Canada but in a focused manner to ensure priority areas are addressed in an approach that maximizes public dollars and results for Canadian women.

3. The recommendation of the reinstatement of equality in the mandate of the Women's Program fails to recognise that the terms and conditions had not been changed since 1973. Since then, women have gained equality rights under Canadian law. Therefore the renewed mandate, which is, "to facilitate women's participation in Canadian society by addressing their economic, social and cultural situation through Canadian organizations" uses focused language aimed at directly helping women in their communities. To be eligible for funding, organizations' mandate and objectives must reflect Section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This provision can be found under the General Eligibility Requirements section of the Women's Program funding guidelines which states: "To be eligible for Women's Program funding an organization's mandate and objectives must reflect: *Section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms,*

which stipulates, “(1) Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability” and “(2) Subsection (1) does not preclude any law, program or activity that has as its object the amelioration of conditions of disadvantaged individuals or groups, including those that are disadvantaged because of race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability”; and it functions democratically and demonstrates responsible governance.”

4. The recommendation to remove limitations on funding for research and advocacy activities is one that the Conservative Party of Canada cannot support as it agrees with an overwhelming number of Canadian women who have asked the government to take concrete steps to address areas of concern for Canadians. The Conservative Party of Canada believes the most responsible and effective use of taxpayers’ dollars is through funding which is aimed at projects that will directly help women in their communities. In Canada’s free and democratic society, all Canadians, women and men, are free to advocate to all levels of government and there is nothing to prevent organizations from raising money to advocate or conduct research.

5. The recommendation that funding be available only to non profit organizations overlooks the value of partnering with organizations that are in a position to help shoulder some of the financial burden themselves. The Conservative Party of Canada believes that it should encourage all sectors in society – for-profit organizations *and* not-for-profit organizations, to ensure the full participation of women in the economic, cultural and social life of Canada. This change will open the door to a whole myriad of new possible funding opportunities that are vital to assisting women on achieving full participation in Canadian society.