

WOMEN MOBILIZING ACROSS CANADA FOR EQUALITY RIGHTS

December 7, 2006

OTTAWA - Women across Canada are taking to the streets this Friday and Sunday to challenge the Harper government's recent decisions on women's equality and human rights.

The month-long campaign leading up to December 10th, International Human Rights Day and the 25th anniversary of Canada's ratification of the *UN Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW), has taken on a new urgency following the government's announcement last week that it is further restricting the work of women's groups by closing 12 out of the 16 Status of Women offices across the country.

On Sunday, a declaration signed by several hundreds of local, provincial and national organizations asking for a reversal of the cuts will be released at a news conference **at 12 noon at the Ottawa Press Club, 150 Wellington, (Nellie McClung Library – Second floor).**

Spokespersons will include: Quebec's CSN president Claudette Carbonneau and the Canadian Labour Congress' Barbara Byers, Michèle Asselin of the Fédération des femmes du Québec, Cheryl Hotchkiss of Amnesty International and Shelagh Day of FAFIA (Canadian Feminist Association for International Action.) They will call on the Prime Minister to reverse a series of bad decisions that have a negative impact on women.

Demonstrators from the Montreal, Toronto and Ottawa area will gather in front of the Supreme Court of Canada at **1:30 pm** and march to the Famous Five Women's Monument on Parliament Hill to demand that Prime Minister Stephen Harper honour his election commitment to uphold women's equality and human rights.

"This government is trying to silence women who defend women's rights. But it will not succeed," said Andrée Côté, spokesperson for the ad hoc women's equality-seeking coalition. She pointed to a series of political measures that are hurting Canadian women such as:

- Changing the funding criteria for women's group and removing the word equality from the objectives of the women's program;
- Making major cuts of 43% to the operating budget of Status of Women Canada;
- Cancelling the Court Challenges Program;
- Refusing to adopt proactive pay equity legislation and,
- Cancelling the funding for the Canada-wide child care program.

There are demonstrations, public card-writing activities, and marches across the country: in New Glasgow, Moncton, Halifax, Kitchener-Waterloo, Winnipeg, Vancouver and Whitehorse.

A quick look at some of campaign events this week-end:

- In **New Glasgow**, a demonstration to be held at Foreign Affairs Minister Peter MacKay's office, organized by the Pictou County Women's Centre gets underway at 12:15 pm on Dec. 8th.
- In **Moncton**, there will be noon rally, billed as *Not In Our Name, Mr. Harper!* at Moncton City Hall on Dec. 8th. The organizers are New Brunswick groups that work for better conditions for vulnerable people.
- In **Vancouver**, on Dec. 8th at 9 am, a panel of women representing many equality-seeking and advocacy groups will hold a news conference at Simon Fraser University.
- In **Winnipeg**, the University of Winnipeg Students' Association are organizing a *Funeral for Women's Equality* on Friday, Dec. 8th at noon, at the Women's Memorial Grove (on the legislative grounds) to mourn the cuts.
- In **Halifax**, a public launch of a card-writing campaign to Prime Minister Harper will be held on Dec. 8th at the Lord Nelson Hotel starting at 1:15 pm, with the Raging Grannies and a new Street Theatre Group.
- In **Corner Brook**, there will be 12:30 pm demonstration on Dec. 8th organized by Corner Brook Status of Women Council and the Canadian Federation of University Women in front of the university.
- In the **Northwest Territories**, the Yellowknife Women's Society is planning an old fashioned bra burning event in front of the local federal building on December 10th because *Harper has booted women back to the 60s!*

For more information contact: Nancy Peckford: (613) 232-2505, x222 or (613) 292-7941 (cell) or Jackie Steele at 613-261-9649 (cell).

Members of the ad hoc coalition include: Aboriginal Women's Community-Based Studies Initiative, Alliance des femmes de la francophonie canadienne, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Canadian Council of Muslim Women, Canadian Federation of Students, Canadian Federation of University Women, Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action, Canadian Labour Congress, Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, Canadian Union of Public Employees, Canadian Women's Community Economic Development Council, Canadian Women's Foundation, Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada, DAWN Ontario, Fédération des femmes du Québec, Feminists for Just and Equitable Public Policy, MATCH International, National Association of Women and the Law, National Council of Women of Canada, New Brunswick Advisory Council on the Status of Women, Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses; Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women, Newfoundland and Labrador, Public Service Alliance of Canada, Regroupement provincial des maisons d'hébergement et de transition pour femmes victimes de violence conjugale, Transition

House Association of Nova Scotia, Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada, Women's Space and YWCA Canada