

21 September 2006

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper, P.C., M.P.  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0A6

Mr. Prime Minister:

During the past few weeks, rumors in Ottawa have become more insistent regarding the imminent demise of the Ministry of Status of Women (SWC). The great wall of silence from that Ministry has done nothing to quell these rumors, and women across Canada are beginning to be afraid that such rumors may be true. Knowing that an announcement will be made on 25 September about budget cuts, I am writing this letter to you to tell you why any cut to funding for SWC must be impossible!

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO CUT FUNDING TO SWC  
BECAUSE:

1 - during the last election, the leaders of all four parties pledged to work toward equality for women in Canada. This is a vital part of the mandate of all Members elected to this Parliament.

2 - our government has sent Canadian soldiers to Afghanistan to fight for the development of democracy there - including the recognition of human rights for Afghan women. It is unthinkable that this same government would pursue any lesser policy on behalf of the rights of Canadian women.

3 - SWC has funded vital research and programs that have benefited women of every political opinion and every income level. It is impossible for this government to deny funding to the Ministry which has secured this valuable research and funded these wide-ranging programs.

4 - the Parliamentary Committee on the Status of Women, representing all parties in the House, unanimously recommended that the funding for SWC be increased by at least 25%.

5 - the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties (1969) provides that every treaty in force is binding on its parties and must be enforced by them in good faith. Therefore, it is impossible that the Canadian government, as signator to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, could abrogate its commitment to the terms of this Convention by cutting funding to the Ministry that helps to implement it.

6 - As one of the oldest NGO's having consultative status with ECOSOC, we have observed and have greatly appreciated the leadership of SWC at the United Nations on behalf of equal rights for women.

The National Council of Women of Canada, established in 1893, is a national organization whose membership includes five Provincial Councils of Women, seventeen Local Councils of Women from Victoria to Halifax and twenty-five affiliated nationally organized societies. On behalf of all of our members across Canada, I repeat that it is impossible for the Government of Canada to cut funding to the Ministry of Status of Women. Their work must continue for the benefit of all of the women of Canada.

Sincerely,

Carla Kozak  
President

CC: Minister B. Oda