

# priorities

THE FEMINIST VOICE IN A SOCIALIST MOVEMENT

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## focus

### THE PROVINCIAL ELECTION

**Meet our women candidates** – a look at the new women who are working to make their mark in May.

page 7

**Why vote NDP?** – Labour activist Marg Brown has a few good reasons.

page 1&3

**A big difference** – what have we got that no other province has? A Ministry of Women's Equality. We look at the ministry's achievements and its future.

page 15

## also

**One delegate's take on the leadership convention**

page 5

**Internet, anyone?**

page 17



## Why vote NDP?

by Marg Brown

Women in BC have the ability in this provincial election to truly make a difference. We have the power to ensure that the New Democrats are re-elected and I think that if we take the time to

really look at the other options, we will mark our "X" for the NDP.

We will vote for the NDP because they are the clear choice for women, because they are the only party where our needs as working moms, single women and women in Labour can have a voice in government.

One only has to look east of the Rockies to see what we don't want. Unfortunately, both in Alberta and more particularly Ontario, the time for opportunity has passed. It is

*Daisy Dugdale is the standard bearer of this procession which celebrated the early release of suffragettes Mrs Pankhurst and her daughter Christabel from Britain's Holloway Jail in 22 December 1908. In October they and "General" Flora Drummond had been sentenced to three months in prison for inciting the public to riot.*

very sad that Ontarians will have to suffer in the coming years as the Harris government repeals legislation, whether directly affecting women such as scrapping the Employment Equity Act or indirectly such as the elimination of anti-scab legislation.

Voters in Ontario taken in by corporate Canada's debt and deficit arguments are now realizing that corporate greed is fuelling the politician's rhetoric. Now we can

*continued on page 3*

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*"The issues and demands raised by the women's liberation movement are integral to the development of a democratic socialist movement. The NDP actively encourages and provides support for women organizing around the demands of the women's liberation movement and commits an NDP government to creating the legislation necessary to realize these demands."*

— NDP Policy on Women's Rights

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## in this issue

**1 Why Vote NDP?**

by Marg Brown

**4 WRC Update**

**4 A pre-election tradition**

**5 At Convention**

by Melanie Watts

**6 WRC Steering Committee, 1996-1997**

**7 Meet Our Women Candidates**

**14 A Brief History of the WRC**

by Anne Frost

**15 A Big Difference**

by Nancy Weaver

**17 Internet, anyone?**

by Susan Simmons

**19 Words of Wisdom**

*from page 1*

look to Ontario to see what we as British Columbians can look forward to under a Campbell Liberal Government.

With the announcement of an INITIAL cut of 10,000 civil service workers in Ontario, one can only wonder what those people will do for employment. Do we honestly believe that private industry will create new jobs for these workers? Every indication points to the fact that the corporate world's alliances are to their shareholders - but not the most important shareholders, the people who built their companies - their workers. Isn't it time that we, as average working people, demand that business foster a true corporate morality?

Even in Alberta, although generally right of centre in politics, we can see that it is mainly the women who are taking the lead in fighting draconian cuts to the social welfare net. The health care workers in Alberta finally said "enough" to the Klein governments' slash and burn policies and in their wildcat walkouts were supported by 2/3 of an Angus Reid poll taken in the province.

One of the policies we aspire to as New Democrats is the commitment to full employment. On a recent trip to Japan I was able to view that policy and its effect on Japan's success. One can argue about Japan's protectionist attitude, but I do think we can still view with envy the fact that since the early 60's, Japan has had little or no unemployment. Workers play an important role in the success of any business and the evidence that Japanese corporations believe in that is illustrated by a true desire to listen

to the workers both daily and during the negotiating process, at least within the companies I visited. As companies succeed the success is shared not just by the senior executives, as is standard today in Canadian companies, but will all the workers either through negotiated bonus or in company expansion. This encourages commitment and lessens the worry of job stability, so evident amongst Canadian workers. The "leveraged buy-out" mentality, the "we're moving to the US" attitude is less apparent as all the players believe in a better life not just for "ME" but for all.

One can commute this reasoning to a view of BC as a business of which we are the owners, shareholders and workers all at once. We want our company to grow and prosper, but not at the expense of our workers. We need to work with our elected representatives to ensure that our "corporate morality" is in place, so that as we watch our provinces' progress we can also hold our heads up high that our success is not at the expense of the socially disadvantaged.

As women voters, we have an obligation to use our strength at the polls to express that we want the programs put in place by the New Democrats to continue and grow and not be extinguished. Can you imagine how British Columbia would look if we allow a Campbell or Weisgerber government to take control? Will we see a better province if anti-scab legislation is repealed? If there are less childcare spaces and less hospital beds available for the sick? Will you see an increase in your pay cheque or will your friend who is unemployed or on welfare be hired when Gordon

Campbell cuts corporate capital tax?

We have the ability to work with government to create new and innovative ways to make BC prosper. We need to encourage both Canadian and foreign investment in our province, but how often have you witnessed investors come to BC and after they have prospered turn around and threaten to leave, or in fact take the profits out of the province, their legacy a closed facility or massive sell-off or downsizing? Profit is not a dirty word, but with profit must come responsibility.

Wherever we live in BC there is a New Democrat woman or

man running for election or re-election. It's an absolute necessity to vote, of course, but as important is to help within your constituency. We must commit, even within our already harried lives as women, to assist in the re-election of the NDP. There are a multitude of jobs to be done and we must all take part so that our future is protected.

*Marg is secretary of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union Local 1518, and Co-Chair of the UFCW's Women's Committee. She has worked for the Overwaitea Food Group for 17 years, lives in Campbell River and is mother of a sixteen year old daughter.*

### SUPPORT OUR WOMEN CANDIDATES BY DONATING TO THE DOROTHY GRETCHEN STEEVES FUND.

Since 1986, the fund has given financial support to women running for seats in the BC Legislature. The fund depends entirely on donations from individual women and men. Donations go to the woman, not her campaign and can be used for campaign clothing, childcare, household help, whatever the candidate deems necessary.

### A MARCH FOR BREAD AND ROSES, JOBS AND JUSTICE

A march to bring attention to women living in poverty, and the fact that their numbers are increasing is planned for this summer by the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) and the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC). The walk will be launched at the CLC convention in Vancouver on May 14 and from the East Coast later in May, ending up in Ottawa June 15. This will coincide with NAC's AGM.

The theme of the march is "For Bread and Roses, for Jobs and Justice". The issues the march will be addressing along the way and taking to Ottawa include adequate funding for women's shelters, a national child care program, strong federal standards for social programs, secure funding for people with disabilities, strengthening the public pension system and the creation of real jobs for women. There will be rallies, concerts and street theatre along the way.

To get involved, contact your local CLC affiliated union, NAC in Toronto (1-800-665-5124) or Cenen Bagon, BC's NAC representative, at 876-4119.

# WRC UPDATE



## NEW MEMBERS

New members of the WRC Executive include a Governor General's Award winner, new, and seasoned, activists.

We will continue to profile these women throughout the year. All bring talent and varied experience to the committee and we welcome them warmly.

**Bobbie Heaton** has been an activist for women's rights since the late 60's, from participating in pro-choice issues and consciousness raising groups to women's studies and attending National Action Committee conferences in Ottawa. She holds degrees in Sociology and Economics and works with battered women in a transition

house setting. Bobbie is a member-at-large on the Port Moody/Burnaby Mountain constituency association and was recently elected secretary for the Burnaby/Kingsway riding association. She worked on federal and provincial leadership campaigns and federal renewal conferences.

**Anne LeBlanc** joins Melanie Watts as a regional representative for Northern BC. She lives in Tumbler Ridge and works as a volunteer advisor with the United Steelworkers of America Women's Committee.

Anne recently returned from

## STEERING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

(Please note that the June 1 meeting is cancelled due to the election.)

**SATURDAY,  
SEPTEMBER 28**

**SATURDAY  
NOVEMBER 30**

For information on time and location contact Vicki Robinson at 430-8600.

two years in Mozambique where she worked with several rural tribal women's groups, assisting them in their efforts to develop small business projects, and helped set up health and safety training courses related to their projects. As an advisor/ management trainer at a centre sponsored by the labour movement and unions she worked to develop strategies to empower women.

In 1993, Anne received the Governor General's award for community service.

**Leanne Baird** is new to the NDP, having joined just last summer. She lives in New Westminster and is a member of the YND. Leanne lived for two years in Waterloo where she completed her Masters in Social Work, leaving to come home to BC after seeing what was taking place in Ontario under Mike Harris. She works for Family Services of Vancouver in a Surrey office doing family counselling and parent education, working primarily with single mothers living in poverty. Outside of work, she is an active member in the United Church, a respite caregiver and a huge sports fan.

**Gulzar Lalani** immigrated to *continued on next page*

# A pre-election tradition

At the end of March, the WRC hosted what has become a pre-election tradition - a workshop for women candidates and their campaign managers.

It began on Saturday evening with an informal gathering at the North Shore home of Beverly Mitchell. It was an opportunity for new women candidates to meet each other, current MLAs and members of the WRC executive in a relaxed atmosphere before getting down to work on Sunday.

The Sunday workshop began with a welcome from WRC chair Kristina Vandervoort and words of welcome and encouragement from Minister of Women's Equality Sue Hammell. A media and communications panel looked at polling, messaging, how to get the attention of the media and what to do with the attention once you have it. Elizabeth Cull and Joy McPhail gave their best media tips.

After lunch the focus was on campaign team building and personal support. Gretchen Brewin, Jan Pullinger and Gillian MacDonald told some of their front line stories and gave advice on the



important things most often forgotten, and Vicki Robinson and Stephanie Lynn spoke on how to create a relationship with the campaign manager and workers so things run as smoothly as possible.

Many thanks to Jessica Bowering and Rebecca Maurer for organizing this very successful event.

*from page 4*

Canada in 1973 from East Africa.

Her interest in women's issues began at a very young age when she defied her parents by refusing an arranged marriage. Gulzar comes from a very traditional family - her father was a prominent figure in their community in Tanzania and helped raise funds for low cost housing and medical supplies for the poor. Her mother had very little education but was a very

strong woman who raised seven children while working with her husband in his business. Gulzar has travelled extensively and is committed working hard on women's issues. She is married to a man who supports this work. She is the mother of one very strong daughter. Gulzar has worked with many community organizations in administrative capacities and is currently employed by the Hospital Employees Union.

**Betty Stevens** has worked for The Bay for 25 years. She is very active in her union. She served 3 four year terms as Vice President of the UFCW local 1518, was co-chair of their women's committee, and is a union counsellor. She is also on the executive of the Victoria Labour Council and chair of their women's committee. Betty serves as facilitator for many union conferences, such as the BC Fed Summer Institute, CLC

weekend schools and women's conferences and toured BC to attend regional workshop for the UFCW's "Women of the 90's" program. She also facilitated a "Violence in the Workplace in Canada" workshop at the UFCW women's conference in Las Vegas in 1995. She somehow finds time to volunteer at a hospital for the elderly one day a week, is a leader for the Boys and Girls Club and is chair of Leukemia Walk Victoria.

# AT CONVENTION

By Melanie Watts

Convention weekend in Vancouver. Millions of drops of water falling splish splash on the ground, each drop of water melding with the next drop and the next drop until the whole mass of drops of water becomes a puddle. In the morning at 8:30 am we walked down Burrard to the bottom where the white sails of the convention centre soared into the sky. I could not see the north shore mountains. We walked across the pavement, past the demonstrators. People in Vancouver are always protesting something. Perhaps because we are relatively affluent we have the time to worry about saving the wilderness.

Once inside we followed everyone down the hall, lined with people selling books and buttons, free posters that proclaimed "Save the Cummins River Valley", tables representing the Women's Rights Committee, the Boag Foundation, and the leadership candidates. Inside the Hall, sitting with friends talking about all that we saw and heard. Then Mike Harcourt spoke. My mum heard him on the radio and told me later that she thought it was the best speech he had ever given. In fact it was first of all the speeches I heard on that day that made me feel happy and proud to be a New Democrat.

Earlier that morning, at the WRC caucus meeting whilst eating a breakfast of coffee and muffins, I heard Alexa speak. She said how

nice it was to come to BC and feel the support of women - that women and children's issues are taken seriously, that Penny Priddy has done good and important work as Minister of Women's Equality, and that here on the western edge of North America we are the luckiest citizens in Canada. This tone was echoed through all the speeches I heard that weekend.

The five leadership candidates addressed the convention individually. Glen Clark spoke first. Before he was about to arrive, my friend Lloyd leaned over and handed me a Glen Clark sign. I was a little hesitant to finally declare or not declare my loyalty to any candidate at that moment, as up until then I had enjoyed my noncommittal position. But, as the sign was thrust at me, I thought what the hell and took it firmly into my hand. I did feel troubled, though about handing Clark the leadership so easily. As Glen Clark's name was announced, we stood up holding our signs high. I turned around to see what looked like a forest of green and white signs bobbing up and down, betraying the excitement felt by the people holding them. I knew he had won, so did Glen. When the media stopped him, enroute to the stage, right in front of where I was sitting, he had a rather distressed expression on his face and he said anything can happen.

Clark talked about our efforts to make ourselves distinct from the other political parties like the Liberals who support, for instance, the ridiculous service charges imposed by the banks on their customers, and



Alexa MacDonough, leader of the federal NDP chats with Penny Priddy at BC convention.

having schools, hospitals and social services stripped down to the bare bones, lean and mean. All the candidates talked about compassion, caring and sharing of resources. We heard Jack MacDonald's goose story and all its variations, several times; Corky Evans anecdote of how we made the lemonade stand that was BC into a thriving 90's cappuccino bar; Donovan Kuehn's convention survival kit which consisted of lots of paper, aspirin, and a condom - because in order to survive we need lots of information, healing and protection; and finally Joan Smallwood's assurance that whatever happened we would remain united.

*Melanie is a writer, gardener, mother and a community correspondent for the CBC radio show Almanac. She lives with her family on a farm outside Dawson Creek. In their March issue, the magazine Gardens West published one of her articles on the particular challenges of northern gardening.*

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# Meet our women candidates

We asked the thirteen new women  
candidates to tell us a bit about  
themselves and what is  
important to them.



**MARGARET PRIESTLEY  
BIRRELL**

*Vancouver Little Mountain*

I came to Canada from Scotland in 1966. When I think back on my thirty years in Vancouver, three experiences stand out in my memory.

The first is my five years on the staff of the BC NDP as full-time Women's Organizer. In those years, 1979 - 1984, the Women's Rights Committee became a force to be reckoned with. We organized a Task Force on Older Women which travelled throughout the province, and another task force on new technology and jobs. We held forums on pornography and prostitution, and we fought for women's centres and women's shelters to be funded and established. We mounted a campaign for reproductive rights.

We weren't always popular with the establishment, but thanks to the Women's Rights Committee, our vision of women's equality is now firmly established in the NDP in BC and across Canada.

The second memorable experience was my campaign for the leadership of the BC NDP in 1984. Even though I did not win, my campaign gathered wide support throughout the province because of grass roots advocacy and organization.

That belief has been strengthened during the last ten years through my third experience as Executive Director of the BC Coalition of People with Disabilities.

I want to carry the lessons of these experiences into my campaign in Vancouver Little Mountain.

I also want women to recognize what is at risk in the next election. We have only to look at what is happening in Alberta and Ontario, where right wing governments have taken a battering ram to social programs, and women's rights are their first targets. That's why I am convinced that women should vote for the NDP. I welcome their help and support in my campaign in Vancouver Little Mountain. ●



**BRENDA BROUGHTON**

*West Vancouver-Garibaldi*

I live in Lions Bay with my husband Michael, and daughters Gillian, Tegan and Bronwen. I have lived in Lions Bay for over 21 years, and for two years have served as Mayor.

I have a B.A. from Simon Fraser University and an M.A. in Counselling Psychology from the University of British Columbia. Since 1985, I have worked as the Director of the Employee Assistance Group, an organization that provides counselling, mediation, critical incident stress debriefing and organizational development services to approximately 80 organizations throughout BC. As Director, I develop programs that provide counselling services to thousands of British Columbians. Over 100 counsellors work with the Employee Assistance Group.

I have represented Canada on the governing international board of the Employee Assistance Professional Associations and currently sit on a National Management Team of Family Service Canada's National Employee Assistance Program.

Regularly over the last ten years, I have made presentations at both international and national conferences of employee assistance professionals on topics including ethics, mediation, Canadian health care and issues involving adaptation to change.

A non-partisan Mayor, I have experienced first hand the current NDP government at work and have been impressed by their approach and the philosophy that has guided them. I believe in leadership that is collaborative, non-confrontational and dedicated to achieving effective results, and the NDP government's creative round-table method of forging workable solutions amid competing interests has become one of my major campaign themes.

Given the unprecedented change and turmoil of the 1990's, we require good government that is focused on optimizing the quality of life for all British Columbians. The NDP has shown itself to have the imagination and planning skills for dealing with this changing world.●

**DEB CHARROIS**

*Matsqui*

I graduated from Simon Fraser University in 1993 with a B.A. in Canadian Studies, thankfully little student loan debt, a rather unconventional resume and no "real" job prospects. Not to worry, I was told, a B.A. proves one thing - at least you're capable of learning. Great. (Although with the breakup of the Canadian state looming on the horizon, I'm told there may yet be a great demand for Canadian Studies majors.) So, with a few extra courses already in hand I decided to invest a semester or two in an area which led a lot of personal interest. Once again, in 1994, I left the hallowed yet comfortable halls of learning, this time with a PBD (Post Baccalaureate Diploma) in Ethnic Relations and Intercultural Communications. The program examined ethnically defined conflicts and the causes and effects of unequal treatment and exclusion. My particular area of

interest was aboriginal issues.

My resume now includes such occupations as plant health inspector (Agriculture Canada), General Labourer (Surrey Schools), and Victim/Witness support worker. Though recently laid off (Surrey schools support staff) I represent CUPE 728 on the district multicultural advisory committee and I have been a delegate to both CUPE Metro Council and the New Westminster and District Labour Council.

I've been involved in the Matsqui NDP for nearly a year and was recently elected secretary of the constituency.

Why am I running? Maybe I watched too many episodes of "Wonder Woman" as a child. Many children grow up wanting the change the world - I did - and I guess I'm running because I'm not ready to give up on that just yet.●



**EVELYN GILLESPIE**

*Comox Valley*

I graduated from the University of BC in 1976 with a degree in Recreation Education and began a career in community development through recreation and health care services. I have developed community based volunteer programs in Vancouver, Toronto and Calgary. Also in Calgary I began my family of three - a daughter now 11, a son 9 and another daughter 4. That "project" led to a period of 10 years as a mother working at home.

During that time I volunteered at an inner city Community Association, eventually becoming president of that organization. During my tenure the organization became the most diverse, politically involved Community Association in Calgary. Aggressive political lobbying strategies were combined with community defined service programs to meet the requirements for maintaining and enhancing the quality of life in the inner city.

Moving back to BC and to the Comox Valley to manage our family business gave me some time to think about future directions for myself.

My experience as an elected representative

-serving the local Community Health Council convinced me that only a strong NDP government possesses the will and determination necessary to protect and build the health, education and social programs that mark this as a civilized, caring society. I felt compelled to stand up for my long-held social democratic principles and serve the party in this very public way.

As women we call ourselves mothers, sisters, partners, friends, daughters. It is though these relationships we appreciate the value of good quality childcare, a comprehensive education, universal health care. We recognize the critical importance of a government committed to a woman's right to choose. Personal and community safety, social justice, economic and social security - all of these are issues which touch us daily and for which we must be ever vigilant advocates.

I believe my experience and skills are ideally suited to the life of a working MLA. My commitment to the principles of democratic socialism and the NDP is the foundation from which I will work to ensure that our communities weather the current storm of retrenchment and emerge stronger than before.●



**JANET GOOCH**

*Okanagan East*

Janet Gooch is the owner of a small real estate company. She was an organic farmer for five years, and is a past member of the Vancouver City Employees Union and the BC Government and Services Employee Union.

Janet is currently serving her sixth year as a School Trustee for School District #16 where she has been the Union Board of Health Representative and is the Finance, Building, Transportation and Grounds Chair, Provincial Council Delegate and Trustee Representative on the Native Education Committee.

She urges women to become involved in politics at all levels. "With the provincial election, municipal and school board elections this fall, and a federal election just around the corner, this is the time for women to get involved. We need to support and encourage women candidates."

Janet praises the NDP government's record of positive changes for women in BC, especially the 40% increase in transition houses and safe homes since 1991. She advocates more public awareness of other forms of abuse against women and children, such as emotional, verbal and financial.●

**MICHELLE KEMPER**

*North Vancouver-Seymour*

As a young woman I am proud of the many advances made by the strong NDP women who have preceded me. I am inspired by their hard-won struggles and am committed to continue their fight for justice.

To let you know a bit about myself, I was born January 1, 1972, in Fredricton, New Brunswick. My family and I moved to Lynn Valley in 1977. I attended Upper Lynn Elementary and then Argyle Secondary School.

While at Camosun College in Victoria in 1992/3 I was active in the local student and in the BC Region of the Canadian Federation of Students. I served as Deputy-Chairperson in 1993 and then went on to be BC Chairperson from January 1994 to May 1995. During this time the student movement was pivotal in the fight against federal government cuts to post-secondary education.

Presently, I am a trustee on the

Langara College Board, bringing community involvement to the decision making process of our education system. I am also working for the Coalition for Public Education, fighting to keep education accessible for all.

In the NDP I have served as YND Treasurer, Co-chair of the Young New Democrats, and member of the Provincial Council and Executive. At the February '96 Leadership Convention I was elected as the party's Treasurer and a Table Officer. These experiences have brought me into contact with many strong women.

My most recent focus has been on making the connections between young workers and trade unions. I believe providing youth with an understanding of the importance of the trade union movement is integral to our future.

I am very proud to be the NDP's youngest candidate, and proud to represent our movement, our party, and my community of North Vancouver - Seymour.●



**JENNY WAI CHING KWAN**

*Vancouver-Mount Pleasant*

Well-known Vancouver City Councillor Jenny Wai Ching Kwan is a tireless fighter for safer streets, affordable housing, livable neighbourhoods, and justice and equality for all members of our diverse communities.

Jenny came to Canada from Hong Kong with her family in 1975, and became a Canadian citizen in 1981. In 1990, she received a B.A. in criminology from SFU.

Before her election in 1993 as the sole COPE representative on City Council, Jenny worked as an organizer and advocate for the Legal Services Society, the Downtown Eastside Residents Association, and the Downtown Granville Tenants

Association. Her community involvement includes Front Line Advocacy Workers, Neighbour to Neighbour, the Women in Housing Coalition, the Downtown South Area Services Team, and the Option Youth Society.

Jenny is now determined to become the first Chinese-Canadian woman in the provincial legislature: "At work every day, I am faced with the legacy of Gordon Campbell and his rightwing agenda. We simply can't let that happen on a provincial level."

As MLA, she will continue to be an outspoken voice on the issues, and is committed to putting an end to crime, homelessness, poverty and violence against women. In Vancouver-Mount Pleasant, Jenny Wai Ching Kwan is on our side.●

**LINDA LAUSHWAY**

*Saanich North and the Islands*

I am a criminologist, visual artist and grassroots community activist. I am also mother of two teenage sons and live on Salt Spring Island. I have worked for the past twenty years in the areas of social justice, peace and the environment and have worked actively to prevent violence against women and children.

I've had etchings, lithographs and photographs exhibited internationally. My work is included in the collection of the National Gallery of Canada and the book *Carmanah: Visions of an Ancient Rainforest*.

I have been involved in many facets of the Canadian Criminal Justice System, including publication of a monthly magazine on criminal justice issues for the Solicitor General of Canada, Assistant to the National Consultant for Native Peoples and the Criminal Justice System, Criminology Instructor at Memorial University in Newfoundland, and a variety of positions related to young people and the justice system. I have a strong background and experience as an organizer and administrator and is currently the Coordinator of

Community Development and Research for Salt Spring Women Opposed to Violence and Abuse.

I have served on many Boards for community organizations. Examples of public service include member of the Advisory Planning Commission to the Islands Trust, member of the Board for the Salt Spring Festival of the Arts, and member of the Executive of the Parent Advisory Committee for the Gulf Islands Secondary School.

Many of my articles related to criminal justice and the visual arts have been published - recently published research articles and presentations include "Child Sexual Abuse: International Research Perspective" and "Health Effects Related to Violence Against Women."

I facilitated a series of workshops in communities around the province focussed on community development and education to prevent violence against women.

I am an energetic worker, with high principles and integrity. I am honest and straightforward and believe strongly in the social democratic principles that are the foundation of the New Democratic Party.●



**CATHY MacGREGOR**

*Kamloops*

I have been a resident of Kamloops since 1977. I moved to Kamloops from Victoria for my first full time teaching job. I began teaching grade 2, but have since taught from kindergarten to grade 7.

As is often the case, difficult times prompted by beginnings as an activist. In 1989 there were massive teacher layoffs brought about by the Social Credit "Restraint Program". As a then part time teacher, all my experience was to be "pro-rated" to full time, and layoff seemed imminent! This was clearly a women's issue, as part time work was the choice of many women career teachers. I am proud to say that I was successful in achieving a modified seniority agreement for our school district - a first step in addressing many women's issues in my profession. Other issues I have worked on include maternity and paternity leaves, achieving parental leaves, establishing constitutionally a Status of Women committee in our local, and developing a district level program to increase the representation of women in administration. As well, during my tenure as BC Lottery

Corporation Chairperson I had the opportunity to help design and implement an employment equity program.

Being a candidate for MLA provides many new challenges, not the least of which is balancing family, home and a campaign! As I have foot canvassed throughout our constituency, I have heard many women express their pleasure in having a woman as a candidate. They understand the need for different styles of problem solving, decision making, and advocacy for women who are under represented at all levels of local and provincial power structures. I sincerely hope that these issues will make a difference when ballots are cast on election day.

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge that my ability to run as MLA is enhanced by the hard work of the many women who have travelled this path before me. In particular, I'd like to thank the Women's Right Committee for their excellent program of direct support and encouragement, The financial support provided through the Dorothy Gretchen Steeves Fund is a life saver for me as a single parent.●





**RAGINI RANKIN**

*Vancouver Langara*

I am an Urban Planner based in Vancouver. I have a Bachelor of Architecture from India and I studied Urban Planning in Denmark. I work as a Planning Consultant for Patti Rao Associates, a family-owned company that has successfully completed eighty-nine large scale development planning projects in BC and Washington State.

As a Director of BC Transit since 1992, I am currently a member of Transit's Audit and Finance and Planning Operations committees. I have also played an active role in improving this Crown Corporation's employment equity and work place harassment policies. I am also committed to more efficient transit planning for the Lower Mainland and I fully support Transit's recent environmental initiatives, such as Clean Fuel technologies.

I am an active member of several

professional and community organizations, including the Planning Institute of British Columbia, Canadian Institute of Planners, Past President Deccan Cultural Society of British Columbia, Current President North West Chapter of Telugu Association of North America and Executive Member of the Governing Body of Telugu Associations of North America.

I care about the preservation of the family and I care about Vancouver. I believe in the preservation of quality health care and educational opportunities for all British Columbians. I want to help build a better educational system and protect our health care services. As an urban planner, I am committed to balanced growth and the protection of the urban landscape. As a Director of BC Transit I have worked hard to improve public transit and reduce traffic congestion in the region.●



**GAIL PAQUETTE**

*Richmond Steveston*

I have always been active in my unions, either as an executive member of shop steward. I believe it is important to contribute back to our society. Democracy only works when the grassroots people actively participate.

I've held traditional jobs and non-traditional jobs. I have managed job, children, husband and home and I know first hand the contribution women make to our society.

I am vitally concerned that the support systems that women and our society need to ensure that all citizens are equal are continued. Everyone knows the ferociousness of mothers defending their young, and that is how I intend to defend medicare, education and programs for women. As a society we cannot allow profit to be of a higher priority than people.

We live in the number one place in the world to live and that is no accident. It is the natural consequence of the programs we have put in place to ensure that all our citizens can participate fully in our society.

I cannot stand aside and allow all that we have built for our children and grandchildren be sacrificed on the altar of corporate greed. If Gordon Campbell is given an opportunity to implement his promised \$3 billion in cuts, it is the working people of this province, the women and children, our elderly and the disadvantaged who will be hurt. The NDP has proven that there is a better way - that it is possible to put people first, take care of the environment, build safer communities, attend to the infrastructure and still manage a balanced budget.●



**KIM RICHTER**

*Langley*

I have lived in the Langley area since 1986 and currently live in Langley Township with my husband Bob and three children - Stafford aged 10, Sterling who is 7 and Graecen, 5. I am a Professor of Business at Kwantlen University College and received my B.A., B.sc. and Masters from the University of Ottawa.

I've been an active volunteer in health care since 1989 and currently chair both the South Fraser Valley Regional Health Board (SFVRHB) and the Langleys' Community Health Council (CHC). I've held these positions since their formation in 1994 under the NDP government's *New Directions in Health Care*. By April 1996, the SFVRHB will be directly responsible for a budget of \$326 million,

and over 5,000 employees.

From 1993-94 I chaired the Langleys' Governance Steering Committee, a group made up of over 100 volunteers from all parts of the community who combined their talents and ideas to develop the Langleys' Community Health Plan which led to the formation of the Langleys' CHC.

I have also served as a trustee on the Langley Memorial Hospital Board, LMH representative to the Langley Hospice Society, Vice-President of the Langley Committee for Quality Health Care, Langley Representative to the South Fraser Valley Health Council, and the Langley representative to the Boundary Regional Steering Committee.●

**ERDA WALSH**

*Kootenay*

I have lived in Cranbrook for 43 years. My husband Gerry and I have two adult children - a son and a daughter - and a four year old granddaughter.

For 15 years I've worked as a paramedic for the BC Ambulance Service, and am Regional Vice President for the Ambulance Paramedics of BC. I also chair their Women's Committee. I have

taught first aid and CPR at the East Kootenay Community College for 9 years.

I have served on Cranbrook City Council for three years. As Councillor I also serve on the Utilities Committee, the Parks and Recreation Committee, the Public Library Board, Community Policing, the Kootenay Regional Advisory Group, the Forest Renewal Committee and the Access Advisory Board.



**INCUMBENTS**

**LOIS BOONE**

*Prince George - Mt Robson*

**GRETCHEN BREWIN**

*Victoria Beacon Hill*

**ELIZABETH CULL**

*Oak Bay Gordon Head*

**SUE HAMMELL**

*Surrey Green Timbers*

**JOY MCPHAIL**

*Vancouver Hastings*

**PENNY PRIDY**

*Surrey Newton*

**JAN PULLINGER**

*Cowichan Ladysmith*

**JOAN SAWICKI**

*Burnaby Willingdon*

**JOAN SMALLWOOD**

*Surrey Whalley*

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE WRC

In 1962, a resolution passed at that year's Provincial Convention established the first Women's Committee.

*The purpose of the Provincial Committee is to stimulate interest among women, to develop their capabilities in the field of organization and education by providing opportunities to improve their skills and qualifications so they will be more effective as people, as supporters, members, active party officers, or as potential representatives.*

Our committee was one of the earliest groups in Canada to try to answer women's social and economic needs with a political program and to work for those feminist objectives which agreed with our democratic socialist philosophy.

From its inception, the Women's Committee brought resolutions about women's issues to annual Conventions and used regular meeting of the Women's Caucus at Convention to organize support for those resolutions, or opposition to resolutions which they felt were contrary to the interests of women. Between Conventions, members of the Committee put their energies into educating all party members about the importance of issues ranging from abortion rights and child care to equal opportunity programs, technological change and rights for working women.

In 1971, the Women's Committee became the NDP Standing Committee on Women's Rights. Its mandate was to develop a program on women's rights for the party and promote understanding and support for that program throughout the province.

At Provincial Convention in 1972, after we became government, three important WRC resolutions were endorsed. They called for the establishment of a Women's Ministry headed by a woman who would be selected in consultation with the WRC, provision of funds that would help the committee produce a newsletter for women members of the party and editorial control over one page of each issue of the *Democrat*. The WRC began publishing *priorities* in January, 1973. In 1977, in recognition of the fact that the work of the WRC was garnering significant electoral support for the party, Convention passed a resolution that funds be made able to carry on the work of education on the issue of women's rights. Party funding of *priorities* began in 1979.

In 1977, a resolution from the BC NDP Women's Rights Committee to establish a Women's Rights Committee at the federal level was passed at Federal Convention and the Participation of Women (POW) committee was established.

In 1985, Provincial Council agreed to support women candidates by establishing a provincial fund (the Dorothy Gretchen Steeves Fund) to provide financial support for women candidates. At the same time, recognizing the barriers that women often face in running for office, the Party agreed to provide funding for skills development workshops to be held around the province. Since that time, the WRC has organized and presented workshops for potential women candidates and their managers in the lead up to both provincial and federal elections.

At Convention in 1990, a WRC resolution was adopted which required that all constituencies be required to have an affirmative action clause in their bylaws such that no less than 50% of the constituency executive, excluding the candidate, be women.

At that same Convention, the Women's Rights Committee presented a major policy document on Women's Issues. The document reviewed and reaffirmed policy in areas ranging from Child Care and Income Security to Housing and Justice, it recognized the interconnectedness of all these issues, and it integrated current policy with the new ideas and ideals that were needed to move us through into the next century.

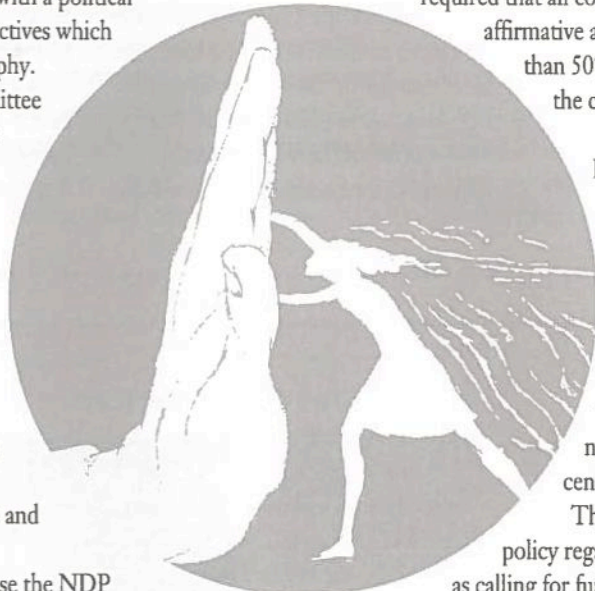
The 1990 "White Paper" reaffirmed the 1972 policy regarding a Ministry of Women's Rights as well as calling for funding of that Ministry according to the same criteria as any other Ministry and for a guarantee that each Ministry in government would have a women's division to integrate women's concerns in that area, establish and monitor affirmative action plans and report back to the Ministry of Women's Rights.

In 1991, following our victory in the fall election, Mike Harcourt established the Ministry of Women's Equality and, after consultation with the WRC executive, appointed Penny Priddy as the Minister.

For more than two decades, the Women's Rights Committee has been in the forefront of our party, developing comprehensive and thoughtful policy on women's rights, holding workshops and conferences, establishing links with women in trade unions and in women's movements, and encouraging and supporting women running for office in the party and in provincial and federal election campaigns.

During that time, many hundreds of women have contributed to the Committee's efforts and to its success. While it is impossible to name them all, the history of the Women's Rights Committee does them all honour.

compiled by Ann Frost



# The Ministry of Women's Equality has made A BIG DIFFERENCE

by Nancy Weaver

BC women who attended the women's caucus meetings at the federal NDP convention in Ottawa in October were greeted by their sisters from across the country with envy and enthusiasm. "You're so lucky in BC!" they said, and they weren't talking about the weather. They were talking about BC's freestanding Ministry of Women's Equality, the first such Ministry ever in BC, and ever in Canada.

The job of the Ministry is to advocate, lead, consult, and educate on equality for women and support service delivery in the areas of child care, stopping the violence against women, wage equality, equality in the workplace, social justice and skill development. The Ministry has a presence throughout BC with regional offices in the Kootenays, Cariboo/Northeast, Thompson/Okanagan, North Coast/Nechako, Vancouver Island and the lower mainland.

In 1993, the Ministry was given overall responsibility for childcare. Over \$100 million has been invested to expand childcare services, with a 55% increase in licensed spaces. This includes over 5,000 new Infant Toddler incentive grants to day care operators, offsetting additional expenses caring for children three and under; an increase in the day care subsidy to help low income parents offset the cost of child care - today 32,00 children receive the subsidy, totalling \$104.8 million; a 480% increase in child care spaces in Universities and Colleges; helping give parents of children with special needs access to the child care of their choice; wage supplements to provide financial support for child care workers — traditionally one of the lowest paid professions in the province — and reduce worker turnover.

The MWE works with other Ministries to make sure women's issues are addressed.

The Ministry leads the government's action to stop violence against women, working in

partnership with the Ministries of the Attorney General, Labour, Health, Social Services and Education. The Ministry's *Stopping the Violence* branch is responsible for managing transition house programs and operational funding to 38 women's centres throughout the province. Since the launch of *Stopping the Violence* in 1992, over \$30 million has been invested in programs for women who have experienced violence. There are 76 transition houses in BC. That's a 40% increase since 1991. There are new transition houses in Maple Ridge, the Sunshine Coast and Chetwynd, and safe houses in areas where transition houses don't yet exist. 79 services in 100 communities offer counselling for abuse victims and children who witness violence. \$2 million has been made available for up to 100 programs to end family violence in aboriginal communities. Victims of threats and criminal harassment, such as stalking, are now eligible for compensation under the *Criminal Injury Compensation Act*.

The government has worked to close the wage gap between men and women through \$250 million in pay equity adjustments in the public sector. There have been four minimum wage increases since 1992 — to \$7 an hour, the highest in Canada — for BC's 80,000 minimum wage earners, 70% of which are women. The Labour Code removed restrictions on workers' rights to choose a union and improved minimum standards to protect live-in domestic workers and live-in homemakers. 220,000 unionized women are protected by the new standards which also benefit 590,000 non-unionized women. The



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*Employment Standards Act* set minimum standards for employment conditions for all workers, such as hours of work, vacations, statutory holidays and maternity, parental and family responsibility leave. The *Pension Benefits Standards Act* legislates pensions for part-time workers, portability of plans between different employers, shorter vesting periods and minimum survivor benefits requirements.

In terms of health - the government invested \$750,000 in 1994 for research to improve early detection and treatment of breast cancer, and created a new Women's Health Bureau to promote research and advocacy on women's health issues and give women a greater voice in health care policy and delivery. The *Access to Abortion Services Act* created "access zones" around facilities and the homes of service providers, ensuring that women have access to this legal, medical procedure. The MWE worked with the Ministry of Health to establish a College of Midwives and formally recognize midwives as health care professionals. The college's first board consists of six midwives and three members of the public. The college will regulate the profession by determining standards of practise, setting the education and qualifications required to register as a midwife, developing a code of ethics for the profession and reviewing complaints. Aboriginal communities will have the opportunity to have aboriginal midwifery care and participate in the rejuvenation of aboriginal midwifery, with its use of traditional herbs, medicines and other traditional practices. Linda Knox, president of the Midwives Association of BC says "I think one of the most important and exciting opportunities will be the gradual

transformation of childbirth back to the intimate and natural process that it used to be."

Gordon Campbell has said that as Premier he would get rid of the Ministry of Women's Equality, taking the responsibility for women's issues himself. Himself was recently on a phone-in show on the CBC - a woman called in to ask his position on midwifery. There was a long silence, after which Campbell replied "I don't know. I don't remember what we've said about that." As Dawn Black says, "the idea that Gordon Campbell would take charge of women's issues from the Premier's office makes a mockery of the important work done with women so far. Such paternalism is simply not good enough for the women of this province!"

Important work has been done, and by reeling off statistics, numbers become meaningless. But behind the statistics are real people whose lives have changed because of the policies this government has implemented. Think about the \$3 billion in cuts Gordon Campbell has promised he would make if he becomes Premier, and ask yourself where the money will come from. We need Gordon Campbell as Premier - responsible for women's issues, child care, our health and education systems - as much as the proverbial smelly old fish needs a bicycle. Remember, he appointed anti-choice advocate Mike deJong as Liberal Health critic. He's said he'll roll back public sector wages. He doesn't think Ottawa's \$1.3 billion cuts to BC's medicare, education and social programs go far enough. He wants to write off BC's progressive labour code and bring back the rules demanded by big business. And give a \$1 billion tax BREAK to corporations.

Think of our sisters in Ontario and Alberta.

Those provinces have taken a battering ram to social services. In Ontario the Tories cut welfare payments by 22%, have frozen the minimum wage, abolished employment equity, set user fees for drugs, hiked college and university fees, cut \$1.5 billion from the health budget, closed 38 hospitals, cut back on childcare spaces, cut \$2.2 million in funding for women's shelters, eliminated funding for programs for abusive men, chopped community health programs by \$2 million (including AIDS prevention programs), scrapped \$3 million designated for new abortion clinics, and the list goes on and on. The Harris government has so devastated Ontario that the Women's Committee of the Ontario Federation of Labour and a coalition of women's groups has presented the Ontario government with the ONTARIO WOMEN'S DECLARATION, which reads

*"We, the women of Ontario, consider that this is a state of emergency. We formally notify the government of Ontario that if it continues to attack the rights of women, we will take all steps necessary to secure and defend our legitimate rights. Women's groups will not bow down to threats and attacks by this government. We will resist all forms of subordination."*

New Minister of Women's Equality Sue Hammell says she is proud to be Minister and is committed to work hard to continue with and build upon the work Penny Priddy has done over her four years as Minister.

There is still much to be done but let's not lose touch with the fact that the Ministry of Women's Equality has done much to improve the lives of girls and women in BC. We are lucky in BC. Let's keep it that way.

# Internet, anyone?

by Susan Simmons



illustration by Juliet Breese.  
Fax: 011-44-1706-812190

The electronic highway is showing evidence of distorted development. A lack of female presence has left us with gaping holes in the roads, missing bridges, misdirected turnpikes and thousands of dead-ends. This does not mean that some women have not ventured into this bold new terrain and managed a successful

Internet presence. Many have, and they are to be applauded for their achievements. But we still have a way to go before the Internet is an equitable communications tool.

As part of a project I am currently working on to interconnect all Canadian women online, I have been presented with the task of contacting service

providers across Canada to determine the extent of women's web presence. This includes not only the technical work, but also content development, graphic design and women owned businesses online. To date I have contacted over 500 site maintainers and have received as few as 60 responses, or 12%. This

is a preliminary indication of the extent to which women are not building our virtual community. Further investigation is necessary.

When we look at Internet usage, women currently represent between 20 and 30% of online users. At the same time, we represent 52% of computer literate users in Canada.

There is no reason for the disproportion online. This is not a healthy way to develop a democratic and just society. Women are completely capable of using the Internet.

We must have equitable participation in all areas of the electronic highway if the Internet is to be used as a tool for delivering, receiving and exchanging information.

Women are said to represent the largest growth sector boarding the electronic highway. This is due to the hard work and tremendous efforts of many of the women who are online today. Current advertising trends have not worked in women's favour. Much of what we see in advertising understandably will deter women from making their way online. Many of us are left with the impression that the Internet is a threatening maze. And for women in particular, we may feel it is not worth the time. It is more important for us to



spend our hours with pursuits centered around family and career.

Some of the main themes we see in advertising regarding the Internet are "sports" and "meeting women". Some of you may have seen the Compuserve

TV ad where two men are sitting by a computer discussing the benefits of ordering sports tickets online. Or perhaps you have seen the ongoing Prodigy campaign where a young woman is the main feature of the ad "It all started when I typed Hello". Her

suggestive presence is clearly being used to entice men online. Or, you may have heard of the latest issue of *Playboy* where the feature story encourages you to meet the "post-modern feminists" in the electronic world - a ten page feature of naked "Women of the Net". No text.

It should come as no surprise that traditional advertising is not very effective at understanding the needs of a female audience when it comes to the Internet. So I ask you to reconsider much of what you have heard, and learn of the benefits of the Internet through women who are already online.

And what about the idea that the Internet is gender neutral? Well, perhaps the technology itself is, but the people who use it bring every gender bias they have along with them. This is evident when you enter any of the chat or newsgroups. Know this before you board the Internet, and bring the street smarts that you have developed in the physical world into the online community. There is nothing there that you have not experienced before.

None of us really know what will happen in the future, but we may all play a role in creating it. Keep the following in mind.

- the Internet is first and foremost a powerful tool for communicating.
- by using the Internet you can work toward reducing administrative costs within your organization, and free up funds for more direct contact with people.
- the Internet presents the possibility of working from home,

## Pursuing our electronic presence

The Canadian Women's Internet Association would like to thank the Ministry of Women's Equality for their outstanding work in securing funding to assist women and other marginalized groups in pursuing an electronic presence. We recognize your efforts and suspect the task has not been an easy one.

I would like to share pieces of an Email recently received by the CWIA.

*"I was raped and assaulted constantly by my first husband, who kept me 'barefoot and in the kitchen', financially deprived and socially would not allow me to have friends at risk of physical punishment. The only good things that came out of my marriage were my*

*children and my endurance and strength to survive. I am now happily married to a wonderful person who respects me equally and loves me as a person. I take each day as it comes, feel profound gratitude that I have survived, and will do my best to help others find happiness as I have.*

*I would like to know if there are discussion groups on the Internet for women who have been abused and are recovering. I sometimes still have nightmares and have had post-traumatic stress syndrome. I've had therapy and all that, but I sometimes wish I knew other women to talk to, who really understand what I've been through. If you can direct me, I would appreciate it."*

— Susan Simmons

and for many women and their families this may improve quality of life by making it possible for parents to spend more time with their children and by freeing up funds spent on child care.

• the Internet presents the possibility of working toward a healthier environment — as we telecommute, there are less vehicles on the road and less paper production within offices.

• the Internet presents the possibility for the disabled to

participate fully in work life - for those in wheelchairs, inner-city mobility is not a requirement as you can telecommute - for idealists — the Internet presents the possibility to transform society into an equitable and democratic place.

As you board the electronic highway, you will be presented with the opportunity to deliver your message, to state your desires, and to tell your story. Surely this will have a positive influence on the physical world.

## WORDS OF WISDOM



The grant of the Parliamentary franchise to women in this country would be a political mistake of a very disastrous kind.

— H.H. Asquith  
British Prime Minister  
1908 - 1916



The appointment of a woman to office is an innovation for which the public is not prepared.

Nor am I.  
— Thomas Jefferson



Give women the vote, and in five years there will be a crushing tax on bachelors.

— George Bernard Shaw

## Women'space

A new magazine on women and the Internet comes out of Nova Scotia. **Women'space** began last June as a community newsletter to share what editors Scarlet Pollock and Jo Sutton had found on the Internet. In September, their newsletter was taken on disk to Beijing as an example of women networking. Mainstream media began to take note and they found themselves on local CBC radio, on CBC TV's Newsworld. The first issue of **Women'space** had a print run of 200 — they printed 2500 copies of the fourth and latest issue. They're expanding again with the fifth issue, adding editors from across the country, including two from Richmond.

The fourth (April/May) issue is simply packed full of information. There is an article on online help for battered women which includes how to access a complete listing of telephone numbers of shelters in the US (Canada is soon to follow); online emergency procedures in 18 languages from Chinese and Russian to Italian and Urdu; accessing advice from groups like the Feminist Majority's Domestic Violence Information Centre and much, much more. There is information on accessing feminist bookstores on the Internet, especially useful for women who don't live in cities. A fascinating article looks at the "Electronic Witches" project - an Email system linking women in the former Yugoslavia, providing a safe forum for sharing stories, passing along information, educating and therefore building community. And more.

You can reach **Women'space** at RR#1, Scotsburn, Nova Scotia, B0K 1R0. Telephone and Fax: 902 - 351 - 2283. Email: diamond@fox.nstn.ca

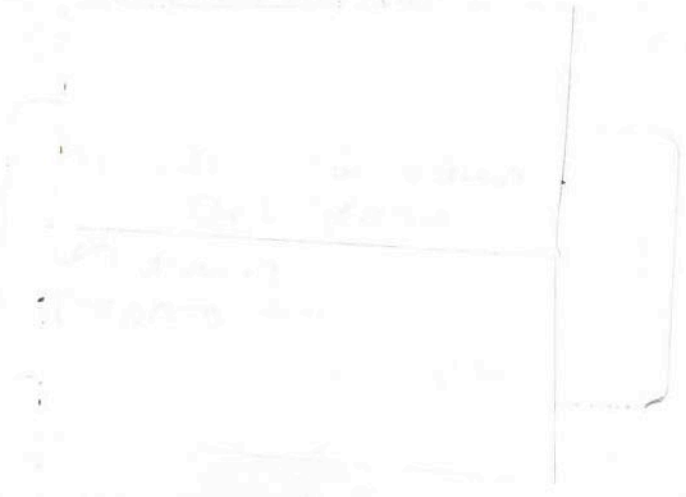
## Ministry funds access program

The Ministry of Women's Equality has announced a program to give women and other marginalized groups training and access to the Internet. The \$500,000 Community Internet Training Program will develop training materials, programs and web sites, and distribute grants of up to \$2,500 to non-profit organizations to provide for a modem, software, training for a staff member and connection to the Internet.

The organizations will each train approximately 40 people in the following 12 months. It is estimated this program will result in 5,800 new Internet users.

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