

THE PINK BOOK, VOLUME III  
**AN ACTION  
PLAN FOR  
CANADIAN  
WOMEN**

NATIONAL LIBERAL WOMEN'S CAUCUS  
OCTOBER 2009



As the chair of the National Liberal Women's Caucus, I am proud to have worked side by side with my caucus colleagues for the improvement of the lives of women in Canada. Our efforts have resulted in parental leave, care-giving leave, the National Child Benefit and other initiatives put in place by past Liberal governments to benefit women.

Stephen Harper's Conservative government is ignoring women in Canada. Women are facing ever-intensifying challenges in their daily lives, challenges which a global recession and the repressive and backward attitudes of the Conservative government have only exacerbated.

Women in Canada deserve better, and so the National Liberal Women's Caucus continues to fight for their needs in an increasingly-regressive political climate.

The National Liberal Women's Caucus is proud to present *The Pink Book, Volume III*. These policy goals continue the work of *Volumes I* and *II* in defending and voicing the concerns of those women in Canada who are often overlooked and ignored, especially by Stephen Harper's Conservative government. Only by acknowledging these groups—and by fighting for their equality—can we eliminate the gender and economic disparity that plagues so many women in Canada. The recommendations of *The Pink Book, Volume III* strive to identify these problems and suggest solutions so that a new federal Liberal government can work toward improving the lives of Canadian women.

Sincerely,



Hon. Maria Minna, P.C., M.P. (Beaches-East York)  
Chair, National Liberal Women's Caucus



In *The Pink Book, Volume III*, the National Liberal Women's Caucus outlines key policy recommendations to a new federal Liberal government. These recommendations stem from our efforts in conjunction with women across Canada to identify—and work to resolve—the obstacles confronting many women on a daily basis. We continue to hear from women in our constituencies and in our day-to-day lives whose input we have sought to incorporate in our recommendations.

*The Pink Book, Volume III* builds upon the extensive work carried out by all of us in the National Liberal Women's Caucus in the creation of *The Pink Book, Volume I* and *Volume II*. By advocating that a new federal Liberal government adopt these policies, we seek to improve the lives of Canadians in a significant, real way. These recommendations cover a broad range of issues; and focus on some of Canada's most overlooked groups, paying special attention to working women, Aboriginal women and women in vulnerable situations. These—and indeed all women—are whom the National Liberal Women's Caucus represents.

The National Liberal Women's Caucus remains committed to working to eliminate poverty, violence against women, exploitation, and unfair economic practices.

We are dedicated to one purpose: to work to assist women in Canada in achieving their goals.

Sincerely,

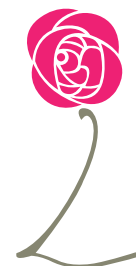


Anita Neville

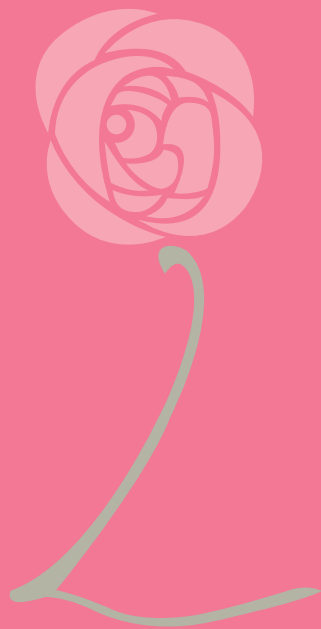
Hon. Anita Neville, P.C., M.P. (Winnipeg South Centre)  
Critic for the Status of Women

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# THE PINK BOOK: SUMMARY

*Canada can lead in a changing world,  
but only if we dare to act. Stephen Harper  
wants to keep us on the sidelines.  
We can do better.*

– Michael Ignatieff, September 1, 2009.

The National Liberal Women's Caucus has fought for the improvement of the lives of women and their families, consulting groups who work with women in order to develop a set of recommended policies designed to help women in Canada. *The Pink Book, Volume I* (2006) and *The Pink Book, Volume II* (2007) were both released with this goal in mind, and further research and consultation has led to the current volume, *The Pink Book, Volume III*. Women's Caucus remains staunchly committed to supporting women's health, safety, equality and economic security.

The situation for women is rapidly deteriorating under Stephen Harper's Conservative government. The economic crisis has exacerbated problems faced by women in vulnerable workforce positions, enlarged the "gender gap" in non-traditional areas of employment, and placed women at increasing risk for domestic abuse and violence. Furthermore, the Conservative government refuses to fulfill Canada's international human rights obligations and its foreign policy ignores the need for gender equality. The Harper government's abandonment of its responsibilities has frustrated the international community.

*A federal Liberal government can do better. Women deserve better. The National Liberal Women's Caucus proposes the following policy recommendations for consideration by a new federal Liberal government, in order to reverse the damage done by Stephen Harper's Conservative government and improve the lives of women and their families in Canada.*

## *WOMEN IN THE ECONOMY*

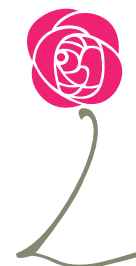
The National Liberal Women's Caucus recommends that a new federal Liberal government:

- *Work with the provinces and territories to build a system of affordable, accessible and high-quality early learning and childcare spaces across the country, including programs to meet the unique needs of rural families.*
- *Adopt a federal poverty reduction strategy to deal with the persistent problem of poverty among women.*
- *Establish in collaboration with the provinces and territories a national framework with timelines and indicators to address Aboriginal poverty.*
- *Change the Employment Insurance (EI) qualification requirement to a temporary, uniform 360 hours during the economic downturn.*





- *Allow part-time employees to qualify for special benefits including parental leave at the 360-hour qualification for EI.*
- *Permit self-employed workers to participate in the special benefits programs under the EI program, giving self-employed workers access to maternity and parental benefits as well as the Compassionate Care Benefit.*
- *Implement a phased-in increase to the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) until the combined total of the GIS and the Old Age Security (OAS) reaches the level of the low-income cut-off (LICO) as defined by Statistics Canada.*
- *Enact a truly proactive pay equity system in which human rights are the first priority when complaints are adjudicated.*
- *Undertake a complete pension review to address the concerns regarding pensions of contemporary Canadian women including those not in the paid labour force.*
- *Establish a "Bridging-to-Employment" program covering the first 6 weeks of salary for new immigrant and visible minority women employees. Workplace educational programs should also be expanded to help break down existing racial and gender stereotypes.*
- *Develop, in cooperation with the provinces and territories, a comprehensive life-long learning strategy that will enable all Canadians to have the opportunity to improve their skills so they can better compete in the labour market.*
- *Re-establish the National Literacy Secretariat to ensure all Canadians, and women in particular, can participate fully in the economic prosperity of our great country.*
- *Encourage the establishment of Women's Business Centres to help women entrepreneurs in all parts of Canada, based on the model of the Women's Enterprise Centres found across Canada.*
- *Encourage the establishment of micro-lending facilities for women entrepreneurs across Canada.*
- *Develop a National Housing Strategy that is inclusive of women, including Aboriginal women, single mothers, immigrant/refugee women, senior women, disabled women and low-income women receiving social assistance.*
- *Increase the participation of women in science, engineering, technology and the trades.*
- *Develop a coordinated strategy and support mechanisms to encourage girls and women in science, engineering, technology and the trades, including measures to incorporate rural and Aboriginal women into the science and technology agenda.*



## WOMEN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY

The National Liberal Women's Caucus recommends that a new federal Liberal government:

- *Work with the provinces and territories to implement a long-term strategy to ensure that by 2017 there are enough health professionals, including Aboriginal health care professionals, to serve all Canadians properly.*
- *Assume responsibility for providing health care and social services to immediate family members of CF and RCMP personnel.*
- *Work with the provinces and territories to develop a national care-giving strategy.*
- *Work with all partners to develop a comprehensive food policy for Canada, including safe drinking water for all Canadians.*
- *Develop a national action plan to combat violence against women that includes culturally sensitive training for law enforcement and court officials; increased sustainable financial support for transition houses; second-stage housing units and safe shelters for homeless women; and a public awareness campaign to highlight the magnitude of the problem.*
- *Increase the level of federal funding to a designated fund for civil legal aid to ensure that women who need access to legal services for family matters will be able to receive it.*
- *Set up a national 1-800 hotline number for women who are being abused.*
- *Amend existing hate crime legislation to include "sex", the legal description for gender.*
- *Immediately begin an independent inquiry into the circumstances of the missing Aboriginal women and girls.*
- *Establish a national Seniors' Commissioner to advise the Prime Minister on the development of a national strategy to combat elder abuse and exploitation as well as other issues affecting seniors, including health, and financial and physical security.*
- *Develop, in partnership with the provinces and territories, a national strategy to prevent the trafficking of girls and women that incorporates measures related to prevention, protection, and prosecution.*
- *Pass legislation to assist and protect victims of human trafficking who are without legal status in Canada to have their status as temporary residents legalized. The legislation would facilitate their acquisition of permanent resident status, and provide them with access to health and social services.*

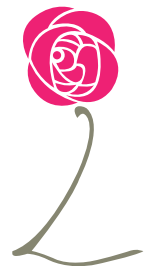


- *Establish a 1-800 hotline for victims of trafficking, particularly as Canada prepares to host the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games.*

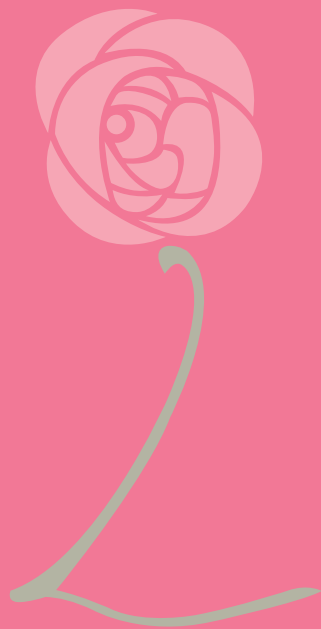
## *WOMEN'S EQUALITY*

The National Liberal Women's Caucus recommends that a new federal Liberal government:

- *Establish the office of the Commissioner for Gender Equality, who would present an annual report to Parliament, to ensure that legislation and policies of the Government of Canada are examined with an equality lens.*
- *Conduct gender-based analysis (GBA) of all federal government legislation and policies, including international policies, to determine how public policies differentially affect women and men*
- *Establish an accountable and transparent mechanism to monitor the implementation of Canada's international human rights obligations.*
- *Support the creation of a free-standing women's agency within the United Nations that would help all UN departments have a gender perspective in their work.*
- *Re-instate the Gender Equality unit in the Human Rights Division of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) and apply gender analyses to all of the department's policies.*
- *Reverse changes in wording of government foreign policy back to "gender equality" from "equality of men and women" and back to "child soldiers" from "children in armed conflict."*







# THE PINK BOOK: INTRODUCTION

The National Liberal Women's Caucus has long fought for—and Liberal governments have delivered—improvements in the lives of women and their families, including parental leave, care-giving leave, and the Child Tax Benefit. It continues to recommend reinstating sustainable funding for advocacy groups and research, while emphasizing equality. It also works to improve the lives of Aboriginal women in Canada. After consulting with groups who work closely with women in challenging situations, Women's Caucus has developed *The Pink Book, Volume III*, to focus on improving the lives of women in tangible, effective ways.

In 2006, the National Liberal Women's Caucus released *The Pink Book: A Policy Framework for Canada's Future, Volume I*. Following the positive reaction to the vision and proposals of *The Pink Book* and after further consultations with women's groups, *Volume II* was released in 2007.

At the time of the release of *Volume II*, Canada's economy was strong: 2006-07 saw a federal surplus of \$14.1 billion, and economists at that time predicted continued growth over the following two years. However, the gross mismanagement of Stephen Harper's Conservative government destroyed this solid financial base, leaving Canada needlessly vulnerable to the global recession. Women especially have suffered in the crisis. It is now more crucial than ever to address the challenges women face in their daily lives—challenges such as poverty, lack of affordable housing as well as early learning and childcare spaces, difficulties accessing skills training, and the threat or presence of violence.

Stephen Harper's Conservative government has ignored the glaring inequalities that women experience in all spheres of society. The government refuses to support measures to help women achieve equality; worse still, Stephen Harper's policies exacerbate and perpetuate the disparities confronting women in Canada. Since 2006, the Conservative government has cancelled previously signed early learning and childcare agreements, denied real pay equity, eliminated the Court Challenges Program, cut funding for literacy programs, silenced women's equality-seeking groups, and ignored the criticism of international bodies. The government is also failing Aboriginal women in an increasing number of ways. It is clear from these actions that Stephen Harper's government does not care about the needs of women in Canada.

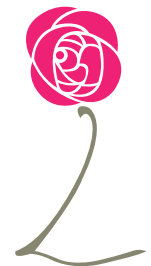
The National Liberal Women's Caucus knows that as a country, *we can do better*. The recommendations in *The Pink Book, Volume III* reflect this belief, building upon the ideas and proposals of the previous two volumes.



**Note:** On June 7, 2009, Liberal Leader Michael Ignatieff made a public commitment that a Liberal government will examine every policy through the lens of rural Canada. As well, a Liberal government will examine every policy through a gender lens. Any recommendations adopted from *The Pink Book, Vol III* will undergo this scrutiny.

## UNEQUAL OPPORTUNITIES: WOMEN IN STEPHEN HARPER'S CANADA

- *Women continue to be among the poorest of the poor in Canada. They make up a disproportionate share of the population with low incomes: 2.4 million in 2001 compared to 1.9 million men.<sup>1</sup>*
- *Single-parent families headed by women have, by far, the lowest incomes of all family types.<sup>2</sup>*
- *Regardless of how much education they have, women still earn less than men. In 2003, women with full-time jobs had earnings of about 70 percent of their male colleagues at all levels of education.<sup>3</sup>*
- *Nearly half—41.5 percent—of single, widowed or divorced women over 65 are poor. While the poverty rates for all seniors have improved overall, there is still a large gap between men and women. The poverty rate for all senior women is 19.3 percent, while that for senior men is 9.5 percent.<sup>4</sup>*
- *While inequalities affect all women in Canada, the impact is especially severe upon Aboriginal women, women with disabilities, immigrant and refugee women, and low income women:*
- *In 2001, 17 percent of Aboriginal women in the labour force were unemployed; the rate for non-Aboriginal women was 7 percent.<sup>5</sup>*
- *Women with disabilities are less likely to be employed than women without disabilities. Statistics Canada stated that in 2001, just 40 percent of women with disabilities were in the labour force compared to 69 percent of women without disabilities.<sup>6</sup>*
- *The economic situation for immigrant and visible minority women is acute as they are nearly twice as likely as other women in Canada to have low incomes.<sup>7</sup> It is often more difficult for immigrant and visible minority women to acquire full-time employment because of the lack of recognition of credentials and racial and gender stereotypes in the workplace.*



<sup>1</sup> FAFIA, *Quick Facts on Women's Economic Realities in Canada*, March 2007

<sup>2</sup> Statistics Canada, March 2006. *Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, p. 134

<sup>3</sup> Statistics Canada, March 2006. *Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, p. 139

<sup>4</sup> Statistics Canada Table 202-0802 – catalogue no. 75-202-XIE. "Persons in low income before tax, by prevalence in percent," Available online at: <http://www.statcan.ca/english/Pgdb/famil41a.htm>

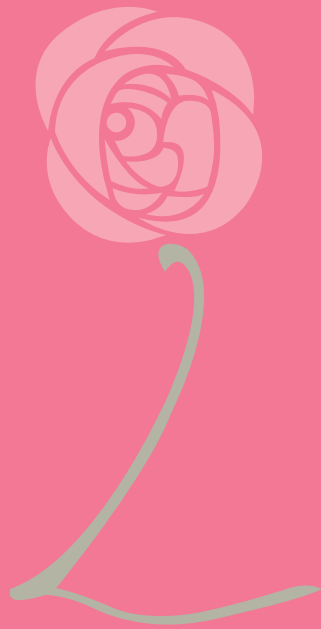
<sup>5</sup> Statistics Canada, March 2006. *Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, p. 199

<sup>6</sup> Statistics Canada, March 2006. *Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, p. 294

<sup>7</sup> Statistics Canada, March 2006. *Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, p. 254







# THE PINK BOOK: WOMEN IN THE ECONOMY

## REDUCING WOMEN'S ECONOMIC VULNERABILITY

Canada is currently in the midst of a deep recession. Since October 2008, approximately 486,000 full-time jobs have disappeared.<sup>8</sup> Because women earn less and have fewer benefits than men, they have less of a cushion during hard times.

Women are over-represented in part-time and non-standard work. Women account for about 7 in 10 of all part-time employees, a figure that has changed little since the 1970s.<sup>9</sup> These women often have difficulty accessing employment insurance (EI) when they need it. They work extraordinarily long hours to make ends meet, have no benefits, and have little job security. These risks build during recessions, creating a situation in which women disproportionately bear the burden of the economic decline.

Another significant group in the labour force are self-employed women. The latest statistics reveal that more than 1 in 10 employed women in Canada are self-employed. In 2004, almost 840 000 women were self-employed.<sup>10</sup> Women entrepreneurs face many challenges, including difficulty in accessing capital and benefits. The majority of women small-business owners earn \$30 000 per year or less and have no access to low-cost health care, no protection for disability, no employment insurance or maternity benefits, and cannot afford private sector insurance and pension plans.<sup>11</sup>

Under Stephen Harper's Conservative government, and in the midst of the worst recession in Canadian history, the 2009 Federal Budget failed to deal with these realities. In fact, the Budget did not contain any initiatives to help women—directly such as increased early learning and child care spaces, flexible EI rules, or rent supplements to offset the rising cost of housing. Nor will women receive any substantial benefits from the \$8 billion infrastructure fund. Because the Budget targeted roads, bridges and other bricks and mortar projects, the jobs created by the infrastructure spending will mainly be held by men. “No money has been targeted to social infrastructure, including social assistance, early learning and childcare, health care, home care – programs which provide essential supports to women and where jobs are frequently held by women.”<sup>12</sup>



*A federal Liberal government can do better. The National Liberal Women's Caucus is concerned about the impact the recession is having on women. Women's economic security is essential for a healthy society.*

<sup>8</sup> Statistics Canada, *The Daily*, September 4, 2009

<sup>9</sup> Statistics Canada, March 2006. *Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, p. 109

<sup>10</sup> Statistics Canada, March 2006. *Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, p. 110

<sup>11</sup> Report and Recommendations, *Prime Minister's Task Force on Women Entrepreneurs*, October 2003, p. 79

<sup>12</sup> FAFIA response to the Federal Budget 2009 prepared in collaboration with Kathleen Lahey, Queens University and Lisa Philipps, Osgoode Hall, March 2009

The National Liberal Women's Caucus therefore recommends that a new Liberal government:

- *Work with the provinces and territories to build a system of affordable, accessible and high-quality early learning and child care across the country.*
- *Adopt a federal poverty reduction strategy to deal with the persistent problem of poverty among women. A federal plan would strengthen and build upon initiatives already underway in Newfoundland and Labrador, Quebec, Nova Scotia and Ontario.*
- *Establish, in collaboration with the provinces and territories, a national framework with timelines and indicators to address Aboriginal poverty.*
- *Change the Employment Insurance (EI) qualification requirement to a temporary, uniform 360 hours during this economic downturn, as this would capture part-time workers, the majority of whom are women.*
- *Allow part-time employees to qualify for special benefits including parental leave at the 360-hour qualification for EI.*
- *Permit self-employed workers to participate in the special benefits programs under the EI program as recommended by the Standing Commons Committee on the Status of Women in its June 2007 report, "Improving the Economic Security of Women: Time to Act." This change would give self-employed workers access to maternity and parental benefits and the Compassionate Care Benefit.*
- *In order to alleviate poverty among single senior women and other unattached seniors, implement a phased-in increase to the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) until the combined total of the GIS and the Old Age Security (OAS) reaches the level of the low-income cut-off (LICO) as defined by Statistics Canada.*
- *Enact a truly proactive pay equity system in which human rights are the first priority when complaints are adjudicated, thereby reversing the Conservative government's dismantling of pay equity legislation in its 2009 Budget.*
- *Undertake a complete pension review to address the concerns regarding pensions of contemporary Canadian women.*
- *Establish a "Bridging-to-Employment" program to give immigrant and visible minority women valuable Canadian workplace experience and a potential pathway to full-time employment. The program would help employers with the cost of hiring by covering the first 6 weeks of salary for new immigrant and visible minority women employees. The Caucus further suggests that workplace educational programs should be expanded to help break down existing racial and gender stereotypes.*



- *Develop, in co-operation with the provinces and territories, a comprehensive life-long learning strategy that will enable all Canadians to have the opportunity to improve their skills so they can better compete in the labour market.*
- *Re-establish the National Literacy Secretariat to ensure all Canadians, and women in particular, can participate fully in the economic prosperity of our great country.*
- *Encourage the establishment of Women Business Centres to help women entrepreneurs in all parts of Canada. These centres should be based on the model of the Women's Enterprise Centres found across Canada offering technical assistance, mentoring, financial resources and access to marketing opportunities.*
- *Encourage the establishment of micro-lending facilities for women entrepreneurs across Canada. Frequently, women entrepreneurs require modest sums to start a business, especially a business based in the home, but they do not qualify for loans from traditional sources.*

### **PROVIDING AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

Housing is a basic human need and yet under Stephen Harper's Conservative government, women are finding it increasingly difficult to find suitable housing for themselves and their families.<sup>13</sup> In rural areas, distance and the lack of an efficient public transportation system often prevent women from finding affordable and adequate shelter. The location of housing is also important: even if women have housing, it may not be safe or secure.<sup>14</sup>



*A federal Liberal government can do better. The National Liberal Women's Caucus has long advocated for a co-ordinated housing policy, and was instrumental in the creation of the first National Homelessness Initiative in 1999.*

The National Liberal Women's Caucus therefore recommends that a new Liberal government:

- *Develop a National Housing Strategy that is inclusive of women. Such a strategy would take into account the needs of all women in Canada, including Aboriginal women, single mothers, immigrant/refugee women, senior women, disabled women and low-income women receiving social assistance.*



<sup>13</sup> CRIAW, *Disentangling the Web of Women's Poverty and Exclusion*, 2006, p. 9

<sup>14</sup> CRIAW, *Disentangling the Web of Women's Poverty and Exclusion*, 2006, p. 9

## *PROMOTING WOMEN IN SCIENCE, ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND THE TRADES*

Under Stephen Harper's Conservative government, Canada's ability to compete successfully in the global knowledge-based economy is being impeded by a lack of women in science, engineering, technology and the trades. Women are underrepresented in these fields. For example, according to the 2006 Census, women made up only 31 percent of scientists, 26 percent of computer information professionals, 12 percent of engineers, and 8 percent of tradespeople.

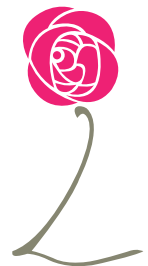
Several factors contribute to this shortfall, including gender stereotypes, inadequate guidance counselling and mentoring, a lack of research assistantships, and insufficient financial support. Girls generally are not encouraged to enter hard sciences, technology or the trades; the tendency is for girls to go into careers in the social and health sciences. Statistics Canada states that in 2004 women made up 87 percent of all nurses and health-related therapists, 75 percent of clerks and other administrators, 65 percent of teachers, and 57 percent of those working in sales and service.

The "gender gap" in science, technology, engineering and the trades places Canada at a significant disadvantage compared to the United Kingdom and the European Union where efforts are currently under way to remove barriers and increase the participation of women in non-traditional areas of employment.

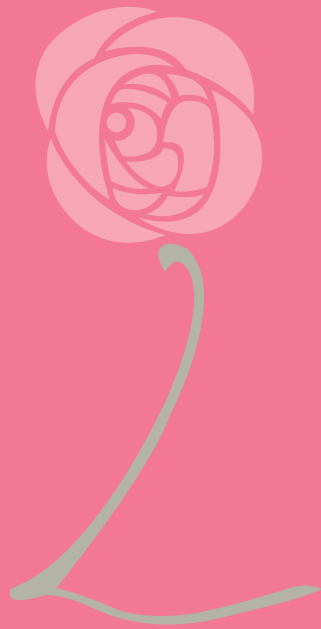
*A federal Liberal government can do better. The National Liberal Women's Caucus believes that Canada needs a long-term coordinated strategy to address the challenges that women face in entering and remaining in the fields of science, engineering, technology and the trades.*

The National Liberal Women's Caucus therefore recommends that a new Liberal government:

- *Increase the participation of women in science, engineering, technology and the trades a priority.*
- *Develop a coordinated strategy and support mechanisms to encourage girls and women in science, engineering, technology and the trades, while recognizing the need to incorporate rural and Aboriginal women into the science and technology agenda.*







**THE PINK BOOK:  
WOMEN'S  
HEALTH AND  
SAFETY**

## SUPPORTING HEALTH FOR WOMEN AND FAMILIES

Under Stephen Harper's Conservative government, women are struggling to find ways to care for themselves and for their families. This has become even more difficult during the global recession. One of the major difficulties that many women face is finding a family doctor. While the provinces are responsible for delivering health care services, the federal government also has a role to play in ensuring that Canadians have access to high-quality health care.



*A federal Liberal government can do better. The National Liberal Women's Caucus believes that women play an essential role as health care guardians, and their efforts to keep their families healthy represent a huge responsibility in their daily lives.*

In order to help women access the necessary health resources, The National Liberal Women's Caucus recommends that a new Liberal government:

- *Work with the provinces and territories to implement a long-term strategy to ensure that by 2017 there are enough health professionals, including doctors and nurses, to properly serve all Canadians. In developing this strategy special attention must be given to increasing the numbers of Aboriginal health professionals and providing the necessary support to integrate foreign-trained medical graduates. Furthermore, the strategy must take into account our ageing population and health care for rural Canada.*

## HEALTH NEEDS OF FORCES FAMILIES

Members of the Canadian Forces (CF) and the RCMP and their families face unique stresses in their lives because of their service to the nation. Serving members risk their lives and are often scarred, both physically and emotionally, in fulfilling their duties. The government needs to ensure that members have all the support required for themselves and their immediate families.

Under Stephen Harper's Conservative government, although members of the CF and RCMP have access to medical care and social services through their jobs, their families do not. CF and RCMP members are constantly being posted from province to province, meaning their families often go without reliable access to family doctors or other necessary services. This situation creates additional stress for the entire family.







*A federal Liberal government can do better.* The National Liberal Women's Caucus values the service of the CF and RCMP, and believes that the government must ensure that members have all the support required for themselves and their immediate families.

The National Liberal Women's Caucus therefore recommends that a new Liberal government:

- *Assume responsibility for providing health care and social services to immediate family members of CF and RCMP personnel.*

### *WOMEN AS CAREGIVERS*

Women also tend to bear the burden of care-giving within the family. Statistics Canada reports that women are far more likely than men to lose time from work because of personal or family responsibilities.<sup>15</sup> As a result, more women than men are more stressed about how to manage their time while doing the majority of the unpaid work in the family, especially care-giving for ill or infirm family members. In 2005, men averaged 2.5 hours per day of unpaid work around the house while women did 4.3 hours.<sup>16</sup>



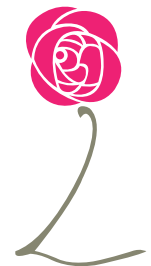
*A federal Liberal government can do better.* The National Liberal Women's Caucus believes that families—especially women—need relief. Women do the majority of juggling work, care-giving responsibilities, and their own emotional and health needs; they need better support from their federal government to do so successfully.

The National Liberal Women's Caucus therefore recommends that a new Liberal government:

- *Work with the provinces and territories to develop a national care-giving strategy.*

### *ENSURING FOOD SAFETY AND SECURITY: A COMPREHENSIVE FOOD POLICY FOR CANADA*

Under Stephen Harper's Conservative government, there is growing concern among Canadians about the safety of the food consumed by their families. Due to the Conservative government's deregulation of the food inspection industry, inspection failures such as the tragic listeriosis outbreak in 2008 and recent recalls of various other products, like peanut butter and spinach, have become more frequent. These outbreaks demonstrate the need to protect consumers from deadly food safety failures.



<sup>15</sup> Statistics Canada, March 2006. *Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, p. 109

<sup>16</sup> CRIAW, *New Federal Policies Affecting Women's Equality: Reality Check*, November 2006 – No. 8

Canadian farmers are committed to a food system that provides safe and healthy food. In a presentation to the House of Commons Subcommittee on Food Safety on June 1, 2009 the National Farmers Union stated: "As stewards of the land and water, we take very seriously our responsibility to ensure that the food we produce nourishes this and future generations. We strive to ensure that the agronomic practices we use are safe and sustainable, and we welcome regulations which are designed to assist in helping us achieve those objectives." Any attempt to improve the current system will require working closely with farmers and other rural stakeholders.

*A federal Liberal government can do better.* The National Liberal Women's Caucus believes that from hungry children to a hungry planet, the issue of food security requires complex solutions that cross all government departments, all jurisdictions and all sectors.

A Comprehensive Food Policy for Canada must consider the growing importance of locally produced food, increasing transportation costs, our rate of self sufficiency, and the sustainability of current agriculture and fishery practices. It will also need to address ethical international development, fair trade practices, the needs of our aboriginal peoples and migrant workers, the food industry, and above all the health of Canadians.

The National Liberal Women's Caucus therefore recommends that a new Liberal government:

- *Work with all partners to develop a comprehensive food policy for Canada, including safe drinking water for all Canadians.*

## **PREVENTING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

Under Stephen Harper's Conservative government, women are increasingly at risk for domestic abuse and violence. Recent news reports indicate that the current economic crisis is contributing to a rise in the number of women who are being abused. For example, the Executive Director of Catholic Family Services for Durham Region in Ontario stated in a recent newspaper article that "referrals for domestic violence were up 24 percent in the last three months of 2008."<sup>17</sup> Statistics Canada reveals that women are much more likely to be killed by their spouse than men.<sup>18</sup> In 2004, the spousal homicide rate against women was five times higher than that for men. Women are also more likely than male victims to be injured and suffer more serious and repeated incidents of violence.<sup>19</sup>



<sup>17</sup> The Toronto Star, "Domestic abuse on rise as families try to cope with recession", April 14, 2009

<sup>18</sup> Statistics Canada, *The Daily*, October 6, 2005

<sup>19</sup> Statistics Canada, March 2006. *Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, p.165



*A federal Liberal government can do better.* The National Liberal Women's Caucus has always viewed violence against women as a priority and is concerned about this trend. The Caucus recognizes that violence against women is a persistent and widespread social problem affecting thousands of Canadian women and their children.

The National Liberal Women's Caucus is convinced that to prevent violence against women, all levels of government must be involved in a strong and coordinated effort. There are concrete steps that the federal government can take immediately that will have a significant impact.

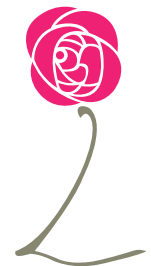
The National Liberal Women's Caucus therefore recommends that a new Liberal government:

- *Working in partnership with the provinces and territories develop a national action plan to combat violence against women that includes culturally sensitive training for law enforcement and court officials; increased sustainable financial support for transition houses, second-stage housing units and safe shelters for homeless women; and a public awareness campaign to highlight the magnitude of the problem.*
- *Increase the level of federal funding to a designated fund for civil legal aid to ensure that women who need access to legal services for family matters will be able to receive it.*
- *Set up a national 1-800 hotline number for women who are being abused.*
- *Amend existing hate crime legislation to include "sex", the legal description for gender.*

### **COMMITTING TO ABORIGINAL WOMEN**

In 2004, 41 percent of Aboriginal women victims stated that they had been beaten, choked, sexually assaulted, threatened, or had a gun or knife used against them. In contrast, 27 percent of non-Aboriginal women victims reported these levels of violence.<sup>20</sup> The levels of violence are even worse for Aboriginal women under Stephen Harper's Conservative government.

A recent report by the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) found that 520 Aboriginal women and girls have been murdered, or gone missing, in Canada since 1970. That nothing has been done is unacceptable. In May 2009, Liberal members of Parliament called on the Prime Minister to launch a public investigation into what happened to the murdered and missing Aboriginal women and girls. To date, Stephen



<sup>20</sup> Statistics Canada, March 2006, *Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, p. 163

Harper's Conservative government has not undertaken an inquiry. The National Liberal Women's Caucus commends provincial initiatives for establishing a special unit to investigate the disappearance of these Aboriginal women and girls, but this is also a national issue. The federal government has an obligation to act and conduct its own investigation.



*A federal Liberal government can do better. The National Liberal Women's Caucus is deeply concerned about the crises faced by Aboriginal women in Canada.*

The National Liberal Women's Caucus recommends that a new Liberal government:

- *Immediately launch a comprehensive public investigation into the 520 missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls.*

### *PREVENTING ELDER ABUSE*

Seniors in our society have the right to live their lives free from physical abuse, neglect or exploitation. Unfortunately this is not always the case. Estimates are that 4 to 10 percent of Canadian seniors experience some kind of abuse. Often the abuse of seniors remains a hidden problem as reported cases only represent the "tip of the iceberg". Many experts believe that incidences are under-reported because individuals fear retaliation or are ashamed.

Caucus therefore recommends that a new Liberal government::

- *Establish a national Senior's Commissioner to advise the Prime Minister on the development of a national strategy to combat elder abuse and exploitation as well as other issues affecting seniors including health, financial and physical security.*

### *COMBATING THE TRAFFICKING OF GIRLS AND WOMEN*

Under Stephen Harper's Conservative government, the trafficking of girls and women remains a serious problem. Trafficking of persons for sexual exploitation is an issue with international and domestic dimensions. Trafficking takes different forms, but elements that are involved can include the threat or use of force, abduction, fraud, deception, the abuse of power. Trafficking has developed into a multi-billion dollar industry that sees thousands of women and girls from destinations such as Eastern Europe and Southeast Asia trafficked for sexual exploitation in brothels, massage parlours and strip clubs.



Racism, sexism and poverty make Aboriginal women extremely vulnerable to trafficking. Young Aboriginal women are recruited on reserves and brought to major urban centres like Vancouver, Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Regina, Edmonton and Calgary. <sup>21</sup>

*A federal Liberal government can do better. The National Liberal Women's Caucus believes that girls and women in Canada should be able to lead their lives safe from sexual exploitation.*

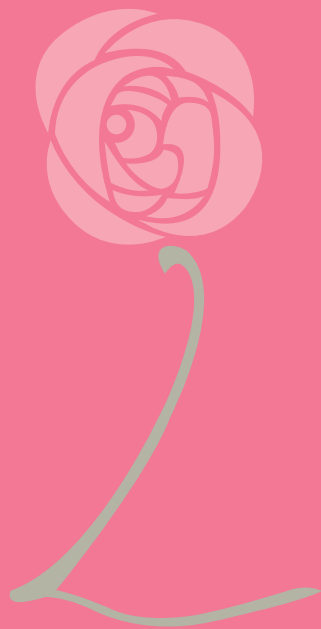
The National Liberal Women's Caucus therefore recommends that a new Liberal government:

- *Develop in partnership with the provinces and territories, a national strategy to prevent the trafficking of girls and women that incorporates measures related to prevention, protection, and prosecution. Integral to the program would be increased funding to the provinces and territories for the supports required by girls and women who are being trafficked for sexual exploitation.*
- *Pass legislation to assist and protect victims of human trafficking who are without legal status in Canada to have their status as temporary residents legalized. The legislation would facilitate their acquisition of permanent resident status, and provide them with access to health and social services.*
- *Establish a 1-800 hotline for victims of trafficking, particularly as Canada prepares to host the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games.*



<sup>21</sup> Chandra Pasma, *Human trafficking: an uncomfortable reality*, Thursday, March 19, 2009. Published in the Catalyst, Vol. 32, No. 1 - Winter 2009





# THE PINK BOOK: WOMEN'S EQUALITY

## *FIGHTING FOR GENDER EQUALITY*

Stephen Harper's Conservative government has shamefully undermined the drive for gender equality in Canada. Its backward steps range from abolishing the Court Challenges Program to the silencing of women's equality-seeking groups and even the removal of the word "equality" from the women's program at Status of Women Canada.



*A federal Liberal government can do better.*

The drive for equality cannot be the responsibility of government alone, but the National Liberal Women's Caucus believes that the Government of Canada can exercise powerful leadership. In particular, the government has a duty to ensure that all of its policies—and not just those explicitly designated for women—must be designed to ensure that they do not have harmful or unfair consequences for women or men.

The National Liberal Women's Caucus therefore recommends that a new Liberal government:

- *Establish the office of the Commissioner for Gender Equality, who would present an annual report to Parliament, to ensure that legislation and policies of the Government of Canada are examined with an equality lens.*
- *Conduct gender-based analysis (GBA) of all federal government legislation and policies, including international policies, to determine how public policies differentially affect women and men.*





## FULFILLING INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS FOR WOMEN'S EQUALITY

Under Stephen Harper's Conservative government, Canada has developed a poor record for meeting its international human rights obligations. Its reputation on the global stage is tarnished and is deteriorating even further, while recommendations emerging from the international human rights system have been routinely ignored. Other UN members, the non-government (NGO) sector, and various UN committees of independent human rights experts are concerned about our failure to live up to our promises:

- In September 2008, non-government organizations (NGOs), endorsed by 50 domestic organizations, stated, "Our organizations are deeply concerned about the mounting gap between the commitments Canada has made on the world stage to protect human rights and the failure to live up to those promises at home."<sup>22</sup>
- Other United Nations committees<sup>23</sup> have expressed similar concerns. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights called on Canada "to establish transparent and effective mechanisms, involving all levels of government as well as civil society, including indigenous peoples, with the specific mandate to follow up on the Committee's concluding observations."<sup>24</sup>
- The UN Human Rights Council conducted a Universal Periodic Review (UPR). Canada's response to the UPR was completed in early June 2009 and outlined which recommendations it accepted to improve its human rights record. Canada claimed in a response to the UPR in June 2009 that it is taking "important steps to address fundamental inequalities between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians", yet the response did not specifically deal with the extreme level of poverty being experienced by Aboriginal people.

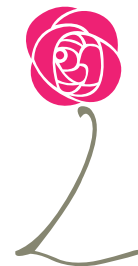
*A federal Liberal government can do better. The National Liberal Women's Caucus believes that Canada needs to fulfill its international human rights obligations for all Canadians.*

The establishment of a new UN agency dedicated to women that would deal exclusively with issues related to women's equality would be an important step forward, as it would provide a stronger voice for women in their quest for equality. A new federal Liberal government must also address women's equality and Canada's international human rights commitments on a national level.

<sup>22</sup> *Promise and Reality: Canada's International Human Rights Implementation Gap*, Joint NGO submission to the UN Human Rights Council, September 8, 2008, p.1

<sup>23</sup> *The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)*, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Human Rights Committee, and the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

<sup>24</sup> *Concluding Observations of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, May 2006



The National Liberal Women's Caucus therefore recommends that a new Liberal government:

- *Establish an accountable and transparent mechanism to monitor the implementation of Canada's international human rights obligations. The process must involve both federal and provincial/territorial levels of governments and input from non-government organizations.*
- *Support the establishment of a free-standing women's agency within the United Nations that would help all UN departments have a gender perspective in their work.*

Under Stephen Harper's Conservative government, women's rights within Canada are not adequately reflected in foreign policies. In the past, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) had a Gender Equality unit within the Human Rights Division to carry out this duty. Canada made a commitment to apply a gender lens during the development of policies in 1995 at the Beijing Conference and when it signed several international documents including the *UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW). This commitment must be fulfilled.

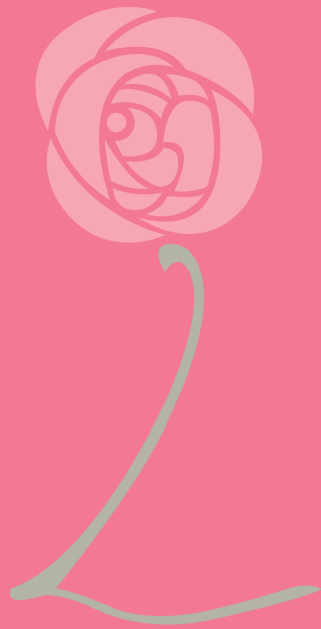


### *A federal Liberal government can do better.*

The National Liberal Women's Caucus therefore recommends that a new Liberal government:

- *Reinstate the Gender Equality unit in the Human Rights Division of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) and apply gender analyses to all of the department's policies.*
- *Reverse changes in wording of government foreign policy back to "gender equality" from "equality of men and women" and back to "child soldiers" from "children in armed conflict."*





# THE PINK BOOK: IN CONCLUSION

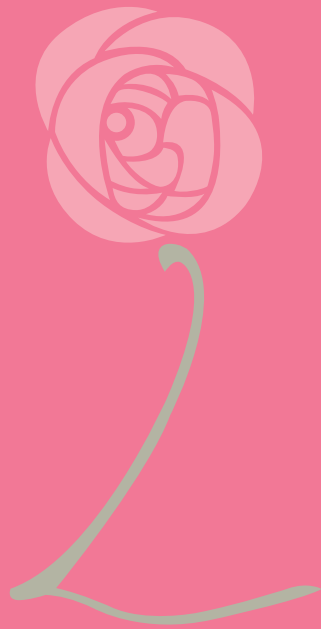
Women under Stephen Harper's Conservative government are facing ever-worsening conditions. Instead of working toward gender equality, the Conservative government's policies are eliminating the progress women have made during previous decades. Women continue to be among the poorest of the poor, encountering substantial difficulties in their searches for employment often because of their gender. Women who are employed are consistently earning less than their male colleagues despite holding comparable educational qualifications. Research demonstrates time and time again that women are struggling to achieve the equality they deserve, but Stephen Harper's Conservative government persists in disregarding the problem.



*As a nation, we can do better. The Liberal Party of Canada has a proven track record of fighting for and delivering on women's issues, and the National Liberal Women's Caucus remains committed to working on behalf of all women in Canada to improve their working and living conditions.*

The proposals outlined in *The Pink Book, Volume III* create an ambitious agenda. The National Liberal Women's Caucus believes that through these recommendations, a new federal Liberal government will lead the way toward a more prosperous, healthy and fair Canada for all its citizens. Although change cannot occur overnight, the National Liberal Women's Caucus will continue to work toward the acceptance of policies that help women and their families in Canada, and re-establishing Canada as an international leader in equality and human rights.





**THE PINK BOOK:  
NATIONAL  
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WOMEN'S  
CAUCUS**

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