

August 4th, 2011

**THE WOMEN'S EQUALITY AND SECURITY COALITION (WESC)
WITHDRAWS FROM THE MISSING WOMEN INQUIRY**

VANCOUVER - WESC, a coalition of women's organizations, is committed to the protection and advancement of women's liberty, dignity, security and equality. The coalition, which was granted standing by Commissioner Wally Oppal, is now withdrawing from the Missing Women Inquiry.

The provincial government, under the leadership of Premier Christy Clark, has refused to fund those granted participant status, including WESC, which effectively denies access to legal counsel and the resources necessary to fully contribute to the Missing Women Inquiry. The provincial government's decision abandons women and girls, especially those most disenfranchised and vulnerable, to continued violence against women.

Commissioner Oppal wrote eloquently to the Government of British Columbia when the Attorney General first refused funding, making it clear that funding for all the participants to whom he had granted standing was necessary for the Inquiry to be inclusive and fair. WESC does not believe Commissioner Oppal should proceed now since the conditions for fairness and balance, that he himself defined, do not exist.

WESC notes that the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) has withdrawn from the Commission. WESC in solidarity with NWAC, is calling for a national inquiry on missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls.

WESC does not believe that, in today's circumstances, the Inquiry can lead to a result that will advance women's safety and security.

WESC has decided that participation in the Inquiry will be more harmful than beneficial to a comprehensive and meaningful response to the Pickton case and to women.

WESC groups remain committed to ensuring that the human rights of women, including the most marginalized women in Canada, are fully realized and will continue this work in other venues.