

A Woman's Rightful Place

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unpaid leave, the Unemployment Insurance Programme provides 15 weeks of maternity benefits for mothers, and, in limited circumstances, fathers. The government has announced it intends to provide 10 weeks of parental benefits for natural and adoptive parents.

Child-care services have not kept pace with the rapidly increasing demand for them. Most families whose children need non-parental care must rely on informal arrangements, perhaps with a friend or neighbour. Less than 20 per cent of all families needing child care have access to services in child-care centres or in private homes licensed by provincial governments and required to meet certain standards for health, safety, group size and child-staff ratios. Governments at all levels are trying to develop policies and programmes to deal with this problem.

Women now account for 44 per cent of the Canadian labour force. But they still tend to be concentrated in occupations often labelled "women's work": clerical, sales, service, teaching and nursing.

A wage gap persists between women and men in the labour force. Women who worked full-time for a full year in 1987 earned on average 66 per cent of what men with full-time jobs earned. Most Canadian workers are subject to provincial jurisdiction, and several provinces are now trying to address the wage gap through pay equity legislation, providing for equal pay for work of equal value. The laws are based on job evaluation that takes into account the skill, effort and responsibility required to do a job, and the conditions under which the work is performed. Equal pay for work of equal value laws have been in place at the federal level for more than a decade. In all jurisdictions, effective enforcement of the laws is the key to progress.

The federal government has also implemented a programme of employment equity for employers with more than 100 employees who fall under federal jurisdiction and for those who want to do business with the federal government. Employers are required to report annually on their progress in integrating women and

other target groups (visible minorities, aboriginal people and people with disabilities) into their work forces at all levels.

About one-quarter of employed women work part-time, and the percentage has not changed much over the past seven years. But many women are taking on part-time jobs only because they have been

man rights acts of the federal government and all 10 provinces.

Canada is also committed to several international agreements, especially the 1985 United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies. Gender equality is also being sought

could involve police intervention and income support (provincial), criminal law (federal) and health care (joint provincial/federal).

Women are increasingly becoming active in politics. In the 1988 federal election, 40 women were elected to the 295-seat Parliament — the highest number in Canada's history. Women are also members of provincial governments and have been elected party leaders in several provinces. They have extensive representation at the municipal level on city councils and school boards.

The achievement of basic political rights in the earlier part of this century set the stage for the much larger, more organized women's movement of today. In the 1960s, individual women and

sequality clauses in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Women's organizations are now identifying laws they feel contravene the Charter and pursuing them through the courts. One test case argues that a mandatory retirement age discriminates against women, who live longer than men and are more likely to be poor in old age.

The influence of the women's movement can also be seen in education and training institutions. Efforts are being made to eliminate sex-stereotyping in school curricula, text books and career counselling. And most colleges and universities offer women's studies courses and/or degree programmes.

Progress has been made. But true equality for women has yet to be achieved. Improved policies to help women as well as men combine their paid employment with family responsibilities and measures to address the needs of single-parent families are priority issues. For Canadian women the task ahead is clear: to continue initiating change and ensure that governments and policy makers at all levels maintain their efforts to advance the situation of women on both a national and international level.



unable to find full-time work. The situation reflects a growing trend to part-time work in the Canadian economy — particularly in the service sector, where the overwhelming majority of women work.

Increasingly, the poor in Canada, as elsewhere, tend to be women. This "feminization of poverty" particularly affects female single parents and their children, as well as elderly women.

Women who head single-parent families are now among the poorest of the poor. Poverty rates among the elderly have been declining, thanks to government programmes such as the Old Age Security benefit and the Guaranteed Income Supplement, an income-tested federal programme designed to help senior citizens with low incomes. It is still elderly women, however, especially those who have not been in the labour force, who are disproportionately disadvantaged.

The Charter of Rights and Freedoms, part of Canada's Constitution, guarantees (since 1985) equal rights between women and men as well as special measures to correct past discrimination on the basis of sex. Discrimination is prohibited as well in the hu-

through work with other international organizations such as the Commonwealth and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

Canadian governments address women's concerns through several mechanisms. The federal government, 10 provinces and 2 territories each have a cabinet minister responsible for the status of women and supporting women's offices in the public service. Most jurisdictions also have advisory councils.

There is ongoing co-operation among levels of government with different responsibilities. For example, addressing violence against women

women's organizations convinced the federal government to establish the Royal Commission on the Status of Women. The Commission's landmark report, published in 1970, was a blueprint for policy and legislation to ensure equality for women.

The National Action Committee on the Status of Women, a non-governmental grass roots organization, was originally established to make sure the Royal Commission's recommendations were implemented. It now acts as an umbrella organization for more than 560 women's groups, representing more than three million women.

Intense lobbying by women ensured the inclusion of the



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Canadian development assistance is delivered to Bangladesh through three major channels: bilateral, or Government to Government grants; multilateral, in which Canada funds international organizations administering projects in Bangladesh; and special programme support, in which Canada responds to initiatives of non-governmental organizations (NGO) and institutions. The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) is the agency responsible for administering Canada's official development assistance programme.

The Canadian programme in Bangladesh is currently Canada's largest bilateral assistance programme and within Bangladesh, Canada is third among donors in annual disbursements. Since the programme inception in 1972, Canada has disbursed over 1.5 billion dollars in grant aid to Bangladesh. Bilateral food aid has formed a major component, followed by programme aid (industrial commodities and fertilizer) and directed project assistance in key sectors. Major sectorial recipients include transportation (railway), agriculture, population and rural development, irrigation and flood control, as well as energy. There is a good blend of Bangladesh requirements and competitive Canadian expertise and resources in these sectors.

The programme is thematic in approach providing for both economic assistance and responding to priority concerns of Bangladesh with the rural poor, i. e., increasing food production, improving living standards and employment opportunities for the rural assetless, and population growth reduction. Support is also provided to emergency appeals for assistance. Following the April cyclone, Canada was one of the first to respond, contributing a total of 8.4 million Canadian dollars in emergency relief and rehabilitation.

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