

BC PROVINCIAL CUTS TO

INFORMATION ACCURATE AS OF APRIL 10, 2002

THE BC GOVERNMENT IS UNDERTAKING massive cuts that affect on the social and economic rights of the people of British Columbia, especially the most marginalized. Cuts to the Human Rights Commission, to legal services, and to social services and social assistance combined with other cuts will have a profound negative effect on women who experience violence, particularly women with disabilities, women of colour, Aboriginal women, refugee women, and poor women. The results are likely to be seen in the **reduction of resources to help women who experience violence, an increase of violence against women and children, a rise in discrimination and harassment against women, increased poverty, and a potential increase in death and suicide rates.**

The referendum on First Nations Land Claims is being called by many a violation of basic human rights and freedoms, and undermines the judicial constitutionally based processes for settling First Nations land claims. As a result of the referendum, Aboriginal people, and especially Aboriginal women, may be exposed to more violence and hostility.

The Government is making deep cuts in the name of the "structural deficit" that will affect human rights. **The erosion of women's rights to food, shelter and security of the person is an erosion of human rights.** Massive cuts to legal aid will make it more difficult for women to get the help needed to enforce maintenance payments and will make it harder for women to leave abusive relationships. The regressive welfare eligibility criteria has the potential to increase women's financial dependence on abusive partners; increase women's exposure to violence through homelessness, prostitution, and vulnerability to employers; decrease security of having food; and reduce the ability to secure assistance in housing and income especially in rural communities. This is exacerbated by the cut to Women's Centres who will lose all core government funding as of March 2004 - and close avenues



of redress through the revision of the BC Human Rights Act.

The Poverty and Humans Rights Project (a coalition of non-governmental organizations) filed a complaint on February 11, 2002, to the United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) Committee because they believe that the **BC Government is violating the social and economic rights of the poorest people of BC under international human rights law.** The ICESCR states that everyone has the right to social security, including social insurance (Article 9); the right to the widest possible protection and assistance to the family (Article 10); the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for her/himself and her/his family, including adequate food, clothing, housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions (Article 11); the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health (Article 12). In 1998 the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights gave an extremely critical report of Canada's performance ('Concluding Observations of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: Canada', 10/12/98. E/C.12/1/Add.31 10 December 1998). The BC Government is creating further violations of human rights, and exacerbating an already poor Canadian performance in the area of human rights.

HUMAN RIGHTS

ANTICIPATED IMPACT ON WOMEN WHO EXPERIENCE VIOLENCE

INFORMATION

BC Institute Against Family Violence
(604) 669-7055
1-877-755-7055 (toll free)

BC Association of Specialized Victim Assistance and Counselling Programs
(604) 633-2506

BC/Yukon Society of Transition Houses
(604) 669-6943

RESOURCES

Government of British Columbia, Minister of Finance
www.bcbudget.gov.bc.ca

PovNet
www.povnet.org

BC Coalition of Women's Centres
www3.telus.net/bcwomen/bcwomen

Access Justice
www.accessjustice.ca

Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives
www.policyalternatives.ca/bc

BC Coalition of People with Disabilities
www.bccpd.bc.ca

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HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

CUTS, POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE CHANGES

IMPACT: KNOWN AND POTENTIAL

Removal of Mary Woo Sims from her office as Chief Commissioner of BC Human Rights Commission before her term was complete.

Review of the Commission is currently underway.

Cut the Human Rights Commission's budget by 32%.

Compromises to the Commission has the potential to disproportionately affect women and especially those that belong to immigrant communities and economically disadvantaged groups.

Staff reduction by one third.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

CUTS, POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE CHANGES

IMPACT: KNOWN AND POTENTIAL

Legal Services Society can no longer pay for legal aid for human rights complaints.

Reductions in legal aid (38.8%), especially in the area of family and poverty law services. (See Legal Aid fact sheet).

Closure of Native and Community Law Offices.

This cut has the potential to impact on the most marginalized women (e.g., Aboriginal women, immigrant women, women of colour) who are seeking assistance (including against government discrimination) to protect their basic human rights.

Constitutes a contravention of the UN Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Makes it more difficult to protect peoples' rights, especially the most vulnerable.

Fewer resources available for women leaving abusive relationships.

Has the potential to result in increased violence against women and children.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE AND SOCIAL SERVICES

CUTS, POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE CHANGES

IMPACT: KNOWN AND POTENTIAL

Cut rates for social assistance recipients.

Narrow rules of eligibility for social assistance.

Cuts to home care, attendant care and other services addressing special needs.

Three week rule (three weeks of self directed job searching before being entitled to welfare).

Refugee claimants not eligible for social assistance.

Deepen poverty for people who already live well below the poverty line (Poverty and Human Rights Project, *"Poverty and Human Rights Submission to the UN ICESCR Committee"*, February 11, 2002).

Low welfare rates affect a person's Charter rights to life, liberty and security (*Louise Gosselin v. The Attorney General for Quebec*, 2000).

Deepen poverty for people who already live well below the poverty line.

New measures will deny support to those most in need.

Increases social and economic vulnerability of persons with disabilities.

Increases homelessness, illness and extreme psychological stress.

Increases poverty and social isolation.

Violation of refugee Charter rights.

CONTINUED

Referendum on First Nations Land Claims.
\$9 million is being spent for administration of referendum.

Aboriginal people may be exposed to more scape-goating, violence and hostility (BC Referendum Action Network, "What to do with the Liberal's Referendum on Treaty Negotiations").

Overriding judicial constitutionally based processes for the settling of First Nations claims - violence of continued colonialism.

Violation of basic rights and freedoms.