

Mary Walsh to be Keynote Speaker at West Coast LEAF's 22nd Annual Equality Breakfast

VANCOUVER, March 5, 2009 - Canadian icon and comedian Mary Walsh will be in Vancouver March 13th, 2009 as the keynote speaker for West Coast LEAF's 22nd Annual Equality Breakfast at the Vancouver Fairmont Hotel. Walsh will be commenting on the current status of women in Canada, including issues such as pay equity, gender roles and the balance of women in politics.

"We are delighted Mary Walsh agreed to be our speaker," said Alison Brewin, Executive Director of West Coast LEAF. "International Women's Day is a day to celebrate women around the world. Unfortunately women's rights are sliding here in BC – in their 2008 report on Canada, the UN expressed concern that rather than improving, inequalities between British Columbians are becoming more pronounced. Mary Walsh – thank goodness - will help us keep our sense of humour about the work ahead of us."

With a career spanning 20 years, Mary is an accomplished Canadian actress, comedian, political satirist and social activist. Best known for her work on *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*, she is the winner of over thirty Gemini Awards for her writing and performances.

The West Coast LEAF Equality Breakfast takes place annually to celebrate International Women's Day and the progress made in advancing women's rights. Past speakers include 2003 Nobel Peace Prize winner and Iranian human-rights lawyer Dr. Shirin Abadi (2008) and counsel for *Roe v Wade*, Sarah Weddington (2007).

About West Coast LEAF

The West Coast Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF) formed when the equality guarantees of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* came into force. West Coast LEAF's mission is to achieve equality by changing historic patterns of systemic discrimination against women through BC-based equality rights litigation, law reform and public legal education.

International Women's Day (IWD) is a major day of global celebration for the economic, political and social achievements of women past, present and future.

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