

For Immediate Release
What About Women? Women's Groups Reject Budget 2009

Vancouver, BC January 28 - Women's groups in British Columbia say Budget 2009 offers women almost nothing. "The Budget does not mention the specific needs of Canadian women, or address them," says Asia Czapska of Justice for Girls. "Almost all its provisions will benefit men more than women, and higher income earners over the most vulnerable."

"The word 'women' is not used once in the entire Budget. This is indicative of the approach to women in the Budget as a whole. Women do not figure in it," says Shelagh Day of the Poverty and Human Rights Centre. "Even though the United Nations recently told Canada that it is obligated to address the conditions of the poorest women in Canada, there is almost nothing in this Budget to help them, and nothing addressed specifically to Aboriginal women," adds Day.

"Although the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development has repeatedly criticized Canada for failing to support women's economic participation, pointing out that women are 'the mainstay' of income growth, this Budget fails to support women's contribution and advancement." says Cenen Bagon of the Vancouver Committee for Domestic Workers and Caregivers Rights (CDWCR).

"Women were looking for substantial investments in social infrastructure, including investment in a national child care strategy, which would provide fundamental supports to women workers, children and families. Although \$8 billion per year over the next two years has been allocated to infrastructure spending, none of this money will be specifically allocated to building new childcare facilities, or to funding the costs of running childcare programs," said Susan Harney of the Child Care Advocates of B.C.

"Instead Budget 2009 dedicates billions to male-dominated industries. This public money will support and create jobs that are mainly held by men.* It leaves women and women's jobs unsupported by the stimulus package," said Harney.

"Women were also looking to this Budget for reforms to EI rules that would make access to benefits fairer. Two out of three women who pay into EI are not currently eligible for any benefits. Budget 2009 extends the period of benefits for those already eligible by five weeks, but does nothing for the many women workers who will not be eligible for EI at all, even though they pay into it," says Alison Brewin of the West Coast Legal Education and Action Fund for Women.

Most women in Canada will see little benefit from the tax cuts and credits announced in Budget 2009. Only 16% of women have income over the amount that will entitle them to a tax cut. Changes to the National Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit essentially extend benefits up the income scale, but do not increase benefits for the lowest income families, many of whom are single mothers.

"The federal government has broken its commitment to evaluating spending through the lens of gender. Clearly the government has failed to look at how Budget 2009 will affect women," says Shelagh Day.

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Shelagh Day, Director, Poverty and Human Rights Centre (604) 872-0750
Susan Harney, Chairperson, Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC (604) 532-5367
Asia Czapska, Justice for Girls (604) 689-7887
Cenen Bagon, Vancouver Committee for Domestic Workers and Caregivers Rights, (604)
Alison Brewin, Executive Director, West Coast Legal Education and Action Fund for Women

*Only 7% of construction workers are women; only 7% of those in the trades and transportation are women; only 21% of those in primary industries are women; only 31% of manufacturing workers are women. According to Statistics Canada, 'Work Chapter Updates,' *Women in Canada* (Ottawa: 2005); online: <http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/89F0133XIE/89F0133XIE2006000.htm>