

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Closing the Doors on Women's Equality**  
Regional Access to Status of Women Canada Eliminated

(Vancouver – November 29, 2006) Women in Canada are outraged at Bev Oda's decision to deal with the \$5M cuts to Status of Women Canada by shutting down regional offices, and canceling funds for independent research on women's issues. Announcements yesterday included the closures of 12 regional offices. Of 131 staff positions, most of them held by women, 61 are being cut.

"This decision reflects a complete lack of understanding of the needs of women in Canada," says Shauna Paull, GAATW-Canada. "In her announcement, Minister Oda defends her decision by saying she wants women to have direct access to services and programs. What is more direct than walking into a local office staffed by highly skilled and knowledgeable individuals?"

"Many new and marginalized groups will no longer be able to meet with regional staff to get information, support and feedback and, most importantly, build the relationships that are critical to gaining funding," states Joyce Arthur, Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada.

"These announcements continue a federal track record of disregard for women's equality rights and women's concerns across the country." states Alison Brewin, Executive Director at West Coast LEAF.

The Conservative government has eliminated program support for advocacy, research and organizing funds and cut resources across the country with the closure of regional offices. "Women in Canada expect equality rights at the centre of government policy. Obviously, this government does not." says Alice West, Chair of WE\*ACT.

"To achieve equality for all women in Canada, SWC funding for research, advocacy, and regional staff must be returned," states Shelagh Day of the Feminist Alliance for International Action.

**Media Contact:**

Shelagh Day (FAFIA) Tel: 604.872.0750

Shauna Paull (GAATW-Canada) Tel: 604.209.5776

Alison Brewin (West Coast LEAF) Tel: 604.684.8772

Alice West (WE\*ACT) Tel: 604.253.6081

Joyce Arthur (Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada) Tel: 604.351.0867