

For Immediate Release

**West Coast LEAF and LEAF:
Granted leave to intervene in *Rick v. Brandsema***

June 23, 2008 - West Coast LEAF and LEAF have been granted leave to intervene in *Rick v. Brandsema* at the Supreme Court of Canada.

Rick v. Brandsema is a family law case arising out of B.C. dealing with the issue of separation agreements and division of assets.

In dispute is a separation agreement which resulted in Mr. Brandsema receiving a quarter of a million dollars more in assets than Mrs. Rick after 27 years of marriage. Ms Rick experienced domestic violence in the relationship and was facing mental health challenges when the agreement was signed. Mr. Brandsema's full disclosure of his assets is also in question.

"Women continue to face serious economic and social inequalities when marriages breakdown," says Zara Suleman, Director of the Family Law Project at West Coast LEAF. "Though this case involves a family with some wealth, the majority of women who settle for unequal separation agreements face lives of poverty. This case offers a unique opportunity to advance principles of substantive equality in family law."

"Access to business records, power dynamics in the marriage, and the economic role of women in building family wealth continue to impact the negotiation of separation agreements," says Kelly Roulette, Legal Director of West Coast LEAF (and co-counsel in the case). "They are not commercial contracts and should not be treated as such by the law."

"The case is important because it is yet another example of the systemic discrimination and increased vulnerability to economic disadvantage that women experience after marriage breakdown" said Audrey Johnson, Executive Director of LEAF.

Leave for intervention was filed on April 20, 2008. The case is expected to be heard in the Supreme Court in October 2008.

West Coast LEAF strives to make the promise of the Charter a reality for the women of British Columbia.

LEAF is the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund, a national non-profit organization founded in 1985. LEAF works to advance the equality of all women and girls in Canada through litigation, law reform and public education using the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

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**For More Information:
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