

West Coast LEAF and ProMOTION Plus disappointed with VANOC: They should be accountable to Canadian equality laws.

September 28th, 2009 – In their official argument in the women ski jumpers' case, released Monday, the Vancouver Organizing Olympics Committee has argued that it is not in breach of the Canadian *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* for failing to host a women ski jumping event at the 2010 Winter Olympic Games. West Coast Legal Education and Action Fund and ProMOTION Plus BC are deeply concerned with the lack of accountability of these Olympic Games and the blatant discrimination against women in sport this case represents.

In *Sagen v. Vancouver Organizing Committee for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games*, a group of women ski jumpers argued that allowing only men to compete in Olympic ski jumping is contrary to the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

While West Coast LEAF and ProMOTION Plus endorse the BC Supreme Court's July finding that the exclusion of women's ski jumping from the 2010 Games is discriminatory, the two groups were disturbed by the finding that it isn't a *Charter* breach.

The case will be now heard at the BC Court of Appeal, with the ski jumpers further arguing that their exclusion from the 2010 Games is discriminatory and that VANOC should be held accountable under the *Charter* equality guarantees. ProMOTION Plus and West Coast LEAF fully support the inclusion of a women's ski jumping event at the Olympics.

"We are disturbed by any trend in the law that exempts private actors engaged in public actions from *Charter* scrutiny," says West Coast LEAF Legal Director Kasari Govender. "If Canada wants to be a leader in human and equality rights internationally, its credibility requires an accountable VANOC."

ProMOTION Plus and West Coast LEAF fully support the inclusion of a women's ski jumping event at the upcoming Olympics.

ProMOTION Plus Executive Director Beverley Siver says, "Equal participation in the Olympics has a profound impact on the equality of women in sport – it challenges assumptions and stereotypes about women's perceived roles and abilities. Women's access to the Olympics opens up opportunities for girls and women in sport all over the world – such as the current spike in participation levels of girls and women in ice hockey, the allocation of resources, and all the health and social benefits of being involved in sport and physical activity."

"We are disappointed in VANOC's arguments," Says West Coast LEAF ED Alison Brewin. "It is unacceptable for Canadian governments to relinquish their role of upholding the principles and values of the *Charter*."

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.

ProMOTION Plus's vision is that all girls and women in the province of British Columbia will participate in and have access to a complete range of opportunities, choices and resources for positive experiences in physical activity and competitive and recreational sport and have equity as participants and leaders.

-30-

For More Information:

Beverly Siver, Executive Director, ProMOTION Plus

Phone: 604 333 3475

bev@promotionplus.org

Alison Brewin, Executive Director, West Coast LEAF

Kasari Govender, Legal Director, West Coast LEAF

(604) 684-8772 ext 111

exec@westcoastleaf.org,