

1.4 Ensuring Equality for Women

Canada must adopt comprehensive, rigorous, and accountable gendered analyses in the federal budgetary process. To this end, the 2008 Alternative Federal Budget includes a gender-based analysis of all budget chapters.

Gender-responsive budgeting aims to address the persistent inequalities between women and men by integrating gender-based analyses into macro-economic and micro-economic policy development.

In 2005, the Beijing Platform for Action called on all signatories, including Canada, to assess how public expenditures benefited women and to pro-actively adjust expenditures to better address gender inequality. Canada actively supports gender budgeting initiatives throughout the world under the Canadian International Development Agency. However, there is only a very limited commitment to gender budgeting in Canada at both the provincial and federal levels.

A gender analysis of Canada's federal budgets from 1995–2005 undertaken by FAFIA concluded that Canadian social policy is being increasingly delivered through tax policy, and that this is leading to ever-shrinking social programs

and weakened social and economic security for most women.¹

This is of particular concern as the majority of low-income earners in Canada are women who are more reliant on sustainable and reliable social programming. Further, low-income earners are unable to benefit from tax measures such as non-refundable tax credits because their incomes are often below income tax thresholds. In 2004, 39% of female tax-filers did not pay any tax because their incomes were too low.

To fully implement a federal gender budgeting initiative, it is imperative to increase the capacity of Status of Women Canada (SWC), the lead federal department for gender equality. The AFB increases SWC's budget to \$50 million to cover operational costs (including personnel and the re-establishment of SWC's regional offices), improved training of public servants throughout departments on the application of gender-based analysis, and increased funding to the Women's Program at Status of Women Canada, which provides grants and contributions to non-governmental organizations.

To support gender-based analysis (GBA), all statistical data collected in Canada must be dis-

aggregated by gender. All federal departments, in particular the Department of Finance, the Privy Council Office and the Treasury Board, must assume a leadership role in ensuring that tax policy measures and expenditures delivered through the federal budget are considered for their gendered impact.

To better facilitate this approach, the AFB invests \$10 million to establish a Gender Equality Enhancement Fund (to be managed by the Treasury Board). This fund will be exclusively earmarked to support federal government departments and non-governmental organizations with the operational costs associated with undertaking gender-based analysis (such as hiring appropriate personnel and related administrative support).

Half of this \$10 million is to be allocated to government departments to support GBA initiatives. Another 50% will be allocated to non-government organizations to perform (at arm's length) relevant gender-based analysis on federal policies and programs. This allocation is consistent with the recommendations of the federally commissioned Expert Panel on Accountability Mechanisms for Gender Equality which reported in late 2004.²

Finally, to ensure that Canada fully upholds its equality commitments under domestic and international law, the AFB allocates funds to appoint a Gender Equality Commissioner (modeled after the Environmental Commission) within the Auditor-General's office. Based upon the costs associated with the Environmental Commissioner, this would require an annual investment of \$3 million.³

GENDER ANALYSIS Cities and Communities

Investment in community and infrastructure is advantageous to women. It is key that GBA be conducted on all community development proposals including community economic development strategies, place-based poverty reduction initiatives and employment development corporations.

Women typically access community services more than men and use public transit more often than men. In 2001, 2.4 million women were considered low income and stand to greatly benefit from public investment in communities.⁴ In 2003, the poverty rate for single-parent mothers was 48.9%.⁵

According to the 2001 Census, a total of 835,200 women reported using public transportation compared with 571,400 men. Women represented 13% of the employed female labour force who travelled to work. Men represented 8% of employed male labour force who travelled to work.⁶

Notes

1 "Canada's Commitment to Equality: A Gender Analysis of the Last Ten Federal Budgets (1995–2004)." (Yalnizyan 2005)

2 http://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/resources/panel/report/index_e.html

3 http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/rpp/0708/OAG-BVG/oag-bvg03_e.asp#sec3g

4 http://72.14.205.104/search?q=cache:ZLST1aoSN7cJ:www.casw-acts.ca/advocacy/womenpoverty_e.pdf+median+income+of+women+in+canada+2004&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=2&gl=ca

5 National Council of Welfare Report, "Poverty Profile, 2002 and 2003," Summer 2006

6 Statistics Canada 2001 Census, <http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/products/analytic/companion/pow/publictrans.cfm>