



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES

Maria Minna, M.P. Beaches-East York

News Release

Minna commits to creation of gender equality commissioner and legislation

For immediate release

OTTAWA – June 5, 2008 – Maria Minna and Liberal leader Stéphane Dion today announced that a new Liberal government will create an independent officer of Parliament for gender equality and enabling legislation.

“This is a tremendous step forward for women in this country,” stated Ms. Minna. “This will mark the first time that an independent officer of Parliament will be directly monitoring and promoting the rights of women and their full equality in Canada. Regardless of which political party is in government, the Gender Equality Commissioner will act in the same manner as the Commissioner of Official Languages. Among many duties the commissioner will identify where the problem areas are in his/her reports to Parliament. This will lift the veil on all federal government departments and their policies and bring accountability to gender responsive budgeting.”

If a Gender Equality Commissioner was already in place that person would have identified that cancelling the court challenges and cutting funding for research and advocacy groups was going to have a detrimental impact to women’s equality.

This announcement follows two motions Ms. Minna presented in the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women calling for the creation of a Gender Equality Commissioner and enabling gender-based analysis legislation.

With legislation and an officer to monitor gender-based analysis Canada will be at the forefront once again of fighting for women's equality. Recently Canada has fallen behind in its international reputation as a promoter and protector of women's rights. Canada placed first from 1995 to 1999 of the gender development index of the United Nations. In 2001, Canada placed third and in 2006 we had fallen to seventh. The news was worse from the World Economic Forum where Canada placed 14th in 2006 and 18th by the Social Watch Index. Canada must return to being a leader on the world stage.

Other countries, where gender-based analysis is enshrined in legislation, women's economic standing is improving at a much faster rate. From the meetings at the Standing Committee on the Status of Women on Gender Budgeting, it was heard from many witnesses that the most powerful force for change in GBA policy and gender budgeting is political will. This announcement stems from a lot of hard work and consultations on the part of Ms. Minna, the Liberal Women's Caucus, and our leader. The Liberal Party has the political will to advance women's equality in Canada. The time for action is now.

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