

## **Women's Conference in Beaches – East York**

By Maria Minna, MP

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On December 1<sup>st</sup>, I held a roundtable for women of Beaches-East York to discuss concerns and issues affecting women today. This was the second Women's Conference I have held this year in the community. The discussions at the roundtable helped shape the Liberal Women's Caucus policy proposals to address economic barriers specific to women. These policies came to fruition on Wednesday, December 5, with the launch of Volume II of the Pink Book.

The Pink Book is aimed at addressing the root causes of women's inequality and promoting a progressive plan for the economic and social security of women in Canada by proposing a number of women-centric policy initiatives.

As the women attending the roundtable attested, there still exist a multitude of barriers that disadvantage women.

The roundtable participants raised numerous concerns surrounding housing and homelessness. They noted that women make up the majority of part-time minimum wage jobs and average peak income for women is just 67% of their male counterparts. This combined with the housing crisis in Toronto makes it increasingly difficult for women to find adequate affordable housing. In response, the Liberal Women's Caucus has proposed a portable shelter subsidy that is tied to the need, rather than the shelter, thereby increasing the number of women who are eligible to receive the assistance they need to live in adequate, affordable housing.

Another area of serious concern raised was the persistence of violence against women. One participant noted that the risk of violence was considerably elevated during the time of breakdown of the family. This is why the new Pink Book proposes key amendments to the Divorce Act protecting women and children from a parent with a history of abuse. Additionally women often have a difficult time accessing legal aid for family law matters. In response the new Pink Book proposes providing increased federal funds to the provinces for civil legal aid, aimed at providing women with the necessary means to get out of an abusive relationship.

These and many other issues - such as childcare, the Canadian Pension Plan drop-out rate, and Employment Insurance for the self-employed - were discussed and are found in the Pink Book Volume I and II. To access both Pink Books, please refer to the Liberal Party of Canada website: [www.liberal.ca](http://www.liberal.ca).