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Status of Women Minister Josée Verner Misleads Committee

Ottawa – The Minister for Status of Women, Josée Verner, falsely claimed at the standing committee today that she put word “equality” back into the mandate of the Women’s Program when no such change has actually been made, Liberal Status of Women critic Maria Minna said today.

“The Minister misrepresented the facts. No change has been made to the funding requirements for the Women’s Program and that’s where the rubber hits the road for all women’s organizations. Those are the guidelines they have to meet before they can apply and qualify for funding,” said Ms. Minna.

“Ms. Verner had the word ‘equality’ quietly added to the overarching goals of the Women’s Program and tried to suggest at committee that it applied across the board. When Liberal members asked the Minister to clarify why the so-called change is not in the funding guidelines section on the department’s website, she dodged questions. Later departmental officials confirmed that adding the word ‘equality’ was only symbolic and that ‘nothing had changed’,” said Ms. Minna.

In September 2006, the Conservative government changed the terms and conditions of the Women’s Program at Status of Women Canada. The changes included removing “equality” from its mandate, which meant that women’s groups and organizations that do advocacy work were no longer eligible for federal funding as they had been in the past. The Women’s Program at Status of Women is the main vehicle to fund projects to promote equality for all women.

Ms. Minna noted that simply adding the word “equality” on the home page of the Women’s Program changes nothing for women’s groups across Canada because the Minister failed to make the change where it actually affects organizations – in the funding guidelines.

“This is insulting to Canadian women, but it’s more proof that the Conservative government is only prepared to pay lip service to the importance of equality and what it means to the Women’s Program and women’s groups,” said Ms. Minna.

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