



Women's Committee Report March 2017

During this month, Women around the world celebrate International Women's Day by holding marches, rallies, luncheons and a variety of other events. But what has this day really become? While driving to work, I heard several ads on the radio celebrating the day but...come buy our product and we will donate a portion of the sale to a local women's shelter. Is this what our society has become? Ready to apply a band aid instead of healing the wounds.

But there is hope...as the Federal budget promises.

The Liberal government released the first federal budget that includes a look at the differences between men and women. Differences like the fact that women are twice as likely to work part-time, do more hours of unpaid care work, are less likely to qualify for Employment Insurance and are more likely to be the victim of a violent crime.

When economic policies are made based on this kind of gender analysis, we have the opportunity to reduce the number of women experiencing violence and poverty. We have a chance to clear the way for women to have equal access to decent work and decent pay.

Narrowing the gender gap benefits everyone. Women make up 47 per cent of our labour force. Nearly one million women are working part-time right now for involuntary reasons – reasons like they can't find childcare. When more women work, they earn more money, they spend more money, they pay more taxes, and they invest in their families and their communities. That means growth.

So on the to Liberal budget promises...

There is \$40 million in the budget for women-led technology firms department that are tasked with making sure all this gender-based analysis happens.

The government will spend \$100.9 million over five years to establish a National Strategy to Address Gender-Based Violence. To address a problem that currently costs our economy \$12 billion a year, according to Justice Canada. A problem that has directly affected more than one million women in the past five years.

Finally, there is \$7 billion over 10 years to increase access to affordable childcare. This is a huge issue for women and for our economy. Research in Canada and across high-income countries demonstrates that a lack of available and affordable childcare is one the biggest barriers to women's employment. Increased access to paid work is important for women, it's important for their families and it is a significant driver of economic growth.

This year's budget makes an important first step towards better policies for Canadians and better lives for women. So far, so good. Here's the trickier part.

In general, there are no specific benchmarks for narrowing the wage gap, increasing women's employment or lowering rates of violence. The six economic sectors identified as the budget's

priorities are all predominantly male employment sectors. There are no parallel investments in predominantly female employment sectors. Support for unpaid care work is delivered through a tax break – which many female caregivers will not qualify for, because they don't have the time left to do enough paid work to raise their incomes to a level that would qualify them for that break. Further supports to caregivers and new parents are delivered through the Employment Insurance program, which many women don't qualify for, because they tend to work part-time, because they do more unpaid caregiving work. That is the sound of our government realizing how much more it needs to know before it can deliver real change for women in Canada.

That is a cause for hope. And it is a reason for Women to keep making their voices heard. And eventually through word of mouth.... it will spread ...or so is my dream and the dream of many activists that were inspired by the late Bob White, former President of the Canadian Auto Workers and the Canadian Labour Congress. Bob White's legacy is a stronger and more equitable Canada, and a labour movement that stands up for Canadian workers. Brother White was a trailblazer, who fought not just for the union but also for social justice. He was passionate about equality rights for women which included fighting for childcare. He believed in using our collective strength to make both our workplaces and our world better places. His vision lives on and we will continue the fight in his honour.

In Sisterhood,
Valerie Saliba
Women's Committee Chair