

# Getting women's equality back on track

## Six issues for PSAC members

The 2008 federal election is about priorities. The PSAC believes **women's equality** needs to be a priority. Ask your MPs and candidates where they stand on these six issues.

### Pay equity

On average, women still earn less than men, regardless of their occupation. For Aboriginal and racially visible women, the wage gap is even wider. And, pay discrimination continues to take its toll when women retire. PSAC has had to fight, often for decades, to force employers to implement equal pay for work of equal value. The complaints-based system is not working. We need a pro-active federal pay equity law, as recommended by the Pay Equity Task force in 2004.

**Ask the candidates:**

**What will you and your party do to adopt a new proactive federal pay equity law?**

### Child Care

No matter how you cut it, the \$100 monthly "Universal Child Care Benefit" to parents with children under 6 is NOT a national child care program. It does not cover the costs of child care, nor does it do anything to create any new child care spaces. The lack of accessible, affordable quality child care prevents many women from finding a viable full-time job. Child care is an essential public service.

**Ask the candidates:**

**What will you and your party do to put a national child care program back on the political agenda?**

**What direct public funding will your party provide for child care?**

### Funding women's equality inside and outside government

The Harper government closed 12 out of 16 Status of Women Canada (SWC) regional offices, cut SWC's operational budget, cut funding for independent research, cut funding to women's organizations for advocacy and research work, and opened up funding to for-profit and religious groups. There has been no \*action\* on the Action Plan for Women promised in the last federal budget.

**Ask the candidates:**

**What will you and your party do to fund women's equality, both within and outside government?**

### Reproductive Rights

Last spring, Bill C-484, the Unborn Victims of Crime Act, was adopted at second reading. This Bill would create a separate offence for causing the injury or death of an "unborn child" should a pregnant woman be the victim of a crime. What is really at stake here is the legal recognition of the fetus' right to life and the possible re-criminalization of abortion. The Supreme Court has recognized that women's constitutional rights to security of the person, autonomy and freedom include the right to end an unwanted pregnancy without state interference.

**Ask the candidates:**

**What will you and your party do to support women's reproductive rights?**

### Aboriginal Women

Poverty among Aboriginal groups remains appallingly high both on and off reserve. First Nations, Inuit and Métis women continue to bear the brunt of poverty, violence, lack of affordable housing, lack of access to safe water, and the list goes on. Residential schools have taken their toll on generations of Aboriginal women and men. The government's apology isn't enough. The Indian Act still discriminates against descendants of First Nation women.

**Ask the candidates:**

**What concrete steps will you and your party take to improve the situation of Aboriginal women?**

### Court Challenges Program

In 2006, the federal government eliminated the Court Challenges Program (CCP). This program funded test-cases to challenge federal laws and policies that violated constitutional rights. The CCP has helped equality-seeking groups to access the justice system. It has resulted in victories for the rights of women, gays and lesbians, persons with disabilities and other disadvantaged groups. Without the CCP, individuals and groups must take on cases at their own expense, while the government uses public funds to fight them.

**Ask the candidates:**

**Will you fight to reinstate the Court Challenges Program?**

