

THE PINK BOOK, VOLUME III
**AN ACTION
PLAN FOR
CANADIAN
WOMEN**

NATIONAL LIBERAL WOMEN'S CAUCUS
OCTOBER 2009

Canadian farmers are committed to a food system that provides safe and healthy food. In a presentation to the House of Commons Subcommittee on Food Safety on June 1, 2009 the National Farmers Union stated: "As stewards of the land and water, we take very seriously our responsibility to ensure that the food we produce nourishes this and future generations. We strive to ensure that the agronomic practices we use are safe and sustainable, and we welcome regulations which are designed to assist in helping us achieve those objectives." Any attempt to improve the current system will require working closely with farmers and other rural stakeholders.

A federal Liberal government can do better. The National Liberal Women's Caucus believes that from hungry children to a hungry planet, the issue of food security requires complex solutions that cross all government departments, all jurisdictions and all sectors.

A Comprehensive Food Policy for Canada must consider the growing importance of locally produced food, increasing transportation costs, our rate of self sufficiency, and the sustainability of current agriculture and fishery practices. It will also need to address ethical international development, fair trade practices, the needs of our aboriginal peoples and migrant workers, the food industry, and above all the health of Canadians.

The National Liberal Women's Caucus therefore recommends that a new Liberal government:

- *Work with all partners to develop a comprehensive food policy for Canada, including safe drinking water for all Canadians.*

PREVENTING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Under Stephen Harper's Conservative government, women are increasingly at risk for domestic abuse and violence. Recent news reports indicate that the current economic crisis is contributing to a rise in the number of women who are being abused. For example, the Executive Director of Catholic Family Services for Durham Region in Ontario stated in a recent newspaper article that "referrals for domestic violence were up 24 percent in the last three months of 2008."¹⁷ Statistics Canada reveals that women are much more likely to be killed by their spouse than men.¹⁸ In 2004, the spousal homicide rate against women was five times higher than that for men. Women are also more likely than male victims to be injured and suffer more serious and repeated incidents of violence.¹⁹



¹⁷ The Toronto Star, "Domestic abuse on rise as families try to cope with recession", April 14, 2009

¹⁸ Statistics Canada, *The Daily*, October 6, 2005

¹⁹ Statistics Canada, March 2006. *Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report*, 5th edition, p.165



A federal Liberal government can do better. The National Liberal Women's Caucus has always viewed violence against women as a priority and is concerned about this trend. The Caucus recognizes that violence against women is a persistent and widespread social problem affecting thousands of Canadian women and their children.

The National Liberal Women's Caucus is convinced that to prevent violence against women, all levels of government must be involved in a strong and coordinated effort. There are concrete steps that the federal government can take immediately that will have a significant impact.

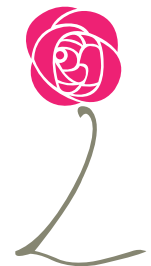
The National Liberal Women's Caucus therefore recommends that a new Liberal government:

- *Working in partnership with the provinces and territories develop a national action plan to combat violence against women that includes culturally sensitive training for law enforcement and court officials; increased sustainable financial support for transition houses, second-stage housing units and safe shelters for homeless women; and a public awareness campaign to highlight the magnitude of the problem.*
- *Increase the level of federal funding to a designated fund for civil legal aid to ensure that women who need access to legal services for family matters will be able to receive it.*
- *Set up a national 1-800 hotline number for women who are being abused.*
- *Amend existing hate crime legislation to include "sex", the legal description for gender.*

COMMITTING TO ABORIGINAL WOMEN

In 2004, 41 percent of Aboriginal women victims stated that they had been beaten, choked, sexually assaulted, threatened, or had a gun or knife used against them. In contrast, 27 percent of non-Aboriginal women victims reported these levels of violence.²⁰ The levels of violence are even worse for Aboriginal women under Stephen Harper's Conservative government.

A recent report by the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) found that 520 Aboriginal women and girls have been murdered, or gone missing, in Canada since 1970. That nothing has been done is unacceptable. In May 2009, Liberal members of Parliament called on the Prime Minister to launch a public investigation into what happened to the murdered and missing Aboriginal women and girls. To date, Stephen



²⁰ Statistics Canada, March 2006, *Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report*, 5th edition, p. 163