

The Federal PC Women's Caucus of Ottawa said "Equality in the context of society, the polity and the economy means that women will not be discriminated against on account of their gender, in respect of rights, responsibilities, rewards, access to training and education, appointment to positions or any aspect of life." (Ottawa, April 9, 1987)

The National Association of Women and the Law views equality as involving "a full range of choices for women in the economy, in the home, in the work force, and under the law." (Ottawa, March 10, 1987)

R.E.A.L. Women believe there is no consensus among women on the definition of equality. They maintain the concept of equality is different for women who support traditional family values, and they further believe that for women to have equality, it should be recognized that men and women are equal but different. (Ottawa, December 11, 1986)

The Charter of Rights Coalition (Manitoba) told the Committee that "feminists are not saying that...women and men are the same or that they can ever be considered the same; women's specificity must be taken into consideration." (Winnipeg, March 31, 1987)

Because women are biologically different from men, it is generally agreed that society has a responsibility toward women and must make special considerations relating to maternity. The Committee also heard that society has a continuing responsibility toward children and families.

Equality for women involves the freedom to make choices. Witnesses agreed that women should be free to choose whether or not to take employment outside the home. Sexual equality provisions included in Sections 15 and 28 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms ensure that women are not detrimentally affected by an assumption that their role is limited to that of wife and mother.

Most witnesses support this principle of equality. However, some said the principle is still open to interpretation in its practical applications by the courts. Representatives of Northern Options for Women stressed the need for a broad rather than narrow interpretation. (Winnipeg, April 1, 1987)

Generally, the witnesses also agreed that equality means the enjoyment of equal rights, opportunities and responsibilities. In addition, wide support was expressed for the view that promoting equality means working to remove barriers to women's advancement in society.

**(B) BARRIERS TO ADVANCEMENT**

"Full equality is still the vision, not the reality."

(The Charter of Rights Coalition [Manitoba])

Because full equality is not a reality, many witnesses said the Women's Program must continue to help remove existing barriers. Since its inception, the Program has consistently worked toward the elimination of economic, social and political barriers.