

Education and training

Clearly, education is a key to closing the door on this inequitable job structure. In our country, education falls within provincial jurisdiction and whereas there are areas of commonality, it is also true that not all ten education systems are the same. Education for both girls and boys, is compulsory and free in Canada up to the age of 16. Depending on the province, this can mean 11 or 12 years of compulsory schooling. In addition to our free primary and secondary schools we are proud of the university and community college systems which we have developed. Significant improvements during the past five years are now evident in the percentages of women in some professions. For example, in law and medicine women now make up more than 30 per cent of the graduates. The Federal Government contribution to vocational training is approximately \$800 million, and an additional \$3 billion is spent financing post-secondary schools. In terms of vocational training we have made some progress, though not as much as in the professions. Women account for about 42 per cent of the enrolment in trades training, but I must admit, this percentage is largely in traditional areas. In apprenticeships in non-traditional areas, only 3 per cent of apprentices are women.

Sex-stereotyping

The most significant thing we have learned in education is the enormous negative impact of tradition including sex-stereotyping, on choices made by our young people both girls and boys. Provincial governments, individual school boards, and numerous non-government organizations in Canada have studied the effects of sex-stereotyping in textbooks and teaching aids. Guidelines have been prepared by a wide cross-section of concerned groups, to eliminate sex-stereotyping from our school texts. This is an area where real reform is necessary.

On a wider level, a number of studies have been done on the effects of sex-stereotyping in the media. As a result of our national plan of action, the Canadian Radio, Television and Telecommunications Commission set up a task force in September 1979 to develop guidelines to encourage the elimination of sex-role stereotyping in the broadcast media. The task force held meetings and received briefs from across Canada. We expect their reports soon. And indeed, my own Commission is in the midst of preparing guidelines for the elimination of sexual stereotyping in all forms of government communications.

Canada supports very strongly the inclusion of the programs of action, a concern that women be protected by governments from sexual assault and physical violence. As well, we echo the concerns expressed about women's health and safety on the job.

Our plan also signalled the need for modernization of our rape laws to ensure high levels of conviction of rapists and a less traumatic trial for the women who have been assaulted. Likewise, we are searching for means to deal with sexual harassment in the workplace, which is a growing concern of women and their employers.

Family violence unfortunately exists in all societies. Our Advisory Council and our office have publicized the extent of family violence in Canada — and we are working on measures to ensure better services to women who are its victims. To do this we must have the close co-operation of the provinces.