

*The Budget*

The government is absolutely committed to providing a fair and sustainable system of protection for Canadian seniors. This is also very important for women as they live longer and are often among the poorest in society. In order to ensure the sustainability of our pension programs, we will consult with seniors and Canadians in general on the nature of the needed changes later this year. That is part of open government.

Women's groups have a great interest in these consultations and I encourage them to make their views known. I have asked my department to specifically focus on this issue in the coming year because we all have to contribute to the fullest degree possible to the design of the program.

Women have a major stake in the budget measures, seeking to replace dependence with independence. An important element of that effort is the new human resource investment fund. We have to ensure that women's particular employment situations, their training and employment patterns, their incomes, family responsibility and life experiences are fully taken into account, both in the design of the new fund and the planned changes to unemployment insurance.

[Translation]

I am also delighted that the Minister of Finance has announced several measures to encourage small business.

Close to 40 per cent of small businesses in Canada are headed by women and their success rate after five years of operation is double that for men. That is the truth.

We can be proud of this success, which, however, did not come easily and without pitfalls. Businesswomen have to face what we call financial sexism. This does not come from me but from a new study released a few days ago by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business.

This study shows that women applying for business loans at financial institutions are turned down 20 per cent more often than men. It is a disgrace. And if they are approved, 95 per cent of the time, they have to pay higher interest rates on their loans. Do you find that fair? We certainly do not. All this, I remind you, in spite of the fact that women are very responsible and successful in business.

No wonder that, according to Pierre Cl  roux, Vice-President of CFIB, these figures prove beyond any doubt that financial institutions are discriminating against women entrepreneurs.

Hats off to the Minister of Finance for stating in his budget speech, and I quote: "This government is determined that small businesses will have access to the financing they need to continue being our number one creator of jobs".

On behalf of all women entrepreneurs, I might say the sooner the better.

[English]

Let me turn to the principle of good government. There is no doubt in my mind that we have to redesign the role of government in the economy to fit the size of our pocketbook and the priorities of our people.

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[Translation]

Last year, soon after being elected, our government undertook an extensive review of all programs and agencies it is responsible for. As part of this program review, the role of three organizations dedicated to women's equality, namely Status of Women Canada, HRD's Women's Program and the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

[English]

The review process found that all three promote women's equality and in various degrees they all conduct research, consultation and undertake communications. All three also work closely with women's organizations.

The government concluded that the best way to increase both effectiveness and efficiency would be to consolidate its actions for women's equality at Status of Women Canada. In this regard effective April 1, 1995 the women's program of human resource development will be transferred to Status of Women Canada. The presence and the role of their local, regional and national staff, those offices and their services, will be maintained.

As well, effective April 1, 1995 the mandate of the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women will end. This will result in a streamlining of resources and costs, removing duplication and eliminating all order in council appointments.

The CACSW's research, consultation and public information functions will be consolidated within the overall operations of Status of Women Canada.

The CACSW will be given the time and support it needs to wind up its operations. Once we move the functions to Status of Women Canada we hope we will be able to absorb some of the advisory council's staff to fulfil these functions.

[Translation]

The Canadian government is firmly committed to women's equality. As a matter of fact, this commitment has motivated all our decisions. This consolidation will enable this government to further the cause of women's equality in partnership with women's groups, the provinces and territories, the private sector and volunteer organizations.

[English]

The Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women played a major role in the formative years of Canada's modern women's movement. At its inception in 1973 following the Bird report, the report of the royal commission, it filled an important