

Hearings were held in Winnipeg, Vancouver, Halifax, St. John's and Ottawa. The Committee heard from 144 organizations representing a cross-section of women's groups. In addition, the Committee received 265 briefs.

Witnesses illustrated that Canadian women live in an enormous variety of circumstances. Because of this great diversity a number of groups urged that the Women's Program recognize regional needs.

For example, a common concern in northern and isolated areas is the need for more services to help women. Stressing the problems of geographic isolation, the Hay River Women's Coalition spoke of having only one professional psychologist to cover 3.4 million square kilometres. They said, "many of the issues which have been resolved in the south for years still need to be addressed in the Northwest Territories." They cited the lack of public funding for child care and provisions for maternity leave as problem areas.

The Mokami Status of Women Council from Happy Valley, Labrador, was formed in 1980 because of a "desperate need" for a transition house. Supported by Secretary of State grants, the fund-raising and lobbying efforts of the group succeeded with the establishment of Libra House in 1986.

The Committee was also told that women in remote areas are not alone in facing problems of isolation and the lack of access to services. The Downtown Eastside Women's Centre in Vancouver described women in urban centres as being "ghettoized" by social and psychological barriers.

Particular women's interests vary from one region to another, and yet the Committee heard that women also have common concerns. These are issues of equality, the removal of barriers to advancement and freedom from violence.

#### (A) EQUALITY

"In 1987, it is no longer a debatable issue; inequalities for women do exist and these inequalities are not compatible with a democratic society."

(Saskatchewan Women's Resources,  
Winnipeg, April 1, 1987)

Witnesses expressed the basic concern that women need to achieve and maintain true equality. Several definitions of equality were suggested.

The Western Canadian Feminist Counselling Association defined equality as "the right to physical, psychological and sexual safety; complete economic equality and opportunity; freedom of choice to work inside or outside the home; the right of choice over one's own personal life". (Vancouver, April 3, 1987)