

this conference.

In studying the draft program of action in preparation for this conference, I have given a great deal of thought to the three major sub-themes of the conference. Employment issues are of special concern to me because of my responsibility for employment matters in my own country. Health and education are vital, too. They relate to matters we all strive for — good health and access to as much education as we desire.

Employment

As the Minister of Employment and Immigration, as well as the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, I have the responsibility for ensuring that women's employment is assured through appropriate training and job creation and, as well, that special compensatory programs are conceived to strike out past inequities. In the past, many of our training and job-creation programs did not meet the needs of women in the workplace. That is a condition I hope to change. I firmly believe that unless special programs are developed, women will fall further behind, will remain in their traditional sectors and will not be equipped to participate in the economic expansion we anticipate in our western provinces, particularly in energy-related industries. That is why a new program of wage subsidies of up to 75 per cent is available to train women in non-traditional jobs. Also we have established a community service program which will finance such projects as child-care and transition houses, giving support for women to enter the workplace.

Affirmative action

Strong measures are required to overcome centuries of tradition in the workplace. That is why affirmative action programs are a necessary component in our strategy for change.

For the past few years the Federal Government and at least one province has had voluntary affirmative action programs in the private sector. We are, at the federal level, as "towards equality" states, seriously considering mandatory affirmative action programs for companies with contracts with the Federal Government. We have already announced our intention to implement affirmative action in the public service.

It is important to note that there is significant commitment within the Canadian labour movement for affirmative action, a commitment registered by the work of the Canadian Labour Congress' Committee on Equality of Opportunity and Treatment of Women Workers.

There is also a growing recognition of the need to eliminate systematic discrimination in the labour force. We have tried the voluntary approach but only 15 contracts have been signed to date. This argues for effective measures in the private sector.

Our Government considers the development of equal rights for women one of the most important areas for action, and that is why we are developing new programs over the next few years. We recognize that the considerable inequalities which continue to exist between men and women are directly related to the segregation of the jobs they do. It is my conviction that this can be diminished by measures such as equal pay for work of equal value, affirmative action and specially directed training programs for women.
