

challenge facing us now is to ensure that women benefit as they should from all government programs and policies. These programs and policies must now work to increase women's social and economic independence, or else we have failed to meet the goals of the UN Plan of Action.

The royal commission

Thirteen years ago, the Royal Commission on the Status of Women was established by the Government of Canada. Its recommendations laid the groundwork for change in the laws and programs of government for the ensuing ten years. As a result, programs were developed, and new institutions emerged. These are the national mechanisms to integrate status of women concerns into all areas of government policy-making. For example, the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, and a Status of Women department within government to initiate and contribute to policy development were established. Arising from the recommendations of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, the federal Human Rights Commission has included in its statutes, the concept of "equal pay for work of equal value", a historical move forward for improving women's economic status. Already cases are coming before the Commission to move this principle into practice.

The plan of action

In 1979, our Government issued a plan of action, called *Towards Equality of Women* which addresses women's issues in all spheres of government activity. We are already making changes as a result of the plan. In the areas of sexual assault, and violence against women, we are preparing for discussions with the provinces to discuss better ways of assisting victims. We are also developing a program of affirmative action in the public service; legislative changes to the Unemployment Insurance Act, and Pension and the Income Tax Act. But the events and conditions are already beginning to overtake this plan, and it is my intention to review and revise it to ensure that there is true movement in all policy areas of the Federal Government. Canadian women's groups' recommendations were the solid base on which this plan was built, and their continued vigilance in monitoring our actions will play a crucial role in ensuring its implementation. As well, we count heavily on women's groups to continuously bring new issues and problems to our attention.

Given the federal structure of our country, all three levels of government, federal, provincial and municipal, must be committed to policies that will positively affect women. In fact, one of my priorities as Minister Responsible for the Status of Women is to discuss with my colleagues in the provinces the means they have established for ensuring that women's concerns are understood and respected in all provincial policies. Some provinces have established the structures to do this, others have not. Let me emphasize that I believe it is essential that governments establish goals and standards so that they can measure progress in these areas that affect women.

We agree with the attention paid in the draft program of action to national mechanisms and stress that in Canada there must be commitment at the provincial level too, or progress for women will be slow and haphazard.

Happily, I am able to table here today, along with *Towards Equality for Women*, the plans of action of five of our ten provinces. As I have said, the provinces have a major role in affecting progress in employment, health and education, the sub-themes of