

We heard evidence which confirms that women have not yet achieved equality, that serious barriers remain, and that new areas of need are emerging. The Committee therefore recommends that the Women's Program continue with present funding, and, if possible, "consider increasing funding to meet the needs of new groups and address emerging priorities". We are, however, insisting on greater accountability by applicant organizations.

We will anchor this report on the principles of fairness and democracy, standing squarely behind the Government's Speeches from the Throne of 1984 and 1986, which gave women's equality national priority.

In terms of funding criteria, the majority of the Committee believes it is desirable for client groups to work toward the achievement of self-sufficiency if at all possible. The Committee also believes that no single group should expect to receive a major portion of its funding from the Program in perpetuity.

Nor should the Program, in its funding practices, designate specific national networking groups as the only official advocates on behalf of Canadian women. Indeed, we learned that women live in a diversity of circumstances, and no one group or organization can speak for the "mainstream" women of Canada.

The Standing Committee held hearings in St. John's, Halifax, Ottawa, Winnipeg and Vancouver. We heard testimony from 144 witness groups from all 10 provinces and two Territories. In addition, we received some 265 written briefs. In all, that represents literally millions of Canadian women who contacted the Committee in person or in writing.

We had the overwhelming impression that every woman spoke from the heart. We were also made keenly aware that priority funding should be directed to groups representing those who are disadvantaged and discriminated against: women victims of violence, the disabled, visible minorities, immigrant women, single parent women, women in remote areas and the elderly. We listened to, and benefitted from, testimony of those women everywhere who defend the rights of the traditional family. Indeed, the Committee supports family values as long as every family member is equally valued.

Many thoughtful women in this country will echo the comment of one witness from Sault Ste. Marie who told me quietly: "There's a silent majority of us out here that could use the resources of the federal government, but we don't have access to the media. We are filled with anger, but it's tinged with hope if your Committee can come up with something meaningful for all women."

The polarization of women's groups -- as reported in the press -- has caught the vast majority of Canadian women in the cross-fire of the war of words. Women bashing other women may attract media attention; it does little to serve the common cause of equality and the advancement of women in our society.

This report attempts to create objectives and criteria which will work toward full participation of women in the Canada of the 1990's and the 21st century.

Geoff Scott, M.P.
Chairperson of the
Committee