

and her right to band memberships. Some 16,000 Indian women have lost their status so far because of this century-old legislation.

Thanks to the adoption of a new legislation, the spouses of deceased veterans, most of them women, will be entitled from now on to an extension of the veterans' disability pensions for one year following the death of their spouses. Previously, payment of the disability pension ceased at the end of the month during which the pensioner's death occurred, thus reducing the surviving spouse's income in a very difficult period.

Canadian mothers who are entitled to day-care allowances under training programs funded by the federal government will see these allowances increased. These changes reflect the importance which the government attaches to the program aimed at facilitating the promotion of women to senior positions. Under amendments to the Labour Code, parents employed in industries under federal jurisdiction will be able to extend their paid maternity leave by as many as 24 weeks of unpaid leave.

Mr. Speaker, the Government's response to the Abella Report should not be ignored. That report, entitled "Equality in Employment", was tabled in the House of Commons last November. It contains the findings of an inquiry on the most efficient and fairest ways of promoting equal opportunities in employment. In her report, Justice Abella provided a penetrating analysis of the unique situation confronting too many women. This Government has responded very quickly to that report. In order to eliminate the systemic discrimination too often faced by women in our society, the Government has decided to require from Crown corporations, federal agencies and suppliers of goods and services to the Federal Government that they have equitable employment practices. To that end, Crown corporations and federal agencies having more than 100 employees shall have to report annually to Parliament on their plans for and progress in equality in employment.

With respect to those firms anxious to get \$200,000 government contracts, they will have to adopt equitable employment practices or lose their right to bid for such contracts.

Furthermore, as an employer, the Government will not dodge its responsibilities. Indeed we intend to intensify the implementation of the positive action program. Immediate steps are taken to eliminate the systemic obstacles to employment equality that exist in the Public Service classification methods. That is the gist of this Government's response to the Abella report.

Along the same line, Mr. Speaker, the Government has announced its intention to give women easier access to the labour force while at the same time recognizing their family obligations. The Minister of Justice (Mr. Crosbie) has recently introduced an amendment to the Divorce Act which would

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among other things strengthen the statutory provisions concerning alimony.

Among the proposed changes, a new mechanism would allow federal and provincial data banks to trace spouses who default on alimony payments. Finally, I would point out that those changes will give the courts authority to garnishee pensions and unemployment insurance benefits wherever the beneficiary defaults on his or her obligations.

In the Throne Speech, the Government undertook to increase its efforts to broaden unemployment opportunities for women within federal agencies, commissions and boards. By ensuring that qualified women have access to jobs involving responsibility and prestige in employment groups that often are non-traditional, the government is setting up an example for business and industry.

I am happy to point out that over the past six months, 23 per cent of all appointees to federal agencies, commissions and boards were women. We are rapidly approaching the 30 per cent goal that was set for the first year of our mandate. Among recent appointments, allow me to mention that of Sylvia Gold as head of the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women. This appointment has been warmly welcomed by women groups from all across Canada, and it also reasserts the Canadian Government's commitment to have this organization turned into a strong and independent body which would not fear on occasion to question Government action in matters relating to the status of women.

Let me recall some of the means with which the Government intends to promote the economic and social equality of women: consulting with women groups; integrating women issues into the Government's decision process; appointing women to federal commissions and boards and important positions in the Public Service; enacting statutes to abolish discrimination against women and to enhance their economic and social status; and finally strengthening the role of the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

However, the Federal Government cannot reach its goals in that area without the help and co-operation of the Provinces. Indeed, many sectors of particular interest for women such as education and health come under provincial jurisdiction. The nature and importance of measures to improve the condition of women are not identical in all provinces. It would be impossible to mention the numerous provincial initiatives dealing with the status of women, let alone enumerate the many issues provinces have been unable to deal with up to now.

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In order to assist provincial governments ensure equal opportunities for women, the Secretary of State will hold regular meetings with provincial ministers responsible for the status for women. More formally, task groups made up of federal and provincial representatives have been set up to make sure that both levels of government assume their respon-