


Promise of Beijing

The scope of *The Plan* is commensurate with the complexity of creating a world of equality. And, like equality, *The Plan* is a work in progress. New commitments will continue to be made under *The Plan* to keep pace with the changing environment on equality.

Gender-based analysis has potential to help shape the full range of government decision-making and to make gender equality an inherent aspect of public policy rather than a remedial measure.



The Plan is set up for easy reference and comparison with the Beijing Platform for Action. Its eight main objectives are aligned with the critical areas of concern addressed in the objectives of the Platform for Action:

- implement gender-based analysis throughout federal departments and agencies;
- improve women's economic autonomy and well-being;
- improve women's physical and psychological well-being;
- reduce violence in society, particularly violence against women and children;
- promote gender equality in all aspects of Canada's cultural life;
- incorporate women's perspectives in governance;
- advance gender equality for employees of federal departments; and
- promote and support global gender equality.

Gender-based analysis

A key component of *The Plan* is a new federal policy requiring gender-based analysis of all federal programs, policies, and legislation, as appropriate. The concept of gender-based analysis is familiar to many in the women's equality movement. Gender-based analysis requires that policies be developed with appreciation of gender differences. It compares how and why women and men are affected differently by public policy initiatives. Gender-based analysis has enormous potential to help shape the full range of government decision-making and to make gender equality an inherent aspect of public policy rather than a remedial measure.

Gender-based analysis will require a learning curve in government. The federal government has a five-year time-

table for its implementation. During International Women's Week 1996, Status of Women Canada released *Gender-Based Analysis: A Guide for Policy Making*, a hands-on manual for using gender-based analysis as a policy tool. One of the next steps will be to train various federal departments on applying gender-based analysis. Gender-based economic indicators are also being developed, as a joint federal-provincial/territorial project, to better enable jurisdictions to incorporate the reality of women's economic status in economic and social policy decision-making.

Platform links

There are many other areas where *The Plan* and the Platform are directly connected and where the commitments of both are being carried out. These are just a few of the steps being taken under *The Plan* that address the critical areas of concern in the Platform:

- Recent reforms made changes to the award, enforcement, and tax treatment of child support payments, with the underlying principle that both parents are responsible for their children. (Poverty, women and the economy, the girl child)
- The 1996 Census was the first national census in the world to ask questions on unpaid work. (Women and the economy)
- New legislation has been passed on firearms, peace bonds, sentencing, and intoxication as a defense. New legislation has been tabled in female genital mutilation, stalking, child prostitution, and child sex tourism. (Violence against women, health)
- The Child Care Visions Initiatives creates 6,000 new and enhanced child care spaces in on-reserve and Inuit communities. Consultations between federal, provincial, and territorial governments continue on the use of federal child care funds. (Poverty, women and the economy, the girl child)
- Preparation of a Women's Health Strategy is well underway and a Canada/USA Women's Health Forum will take place in August, 1996. (Health)

A role for everyone

It takes a collective effort to monitor, to shape, and to advance progress on women's equality.

The Beijing Declaration recognizes the necessary limits of government in this regard:

The participation and contribution of all actors of civil society, particularly women's groups and net-

works and other non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations, with full respect for their autonomy, in co-operation with Governments, are important to the effective implementation and follow-up of the Platform for Action. (Paragraph 20)

In other words, we all have a role to play in advancing women's equality—in Canada and in the global community. In this, the last decade of the twentieth century, we, in Canada, have developed experience and expertise in collaborating across the public, private, and voluntary sectors. This web of connections with its open and interactive avenues of communication, consultation, cross-fertilization, and concerted action is one of the most exciting, promising, and powerful developments in the movement for equality.

Status of Women Canada has just completed a consultation process with women's organizations and other interested constituents on how we can work more collaboratively to achieve women's equality. Consultation and collaboration also continue among federal, provincial, and territorial governments, particularly as we work to renew the federation. Canadians are increasingly interactive in their relationship with government and Status of Women Canada is committed to supporting a strong dynamic partnership with the NGO movement.

Status of Women Canada is supporting a number of post-Beijing activities sustaining the momentum of the World Conference on Women. For example: In May, the Canadian Beijing Facilitating Committee published a working guide for individuals and organizations called *Take Action for Equality, Development and Peace—A Canadian Follow-up Guide to Beijing '95*.

Since February, the Comité Québécois de Suivre a

Beijing has organized workshops and training for women on lobbying at the international level. The Student's Commission is producing a multimedia kit on issues raised at the Youth Caucus of the World Conference; and Immigrant Women of Saskatchewan convened a two-day post-Beijing Forum in March.

In a fast-changing environment, we must be vigilant to ensure the commitments of the Beijing Platform for Action and *The Federal Plan for Gender Equality* are implemented. As importantly, we must work in partnership to create cooperative strategies for women's equality. International agreements, national commitments, and NGO activism can be mutually reinforcing and an effective dynamic for advancing women's equality in Canada and around the world. Working together, we can fulfill the promise of Beijing.

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References

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