

B.C. CEDAW Group

News release

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B.C. fails to meet international women's rights standards – B.C. CEDAW Group

New report highlights province's lack of action to protect women and girls, failure to address violence and poverty

The government of British Columbia is ignoring the human rights of the province's most vulnerable women, according to a new report released today by the B.C. CEDAW Group, a coalition of women's and human rights organizations that has been monitoring the status of women's equality in the province since 2002.

Nothing to Report is an assessment of B.C.'s response to two urgent recommendations made to Canada by the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (UN CEDAW) in 2008. Canada was given one year to report back on steps taken throughout the country to address:

- Police and government failure to deal effectively with violence against Aboriginal women and girls, and
- Women's poverty and inadequate social assistance rates.

On both issues, the B.C. CEDAW Group – backed by many allies, including the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs, the B.C. Federation of Labour, and the B.C. Civil Liberties Association – concludes that B.C. has taken no effective steps to respond to the UN Committee's direction nor has the province urged the federal government to take action.

“Despite over a hundred disappearances and murders of Aboriginal women and girls from Vancouver's Downtown East Side and along the Highway of Tears in northern B.C., the provincial government has not responded to numerous calls for a public inquiry to examine the reasons for law enforcement's failure, and to correct systemic problems,” says Laura Holland of the Aboriginal Women's Action Network (AWAN), one of the member-organizations of the B.C. CEDAW Group.

“Nor has any effective action been taken to address the poor social and economic conditions of Aboriginal women and girls, which make them more vulnerable to violence.”

Shelagh Day of the Poverty and Human Rights Centre, also part of the B.C. CEDAW Group, says that in addition to the pandemic of violence against Aboriginal women and girls, B.C. has the highest rate of poverty in Canada, and social assistance rates in this province are too low to cover both rent and decent food.

“When social assistance rates are inadequate, women are often endangered – they become homeless or live in squats where they are at risk of harassment and rape, or they feel compelled to stay with abusive partners.

“It is time for the government to act and to respect the international human rights obligations and responsibilities to which Canada and its provinces and territories have pledged,” says Day.

Along with AWAN and Poverty and Human Rights Centre, other member-organizations of the B. C. CEDAW Group are: Coalition of Child Care Advocates of B.C., Hospital Employees’ Union, Justice for Girls, Women’s Housing Equality Network, North Shore Women’s Centre, Vancouver Committee for Domestic Workers and Caregivers Rights, Vancouver Rape Relief and Women’s Shelter, Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres-B.C. and Yukon Region, Vancouver Women’s Health Collective, and West Coast Women’s Legal Education and Action Fund.

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For a copy of *Nothing to Report*, go to:

<http://www.westcoastleaf.org/userfiles/file/BC%20CEDAW%20Group%20Shadow%20Report%202010.pdf>

For a copy of the UN CEDAW 2008 concluding observations on Canada, go to:

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/docs/co/CEDAW-C-CAN-CO-7.pdf>