



International Women's Day
March 8, 2010

**FORWARD
WE MARCH!**

At a time when it feels like our world is short of causes to celebrate, **Canadian women do have something to cheer about.** Canadian women have become a major force in the labour market, women have crossed the 50 per cent threshold and have become the majority of the country's hourly workforce. On International Women's Day, that's a milestone worth celebrating.

But we still have a long way to go and get there we will.

Today women are working harder and longer, yet we are still falling behind just as our mothers did before us. For women who were around during the heyday of the women's movement, this feels like a betrayal of promises for women's equality. For younger women, the barriers that we insisted must come down feel as high as ever as they strive to make their mark in a supposedly "post-feminist" era.

Women are still pushing for a national child care program, affordable housing, real and binding pay equity legislation –all programs which will promote change for women and their children.

The erosion of women's rights began without delay under the Harper Conservatives through a series of carefully controlled attacks on women's equality as part of a broader agenda, so craftily and insidiously pushing back the hard won gains of all equality seeking groups (including people of colour, the LGBT community, women, people with disabilities, immigrants and refugees and others).

For women in this country and all those who genuinely believe that we all must have the opportunity to live in dignity, there are two prominent issues that confront us on International Women's Day.

Our national gun registry is in danger and we could lose it in the months to come. The Conservative sponsored private members Bill C-391 would effectively eliminate the registry and kill our national gun control system. Bill C-391 passed second reading, propped up by 8 Liberals, 12 NDP and one independent MP.

By eliminating the long gun registry, the government is depriving police, suicide prevention and domestic violence prevention officers of an essential tool that helps protect families and communities from gun violence. These are the guns most often used to kill police officers, women in domestic violence situations and in suicides, particularly those involving youth.

On International Women's Day this year the CAW will join with hundreds of thousands of Canadians across this country calling on MPs to vote NO when Bill C-391 returns for third and final reading in Parliament in the coming months.

Affordable quality child care is also under threat. Federal transfer payments to the provinces to support affordable quality child care will dry up entirely in early 2010 and already cities are cutting or closing municipal centres. Tens of thousands of day care spots will disappear across the country. This also means thousands of child care workers, mostly women, will lose their jobs.

UNICEF ranks Canada dead last of the world's 25 most wealthy countries for child care and it's only getting worse.

This year is the fourth anniversary of the Universal Child Care Benefit –the Conservative government's answer to a universal child care plan. The pittance of less than \$100 a month after tax for parents with children under six falls far short of actual child care costs of \$600 to \$1,200 a month. With fewer affordable child care spaces being created, this translates to closing off opportunities to low-income families.

This Conservative experiment has been an abysmal failure. The CAW is standing with community partners to demand a universal, affordable, not-for-profit, quality child care program.



This year, let's demand that the interests of women and families are put first for stronger and truly egalitarian communities.

This International Women's Day, let's celebrate our achievements and not let this conservative agenda push us back. Forward we march!

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