

BC PROVINCIAL CUTS TO

INFORMATION ACCURATE AS OF APRIL 10, 2002

CRIMINAL LAW

ANTICIPATED IMPACT ON WOMEN WHO EXPERIENCE VIOLENCE

CUTS TO LEGAL AID COMBINED with cuts to the criminal justice system may endanger the safety of women and their children. **Cuts to rural policing and a 24% reduction in the number of crown counsel could mean that fewer reports of violence against women will be thoroughly investigated, fewer comprehensive police reports to crown counsel will be made, fewer charges will be approved by crown counsel and more charges may be stayed as a result of delayed or reluctant witnesses.** As a result, fewer abusers will be held accountable for their behavior and fewer women who experience violence will have access to criminal protection orders.

CUTS, POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE CHANGES

IMPACT: KNOWN AND POTENTIAL

Crown Victim Witness Services has been eliminated (Ministry of AG and Minister Responsible for Treaty Negotiations Service Plan Summary 2002/03-2004/05, 2002:2).

Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General continues to fund community-based and police-based victim assistance programs.

15 Crown counsel (i.e., 25%) are going to be laid off (Ministry of AG and Minister Responsible for Treaty Negotiations Service Plan Summary 2002/03-2004/05, 2002:2).

Court ordered assaultive men's treatment programs will be cut by at least 50%.

Remaining community-based and police-based victim assistance programs will be required to pick up these services. Those programs may have to reduce some services to victims of sexual assault/physical assault. Programs will be depending on already overburdened Crown counsel to provide court/case related information for victims.

With reduced Crown resources there will be long delays and there may be a temptation to let workload concerns affect charging decisions. The ultimate result may be that fewer offenses are prosecuted. The enforcement of criminal protection orders will be more difficult, including an increase in applications to remove protective conditions of bail and a decrease in the number of breaches of protection orders prosecuted. Due to inadequate resources, less time may be spent assisting the victim and offenders will not be held accountable for their violence.

There will be less service to rural areas, delays and backlogs in court time and inadequate time for witness preparation.

This will impede efforts to teach men alternative non-violent forms of behaviour and therefore potentially increase violence against women.



CONTINUED

INFORMATION

BC Institute Against Family Violence
(604) 669-7055
1-877-755-7055 (toll free)

BC Association of Specialized Victim Assistance and Counselling Programs
(604) 633-2506

BC/Yukon Society of Transition Houses
(604) 669-6943

RESOURCES

Government of British Columbia, Minister of Finance
www.bcbudget.gov.bc.ca

PovNet
www.povnet.org

BC Coalition of Women's Centres
www3.telus.net/bcwomen/bcwomen

Access Justice
www.accessjustice.ca

Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives
www.policyalternatives.ca/bc

BC Coalition of People with Disabilities
www.bccpd.bc.ca

Cuts and changes to Criminal Injuries Compensation means that compensation will no longer be provided for pain and suffering. Criminal Injuries Compensation will be replaced with the new Crime Victim Assistance Act and will continue to provide funding for counseling and other related costs.

Police and Corrections Related Services

5 community probation offices will be closed (Hope, Kitimat, Parksville, Sidney, 100 Mile House) (Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General Service Plan Summary, 2002:3).

The Ministry will 'rationalise' costs of policing communities of less than 5,000 and rural areas (Ministry of Public Safety Services Plan, 2002: 4)

Police training at the Justice Institute will be reduced.

The Protection Order Registry will be enhanced through technology, but the Province has transferred administration of firearms licenses to Federal government and it is not clear whether staff doing firearms license application checks will have access to the Registry to determine whether the applicant has a history of family violence

Women who have been physically or sexually assaulted or psychologically traumatized may receive less compensation to support their recovery.

Police and Corrections Related Services

It may be more difficult for probation officers to monitor men on probation.

If these measures create a reduction in policing it may make it more difficult for women to obtain protection, particularly in rural and semi-rural areas where services are already scarce.

Municipal police may likely receive less training on how to deal with violence against women.

Could potentially result in offenders with histories of violence against women and children receiving firearms.