

BC PROVINCIAL CUTS TO

INFORMATION ACCURATE AS OF APRIL 10, 2002

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE AND OTHER SOCIAL PROGRAMS

ANTICIPATED IMPACT ON WOMEN WHO EXPERIENCE VIOLENCE

AMONG SERVICES THAT ARE MOST CRITICAL to women who are attempting to leave abusive relationships are those that provide crisis intervention/counselling, basic needs (shelter and food), personal and child support. The reduction or elimination of any of these services and programs disrupts the safety net because each is an essential component of responding to women who experience violence. **The reduction and/or elimination of social services, such as those included in the selective list that follows, often forces women to remain in or return to abusive situations.**

CUTS, POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE CHANGES

IMPACT: KNOWN AND POTENTIAL

Ministry of Women's Equality

Elimination of a stand alone Women's Ministry – replaced with a Minister of State for Women's Equality.

Women's Centres

Core funding for Women's Centres eliminated by 2004 (approximately \$2 million across the province annually).

Bridging Employability Program

Program for women leaving abusive relationships to develop skills for employment will be eliminated by 2003/4.

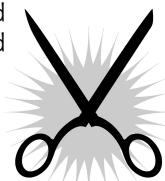
Minister of State for Women's Equality continues to fund transition houses, Stopping the Violence Counselling Programs and Children who Witness Abuse Programs.

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

Potential for marginalization of women's equality needs across government.

Affects 38 Women's Centres in the province and a range of services that they provide, coordinate and administer including education/workshop counseling (peer and crisis), referrals, family court advocacy, support during court proceedings, supports for abused kids, general advocacy, resource library, child care support programs, First Nations Support circle, clothing exchange, free meals for women and their children, meeting spaces for women (Source: Women's Centres, Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services).

-Impede access to employment, increased dependence on abusive partners



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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

Social Assistance

Change to base funding – government goal is savings of \$580 million annually and reduce welfare roll by \$38,000.00.

CATEGORY	Current	New	% Loss
Single parent, One child	\$376.58	\$307.22	18.4%
Single Person, age 55-69	\$231.92	\$185.00	20.2%
Single Person, age 60-64	\$282.92	\$185.00	34.6%

Eligibility

- No eligibility for 3 weeks.
- Employable single parents will be expected to find work when youngest child turns 3 (down from 7yrs).
- Flat Rate Earnings Exemption eliminated - currently allowed to work and keep \$100 (single), \$200 (child or partner).
- Family maintenance payments owed to a custodial parent while on assistance will be paid to the ministry.
- Single parent no longer entitled to keep \$100/month of family maintenance payments.
- Legal guardians no longer eligible for social assistance under the Child in the Home of a Relative Program.
- Short term homemaker services eliminated in some situations (e.g. refugee claimants).
- Young people age 19+ will be required to be independent for 2 years before eligible for assistance.
- Dependent children of clients will be required to attend school as a condition of family's eligibility.
- If found guilty of "fraud", banned from receiving welfare for life
- Proposed elimination of welfare to sponsored immigrants.

Workfare

- Welfare-to work training programs with mandatory work-experience. Prior to completing an application, individuals must participate in employment orientation and 3 week self-directed job search.

Human Resources

- 459 Human Resource staff will be cut and 36 offices closed – 15 in rural communities. (Ministry of Human Resources Services Plan, p.5).
- Rural community offices may be replaced by kiosks in public spaces (e.g. local hotels).

Counselling

- Loss of youth counsellors for "at risk" adolescents.
- Elimination of funding for programs addressing isolation of marginalized people (eg. Youthquest).
- Seniors counselling program eliminated.

Ministry of Children and Family Development

- \$460 million and 1,100 ministry staff will be cut over 3 years. (The Sun, Jan 18 2002 A4).
- Restricted eligibility criteria, new rate structure for early childhood development, special needs children, youth services by 2004.
- Adolescents forced to leave foster care at age 17.

Welfare only covers 45-65% of the cost of daily living depending on family type (SPARC Release December 6, 2001)

Return to work policy expected to affect just under 10,000 single parents (Ministry of Human Resources) and 82,498 children dependent on welfare (Sept. 2001 figure).

The range of potential impacts on women and their children include:

- Increased financial dependence on abusive partners.
- Fewer supports will endanger women by making them more vulnerable to violence (stalking, harassment, assault, and murder) - especially for immigrant and refugee women.
- increase in poverty for women and children.
- Due to poverty, many mothers will be faced with the prospect of returning children to abusive partners with financial resources.
- Decrease in food security, increase in food bank usage and women and children going hungry.
- Decrease in financial resources for education or job-finding (e.g. transportation, telephone, stamps, newspapers).
- Increase in social isolation.
- Increased risk of homelessness.
- Increase in child prostitution and poverty for youth who are trying to escape violence at home.
- Inability to supplement assistance with part-time/casual work.
- Overall health decreases, increase in morbidity and/or mortality
- Increased humiliation and depression

-Delays in receiving social assistance for 3 weeks may hinder leaving violent relationships.

-Decreased ability to secure assistance (financial/housing assistance, education/employment opportunities) particularly in rural communities.

-Increased danger to women who will have no privacy when making applications for social assistance.

-Many "at risk" adolescents have experienced or witnessed abuse; fewer services to help them deal with such issues.

-Elderly women who experience spousal assault are at a greater risk for re-victimization.

-Reduction in services for children with disabilities, autistic children.

-Increased poverty and homelessness for "at risk" youth.

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Child Care

- Child Care BC Program which provided before and after school care for children from kindergarten to age 12 eliminated.
- Lower subsidy thresholds.
- Sections of the Child Care BC Act rescinded and Funding Assistance Program terminated.
- Resource and referral centers closed.

Housing

- New criteria for new social housing focussing on most vulnerable (homeless, mentally and physically incapacitated individuals) may exclude women who are attempting to leave violent situations.

- Fewer families will access the income tested child care subsidy; eligible families will receive fewer dollars to assist with monthly child care fees
- Decreased community access to assistance to apply for child care subsidies; reduced access to child care information
- Parents will have to choose between quality childcare and feeding children
- Use of cheaper, unsafe, baby-sitting where adults are untrained and have no criminal record checks
- Lack of childcare before and after school reduces a women's ability to leave an abuser and get work.

- Women who have experienced violence may have a harder time accessing housing which will reduce their safety on a short and long-term basis.
- Women may return to abusers, move in with family/friends, take sub-standard unsuitable apartments or use food and clothing resources to pay their rent.