



FAFIA's Submission to Alternative Federal Budget 2008

Ensuring Equality for Women

Canada must adopt comprehensive, regulated and accountable gendered analyses in the federal budgetary process. To this end, the 2008 Alternative Federal Budget includes a gender based analysis of all budget chapters.

Gender responsive budgeting aims to address the persistent inequalities between women and men by integrating gender-based analyses into macro-economic and micro-economic policy development.

In 2005, The Beijing Platform for Action called on all signatories, including Canada, to assess how public expenditures benefited women and to proactively adjust expenditures to better address gender inequality. Canada actively supports gender budgeting initiatives throughout the world under the Canadian International Development Agency. However, there is only a very limited commitment to gender budgeting in Canada at both the provincial and federal level.

A gender analysis of Canada's federal budgets from 1995-2005, carried out for the Feminist Alliance for International Action, concluded that Canadian social policy is being increasingly delivered through tax policy and this is leading to ever shrinking social programs and weakened social and economic security for most women.¹

This is of particular concern as the majority of low income earners in Canada are women and are more reliant on sustainable and reliable social programming. Further, low income earners are unable to benefit from tax measures such as non-refundable tax credits as their incomes are often too low to even pay income taxes. In 2004, thirty-nine percent of female tax filers did not pay any tax as their incomes were too low.

To fully implement a federal gender budgeting initiative, the government of Canada must increase the capacity of Status of Women Canada (SWC), the lead federal department for gender equality. The AFB increases SWC's budget to \$50 million to cover operational costs (including personnel and the re-establishment of SWC's regional offices), improved training of public servants throughout departments on the application of gender based analysis, and increased funding to the Women's Program at Status of Women Canada, which provides grants and contributions to non-governmental organizations.

¹ Canada's Commitment to Equality: A Gender Analysis of the Last Ten Federal Budgets (1995-2004) (Yalnizyan 2005)

To support gender based analysis (GBA) all statistical data collected in Canada should be disaggregated by gender. All federal departments, in particular the department of Finance, the Privy Council Office and the Treasury Board, must assume a leadership role in ensuring that tax policy measures and expenditures delivered through the federal budget are considered for their gendered impact.

To better facilitate this, the AFB invests \$10 million to establish a Gender Equality Enhancement Fund (to be managed by the Treasury Board). This fund would be exclusively earmarked to support federal government departments and non-governmental organizations with the operational costs associated with under-taking gender based analysis (such as hiring appropriate personnel and related administrative support).

Fifty percent of this \$10 million is to be allocated to government departments to support GBA initiatives. Another 50% will be allocated to non-government organizations to perform (at arm's length) relevant gender-based analysis on federal policies and programs. This allocation is consistent with the recommendations of the federally commissioned Expert Panel on Accountability Mechanisms for Gender Equality which reported in late 2004.²

Finally, to ensure that Canada fully upholds its equality commitments under domestic and international law, the AFB allocates funds to appoint a Gender Equality Commissioner (modeled after the Environmental Commission) within the Auditor General's office. Based upon the costs associated with the Environmental Commissioner, this would require an annual investment of \$3 million³.

² http://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/resources/panel/report/index_e.html

³ http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/rpp/0708/OAG-BVG/oag-bvg03_e.asp#sec3g