



Support for Women

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and Minister Responsible for Seniors' and Women's Issues

Women and the Economy

- Since December 2001, B.C.'s economy has generated more than 409,200 new jobs, leading the country in job growth – with about half (45 per cent) of those jobs filled by women.
- The number of women working in British Columbia today is at its highest level ever (1.075 million). The highest level on record in more than 30 years.
- Since December 2001, 78 per cent of female job creation has been full-time.
- Nearly 36 per cent of the self-employed in B.C. were women, one of the highest rates in the country and above the national average.
- Female labour force participation is at one of its highest levels: 61.3 per cent (January, 2008).
- For 2007, there were 1,055,400 women working in B.C., compared to 901,400 in 2001.
- In February 2008, there are 26,600 more women working in B.C. than in Feb. 2007.

Support for Advanced Education

- Educational opportunities for women show a pattern of growth; women make up 58 per cent of students in B.C. universities and 53 per cent of students in B.C. colleges, university colleges and institutes. The number of women enrolled in graduate programs has increased from approximately 7,800 in 2001-02 to almost 10,000 in 2006-07. More women than ever are enrolled at the graduate level and in trade schools.
- Our new loan-reduction program is aimed primarily at low-income households and people with dependents. Last year, we forgave more than \$70 million in student loans, and of the 25,000 people who benefited, 61 per cent were women, receiving 64 per cent of the amount forgiven.
- Women receive 60 per cent of the student loans provided interest-free to students from British Columbia while they are studying full time. The Industry Training Authority is increasing awareness and access for under-represented groups to consider industry trades or technology. This group includes women.

Support for Child Care

- This government is committed to the development of a high quality, accessible and sustainable early learning and child care system that meets the needs of children and their families in all parts of the province.
- B.C. continues to fund more than 86,000 licensed child care spaces across the province.
- More than 3,300 new spaces have been created since 2001 and the province has targeted the creation of another 2,000 spaces by 2010.

- The almost \$130 million per year subsidy program supports about 25,000 children per month in low and moderate income families.
- We changed subsidy eligibility so that about 6,500 more children are eligible for subsidized child care and about 6,000 families receive an increase in their existing subsidy.
- We increased the out-of-school child care subsidy rate benefiting an estimated 13,300 children and 10,000 families with children aged six to 12.
- We extended the kindergarten subsidy rate to carry on through the entire school year, rather than when children turn six.
- Early childhood educators are a critical component of an effective child care system. Government is playing a role in supporting the recruitment and retention of early childhood educators through training and professional development contributions, bursaries and two pilot programs: the [ECE Student Loan Assistance Program](#) and the [ECE Incentive Grant Program](#).
- Success by 6 is a comprehensive, integrated service delivery system that supports children and families through a partnership between the Ministry of Children and Family Development, United Way and credit unions. This initiative supports and strengthens existing community services and helps establish new ECD programs, providing children with support they need to be physically, socially and emotionally ready to start school. From 2003-2007, \$18 million in provincial funding directly supported communities across B.C. Currently there are 19 Success By 6 initiatives reaching over 203 communities in BC and 50 cross-sectoral tables focused on bettering the lives of children age six and younger.

Employment and Income Support

- There are some encouraging signs that women in B.C. are starting to take advantage of the critical trades shortage in some sectors of the economy. According to Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey, a record number of women – over 18,000 – were employed in the construction sector last year.
- Since 2003/04, the number of women studying in construction, mechanics and transportation training programs has increased 45 per cent by 2005/06, with a total of 141 females enrolled. However, with over 6,000 male students enrolled in the program area, these 141 female students still account for only 2.3 per cent of the total.
- The Province is providing \$100,000 to connect more women with employment opportunities in the construction sector through the Skilled Trades Employment Project for Women operated by the B.C. Construction Association.
- Through [Empowered to Work](#), a women's mentoring project, we're investing more than \$500,000 annually for several innovative mentoring programs. Empowered to Work is for women re-entering the paid workforce after a prolonged absence, as well as those entering for the first time, including single mothers, women with disabilities, mature women, immigrant women, Aboriginal women, women entering the trades, sciences and technology and women who want to move from employment to self-employment.
- This government is committed to assisting women who are able to work, find and keep jobs and become self-reliant, so they can build brighter futures for themselves and their families. That's why we're investing over \$70 million each year in employment programs that work, assisting British Columbians throughout the province to move into good jobs.
- These programs include a specialized \$5-million [Bridging Employment Program](#) that assists women who have faced violence and/or abuse to overcome their barriers and move towards independence and employment. Over the past four years, our Bridging Employment Program

has been highly successful – helping women leave abusive situations and helping former sex trade workers – both men and women – develop the life skills they need to move forward toward employment, self-reliance and a brighter future.

- In July 2006, the Province launched the new \$35 million B.C. Employment Program, which is designed to give clients on income assistance the supports and training they need to find and keep good jobs.
- In October 2006, we launched the revised \$7.5 million Community Assistance Program (CAP), providing life-skills services and supports to approximately 5,000 BC Employment and Assistance clients who possess significant barriers to independence.
- Fifty CAP contracts were awarded province-wide, including one specialized contract in Vancouver for Women at Risk delivered by Family Services of Greater Vancouver. Clients receive personal counselling and support as well as life skills, such as self care, self-esteem building, stress management and trauma counselling.
- Since 2001, 112,000 fewer British Columbians are dependent on income assistance; that includes parents and the 51,500 children who depend on them. The number of single women on income assistance has declined by over 4,000 women. Studies show that 90 per cent of people leaving income assistance leave for a job, education or a better financial situation. Those who are working are earning two to three times what they received on income assistance.

Support for Families

- We provided \$40 million to help B.C. families of children with special needs and individuals with developmental disabilities to buy equipment, convert vehicles and renovate homes so loved ones may remain at home and gain greater access to their communities.
- We provided \$550,000 to Douglas College to train more qualified behavioural interventionists and support workers for children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).
- We provided \$10-million to the Victoria Foundation to establish the Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Action Fund, to promote prevention and support projects for children and youth. We also provided \$200,000 for research, assessments and diagnoses for youth with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) who are in the youth justice system.
- We invested more than \$2.7 million over the past two fiscal years to the BC Council for Families to strengthen and support families through training and prevention programs and services. REVISED (number and timing)

Health Care Support for Women and Their Families

- B.C. women have the second lowest overall incidence rate of cancer in Canada and are below most of the national incidence rates for individual cancers. B.C. women have the lowest incidence rate for breast cancer, kidney and colorectal cancer.
- One of the four pillars of ActNow BC is Healthy Choices in Pregnancy (HCIP). For 2007/08, we have provided \$2.8 million to support key components of HCIP to promote healthy pregnancies for women, improve maternal and infant health, and decrease the incidence of infants that have Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). The funding also enhances and develops health authority perinatal programs and further implements the provincial education plan which educates direct service providers on how to counsel women regarding alcohol use in pregnancy. A portion of the HCIP funds is also helping to support the development of an Aboriginal perinatal health plan, clinical maternity care best practices, and breastfeeding education for health care providers.

- The Provincial Health Services Authority provided \$72,000 in funding to ensure mothers infected with HIV will be able to access infant formula at no cost and prevent post-natal transmission of HIV to uninfected babies.
- The \$16.5 million to the Nanaimo Regional General Hospital's new maternity care unit will allow expectant mothers and families to benefit from single-room maternity care and additional newborn intensive care beds. The privacy of single rooms supports mothers to begin breastfeeding and to bond with their infants immediately.
- Prince George Regional Hospital opened a new Maternity Unit and Neonatal Intensive Care Unit to provide private rooms for all stages of childbirth/recovery. This means mothers will labour, birth and recover in their own private rooms rather than have to move to other areas of the hospital. This will allow mothers to start breastfeeding sooner and families to become more involved in the care of their infants.
- The provincial women's health strategy was designed to improve the health and health care of girls and women in B.C. To further this strategy, government has provided \$100,000 to the health authorities to support the development of women's health plans. Additionally, we have invested another \$2 million to support the Women's Health Research Institute to improve our understanding and treatment of disease and injury among women and to work closely with researchers and training programs across B.C. and across Canada.
- In June 2007, the BC Centre of Excellence for Women's Health launched the BC Women's Health Data Directory in collaboration with the [Women's Health Research Network](#). The directory provides a gateway to data that will support health authorities in their efforts to enhance women's health and further the provincial women's health strategy. In 2008, Ministry of Health is helping to fund an expansion of the directory, which will incorporate additional research related to health authorities' studies and projects.
- Since 2005, the Province has provided \$4 million to increase awareness of the need for women between the ages of 40 and 69 to have a free mammogram through the Screening Mammography Program of B.C. To improve the survival rates of women with breast cancer, we provide \$10 million annually to give eligible patients access to the drug Herceptin through the BC Cancer Agency.
- The [BC HealthGuide program](#) provides health information and advice 24 hours every day to help women and their families make better health decisions. Callers can get information on health concerns, symptoms, home treatment and other care options. They can also find tips on how to prevent illness and when to consult a doctor. Free copies of the new, updated BC HealthGuide handbook are available at local pharmacies.
- Women can call the BC NurseLine and speak to a registered nurse (24 hours a day) or a pharmacist (from 5 p.m. to 9 a.m. every day). These services are confidential and translation services are available in over 130 languages. Nutrition information is available from a registered dietitian at Dial-A-Dietitian (from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday), with translation services. Visit www.dialadietitian.org for more information.
- The BC HealthGuide OnLine provides current, medically approved information on over 3,000 health topics, tests, procedures and resources. Click on www.bchealthguide.org or the Women's Health Channel at www.bchealthguide.org/womens.stm
- BC HealthFiles fact sheets cover a range of topics including public health, safety and other tips. They're available [online](#) and at public health units in B.C.

- We're funding a \$3.5-million expansion of diagnostic and assessment services to benefit children with complex developmental behavioural conditions, including those with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder
- Government is spending close to \$400,000 a year for expectant mothers in need and their babies by increasing monthly natal supplements from \$35 to \$45 each month for pre- and post-natal nutrition and infant nutrition.

Legal Aid Support

- Legal aid is an essential component of our justice system and has an important role to play in maintaining access to justice. B.C. invests more than \$62 million annually in a broad range of legal aid services to assist lower income individuals.
- Legal aid funding continues for emergency interim orders on family matters (such as restraining orders), supervised access orders, threats to permanently remove a child from the province, or child apprehension by the Ministry of Children and Family Development.
- Government provides more than \$25 million per year for options for families that encourage cooperation, like Family Justice Centres, family maintenance enforcement and mediation.

Support for Aboriginal Women

- We provided a total of \$120,000 to 24 regional delegated Aboriginal child and family agencies to support the work of their Aboriginal Elders Advisory Committees.
- We funded a Prince Rupert forum to address the high incidence of suicide among Aboriginal youth.
- We invested \$500,000 to fund projects in the northern region to help reconnect Aboriginal children in government care to their communities, culture and extended families. We also provided \$160,000 in grants to 11 Aboriginal agencies throughout the province to strengthen children's ties to their culture and traditions.
- In March 2006, the Province provided just over \$1 million in [Community Action for Women's Safety grants](#) to help 53 community-based organizations develop responses to violence against women, especially Aboriginal women, immigrant and visible minority women, older women and women with disabilities. Almost 50 per cent of the grants went to organizations with projects aimed at preventing violence against Aboriginal women.
- In March 2007, Minister Ida Chong hosted an Aboriginal Women's Dialogue to discuss priority issues facing Aboriginal women in British Columbia and hear their views on measures to improve their quality of life. These issues were put forward for discussion at the Aboriginal Women's Summit, which the Minister attended, in Corner Brook, Newfoundland and Labrador in June 2007.

Support for Women Affected by Violence

- On April 23, 2007, Premier Gordon Campbell, Minister Ida Chong and Attorney General Wally Oppal hosted B.C.'s first Congress on Women's Safety, a one-day dialogue on the issue of violence against women. Five presenters and more than 100 delegates provided a range of perspectives and included representatives from government, First Nations, multicultural and non-profit organizations, justice and law enforcement, business and the academic community.
- To support women affected by violence we've now provided a \$14.5 million increase since January 2005. That's a 40 per cent increase - for a total of almost \$50 million a year for prevention and intervention initiatives including transition house services, safe homes, second

stage housing, counselling, outreach and multi-cultural outreach services including \$2 million each year to ensure all provincially funded transition houses can provide 24/7 service.

- This increase also means women in over 100 communities throughout British Columbia are benefiting from the services available. Ninety-five per cent of women in British Columbia now have access to services within an hour of their home.
- In April 2007, the Province strengthened the health and safety support for women working in Vancouver's inner city sex trade with a one-time grant of \$75,000 for the Mobile Access Project, a crisis intervention and support service operated by the WISH Drop-in Centre Society.
- The Province has committed more than \$2 million in funding for transitional housing developments in Victoria, Terrace and Vancouver's Downtown Eastside that assist and support at-risk women and women and children fleeing abusive relationships.
- In March 2006, the Province provided just over \$1 million in [Community Action for Women's Safety grants](#) to help 53 community-based organizations develop responses to violence against women, especially Aboriginal women, immigrant and visible minority women, older women and women with disabilities.
- In 2006/07, the Province invested \$1.2-million in [Partners in Prevention](#), a grant program that builds on the system of supports we already have in place to assist women fleeing violence. This supports projects that collaborate with men and boys as partners in prevention and gives organizations an opportunity to have a lasting impact on preventing violence against women province-wide.
- Operated out of BC Women's Hospital and Health Centre, the Woman Abuse Response Program has trained more than 900 staff and 1,700 health care workers to recognize signs of violence and sexual abuse, to help ensure a more integrated response when a woman's health is affected by violence.
- Women leaving abusive situations who are eligible for income assistance receive support immediately. They are exempt from the three-week work search, two-year independence test and time limits.
- Reforms to the Spousal Assault policy are having the desired effect. There are fewer stays of proceedings that leave women unprotected and more women are being protected through court-ordered protection orders. Since the revisions there has been no change in the percentage of spousal assault charges approved to court.
- We recognize that some women may be very isolated and may be reluctant or afraid to seek any kind of service in their community. That's why government supports the confidential crisis line VictimLink – a toll-free 24-hour help line offering immediate crisis support and referral services – in 130 languages and dialects (1-800 563-0808).
- In ten communities multicultural outreach services ensure women are assisted by people who speak their own language and are familiar with their culture.

Support for Women Who Are Immigrants

- Through the Canada-BC Immigration Agreement, B.C. provides \$75 million for settlement and adaptation programs for new immigrants and refugees. These programs help immigrants adjust to life in their new country.

- Settlement and adaptation programs include English language services for adults, to help new immigrants adjust to life in British Columbia. To help new immigrants attend, transportation costs are covered, and free child care is provided.
- [BC NurseLine](#) gives people the information they need, when they need it, where they need it, and includes services for people who are deaf and hearing impaired as well as translation services in more than 130 languages – improving access for all British Columbians.
- The [BC Newcomer's Guide](#) is available online in five languages (English, Korean, Punjabi, French and Chinese) and includes information on health care in B.C.
- The Province provides close to \$1 million a year for multicultural outreach services to women who have experienced abuse and for whom English is not their first language. These services are provided in 10 communities and in 24 different languages.

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[More Information](#)