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Review of Selected National Projects in the areas of  
Health and Employment

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## I WOMEN AND HEALTH

1. A number of new measures have been taken in Canada in recent years to bring matters relating to women and health into the domain of public policy. The following activities are indicative of the kinds of programs now underway.

### A) Occupational & Environmental Health Hazards

2. The Health Protection Branch of Health & Welfare Canada has recently completed a world literature search to obtain and provide up-to-date knowledge on risks from industrial and environmental exposure to pregnant, lactating or menstruating women. The review articles are currently being screened for proven facts regarding occupational exposures of women, in order to recommend areas of research to fill information gaps.

3. The Health Protection Branch has also developed a significant toxicology program to identify potential effects of environmental and food-borne contaminants on the reproductive process.

4. New procedures have been developed for assessing both minimal neurological impairment and immunosuppression observed in infants of test species after in utero exposure.

5. The Branch has completed animal studies to assess trans-placental transfer of food additives and is now extending these studies to a broader range of environmental chemicals. In addition, there is an extensive on-going research program on the ability of food and environmental chemicals to produce genetic damage.

6. Work is now underway within the Medical Services Branch to define areas of occupational exposure to chemicals and other hazards that have a possible teratogenic consequence and seek action through collaborative efforts with the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety.

### B) Research into Women's Health Problems

7. A Women's Health Research Committee has been established within Health and Welfare Canada, charged with the development of a special bulletin to inform the research community of areas where new knowledge is needed, related to various aspects of the health of women. The bulletin pays special attention to health problems arising from changing life-styles, sexually-transmitted diseases, stress, poor nutrition and obesity, and identifies research in these areas that is being conducted or planned within the department.

8. The Mental Health Division of Health and Welfare Canada is currently engaged in a study which involves extensive analysis of mental health delivery systems in Canada. Preliminary examination of some of the data suggests that a statistical basis for differential diagnosis and treatment of mental disorders by sex can readily be demonstrated. Detailed examination of these findings will be undertaken and if the data are shown to be reliable, the implications will be discussed. The broader implications of general over-representation of women in mental health statistics also indicated in preliminary findings, will also be

analyzed. Hopefully, some approaches to mental health service may be suggested which would be more in keeping with the present lifestyles and expectations of Canadian women.

9. As part of its plans for events in 1980 (World Congress on Rehabilitation) and in 1981 (United Nations International Year for Disabled Persons) the Health and Welfare Canada is researching the extent, determinants, consequences and rehabilitation, and other needs of handicapped and chronically disabled women.

## II WOMEN & EMPLOYMENT

10. The past three decades have marked a period in Canada, as in other industrialized countries, when the labour force has been radically altered by the entry of a large proportion of women. The participation rate of females in Canada more than doubled from 23 per cent in 1950 to 48 per cent in 1978. For women to work after they are married, and to re-enter the labour force either after a short period of maternity leave or when the children no longer need day-long supervision, has become a common practice for Canadian women.

11. Yet this rapid increase in the participation of women has not brought about sexual equality in the market place. To a large extent women in Canada are employed in a relatively small number of occupations, many of which are stereotyped as being "female jobs". There exist substantial differences between the earnings of women and men, with occupations stereotyped as "female" paying far lower wages than other occupations. In spite of laws in Canada guaranteeing equal pay for work of equal value, there is evidence that this is often not the case. Government and private pension schemes have not been adjusted to reflect the new realities of the enlarged role played by women in Canadian society. Day care is still not adequately provided in many communities.

12. As with some other problems, the problem of addressing women's issues has been made difficult by the existence of various, sometimes overlapping, governmental jurisdictions in Canada. For example, child-care is mainly in the provincial-municipal jurisdiction whereas employment-related services are provided by both federal and provincial governments. Employment training is funded by the federal government but operated by the provinces.

13. At the national level, a number of innovative programs have been initiated to deal specifically with the problems faced by women in or re-entering the labour force. The following are instances of such undertakings.

A) Women's Career Counselling Service

14. The project provides pre-employment counselling and employment-related services to job seekers who are experiencing extreme difficulty in preparing for and/or entering the labour market. The clientele comprises sole support mothers, chronically unemployed females, welfare recipients, ex-offenders and others who have not worked for many years and require help in over-coming apprehension, or in taking advantage of programs and other services available elsewhere in the community.

15. The project is on-going under the auspices of the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission's "Outreach" program. This program funds innovative approaches to the delivery of employment-related services for special-needs clients.

16. The national-capital area in which the project operates lacks opportunities for women seeking jobs, whether they be well-educated or not. There is very limited private industry and there have been cut-backs within this sector in recent years. The federal government is the major employer and has also been taking concrete measures to reduce the size of the Public Service, as well as to decentralize portions of the government elsewhere in the country. These factors are in addition to generally high levels of unemployment for women: the 1979 annual average of unemployed women VS men in the province of Ontario was 7.7%: 5.6%; the national average for 1979 was 8.8%: 6.6%.

17. The project developed as a result of experiences at a local women's centre where many visitors indicated a desire for job-counselling. The inception of the project in 1975 also coincided with a general influx of women into the labour force and the heightened awareness of women's issues resulting from International Women's Year.

18. Some sixty-three percent of the project's clients in 1979 had work experience in just three traditionally female occupations - clerical, sales and service. Of the professional category, most women were social service workers, teachers or nurses. More than one-quarter of the clients were on public welfare.

19. The project was conceived and continues to be operated by women. The staff of four counsellors all had previous backgrounds in social work and had experienced personal difficulties in the labour market.

20. The services originally emphasized individual counselling but have evolved to a group workshop format. It was found that clients progressed much more quickly in overcoming their difficulties in the group support structure where experiences could be shared.

21. The basic philosophy continues to be a strong commitment to assist and encourage women to set their own career goals with increased self-confidence, self-knowledge and skills, and to effectively search for and find their own jobs.

22. The project provides the following services:

- i) information sessions - held twice monthly to explain resources available from the project and elsewhere in the community;
- ii) career orientation - four week workshops with participants meeting two half-days per week, focussing on self-assessment exercises, assertiveness training, an introduction to the labour market, training opportunities, resumé writing, and interview techniques;
- iii) counselling - either by telephone or on a personal-interview basis;
- iv) monitoring - weekly one-half day clinics of clients to review employment opportunities, interview results, etc.;
- v) library - of local employers, occupational data, government publications, general guides to seeking employment;
- vi) volunteer on-the-job training - at the projects office in support/ service work related to the projects' operation: typing/receptionist/ library/clerical/information services work.

23. The project continues to operate as a result of annual grants from the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission, (CEIC), totalling approximately \$75,000 per annum.

24. Although the nature of the project makes it difficult to measure its overall benefits for women, there are indicators of its success: one of these is the steady increase in the demand for services in all the areas noted above; another is the increased use of the service by regional employers, social assistance agencies and other employment service agencies; a final indicator is the high incidence of sustained interest in the project's work on the part of past "graduates" many whom are now successfully employed and continue to volunteer their time and experiences to help other clients.

#### B) Unison Society of Cape Breton

25. Unison is operating in Sydney, Nova Scotia also as an Outreach Project. It is designed to meet specific needs of the following types of women in industrial Cape Breton:

- women who have come into conflict with the law;
- sole-support mothers;
- wives of incarcerated male offenders;
- separated and divorced women seeking to enter or re-enter the labour force.

26. The ultimate goal is to provide women in these groups with extensive employment counselling and support to help each one develop to her own potential in a very competitive labour market. The emphasis is the long-term welfare of clients.

27. At its inception three years ago, the project was oriented solely towards female offenders, but it has gradually expanded its terms of reference to include a larger number of other women with a variety of problems.

28. During 1979 the project had a caseload of 139. Of these, 81 were female offenders and 58 were special-needs clients. The workers were able to make 63 placements (23 full-time, 40 part-time) during the course of the year.
29. The problems facing Unison clients are compounded by a very poor local labour market. The unemployment rate in Cape Breton is currently running at 15.3% compared to 11.5% for Nova Scotia as a whole. Over the course of 1979 it was at a level of 16.2%. Statistical data on female unemployment is not available for the Cape Breton area but the Nova Scotia figures provide an indication of the problem. The female unemployment rate in Nova Scotia is 11.3% (16,000 women). The female participation rate is 42.8% compared to a male participation rate of 70.1%. In industrial Cape Breton (an area encompassing Glace Bay; North Sydney; New Waterford and Sydney) there were 5,121 female clients registered at the Canada Employment & Immigration Commission (CEIC) in the last quarter of 1979. They represented 41% of the total clients registered.
30. Originally, the Unison project in Cape Breton was a branch operation of a now defunct Unison project operating from Halifax. In 1976 it became a separate organization and signed an Outreach contract with CEIC. It is now beginning its 5th year as an Outreach project.
31. All those working with the Unison project are women. The President of the Unison Society Board is a female. The two female case workers are involved in the day-to-day project management as well as the counselling and referral process. They receive training at the local Canada Employment Centre and participate in various conferences and seminars as part of their staff development.
32. Unison places highest priority on the immediate personal needs of clients - food, clothing, housing, legal aid, dependents' care, transportation - then long-term objectives are set and extensive personal counselling is given. The projects other activities include regular court and jail visits, liaison with local business establishments and with the Canada Employment Commission, referrals to other self-help agencies, and considerable community consciousness-raising work.
33. The project is funded at a level of \$19,608.00 for 1980/81. This is an increase over 1979/80 and reflects the Commission's main Outreach priorities which place emphasis on women, natives and the physically and mentally handicapped.
34. Funding is also obtained from the local United Way, the Elizabeth Fry Society and the Interprovincial Home for Young Women.
35. The problems facing female offenders and wives of offenders are great. They are compounded by very poor labour market conditions. Unison is working towards preparing women to compete for jobs under those difficult conditions.
36. The project has established a good reputation within the Sydney community, and the co-operation and support afforded to them by various groups, agencies and the courts is indicative of its success. The fact that the client group has expanded beyond female offenders also speaks well for its capacity to assist women with special needs.

C) Federal-Provincial Sole Support Mothers Pilot Project

37. The project evolved in 1976 as a result of the identification of a significant number of sole support mothers in receipt of social assistance, who wished to make the transition from dependency on publicly-funded income maintenance to independence through employment. The objective of the project is to assist sole support mothers achieve this independence.

38. The project operates in the large metropolitan area of TORONTO ONTARIO which has an extensive and diversified industrial base. This is a key component of the project and was the prime consideration in its establishment, as it provides a wide range of skilled, semi- and unskilled employment opportunities. Some 280 women have been referred to the project each year since its inception.

39. The project was conceived by the provincial Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services which is responsible for the family benefits assistance program. Ministry officials then sought the cooperation of the federal Canada Employment and Immigration Commission (CEIC). The project is operated jointly by both departments - the Ontario Ministry identifies and refers candidates to CEIC and provides for the personal needs of participants, such as day care; the federal CEIC provides all aspects of the required employment services - the orientation, counselling and if necessary, employment searching assistance.

40. Both men and women have been involved in the project since its inception. In 1980, three sole support mothers who are social workers, are responsible for the Ontario Ministry's involvement; two women counsellors coordinate CEIC's role.

41. CEIC's services include a three-week employment program comprising orientation sessions on the labour force and market, creative job search and interview techniques, resume writing, employment application form completion, and individual counselling. This course polishes the skills of women who are ready to find employment; for those without skills, it provides the basis for industrial on-the-job training for which CEIC reimburses the training salary costs to the sponsoring industry.

42. The project is financed jointly by the provincial and federal governments. Costs per year for salaries and operating and maintenance, total approximately \$80,000.

43. The major benefit of the program is that participants do indeed gain financial independence and they are counselled by CEIC against accepting employment that will not achieve this objective on a permanent basis. Women make their own decisions about returning to the labour market and are free at any time during the course of the project to return to income maintenance.



D) Pre-trades Training for Women

44. The project was started in Winnipeg MANITOBA in November 1976. Its purpose is to expose women to as many trades occupations as possible so that they will be able to make educated career choices.
45. The project was conceived by the Provincial Council of Women as the result of a report on apprenticeship in Manitoba prepared as an International Women's Year undertaking. The study concluded women were not working as tradespeople in the province, nor were any women taking trades training at technical colleges. Winnipeg is the major population centre of Manitoba and comprises half the provincial population.
46. The project is jointly operated by the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission (CEIC) and the Red River Community College in Winnipeg which is funded by the provincial Department of Education. It functions in the following manner: i) CEIC counsellors determine through personal interviews, the eligibility of women for sponsorship to the training program. CEIC purchases the spaces from the Community College. Agreement has been reached with the province to purchase additional seats in the future; ii) Women who are accepted are enrolled in one of two eight-week training courses offered at the College each Spring. The College employs a Coordinator responsible for counselling students, sensitizing instructors to the role of women in the trades and how to handle biases, and for contacts with local industry; iii) The training course involves an introductory session, instruction in electricity, electronics, small motors, auto mechanics, drafting, metals and construction, in the College workshops, and two-weeks of on-the-job training at a local industry. The College pays for all aspects of the course; iv) An evaluation is completed by the instructor at the termination of the course, on the best future prospects for individuals.
47. Women are sensitized to the availability of the course through local advertisements and workshops run under the auspices of a complimentary CEIC-sponsored Outreach project offering a women's career counselling service. The College has also printed an introductory brochure which is widely circulated through government, industry and the public. Basic criteria for eligibility include enjoyment of working with hands, good health and satisfactory personal arrangements such as day care.
48. Both men and women are involved in the project at the College and CEIC. The project has the support of senior male administrators at both the federal and provincial levels, and in industry.
49. The major benefit to women is in terms of the positive image installed in participants about their potential. Although only approximately 10% of graduates have found employment in their chosen trades areas, another 10% is enrolled in further trades training in chosen fields as a result of this course. The project has had an immeasurable effect on sensitization of employers, educators and counsellors as well, which should in the long run reduce resistance to women entering into hitherto male-dominated occupations. As well, in Manitoba trades training courses there is an increasing female enrollment which now is approximately 8%.

50. Spillover has also occurred with similar projects now ongoing in the provinces of Saskatchewan and Ontario. Further, the first graduates of the course started a provincial "Women in Trades Association" which now has affiliates in the provinces of Ontario, Saskatchewan and Alberta, and a national umbrella organization is planned. The federal Department of Labour has employed one full-time office in Winnipeg to work on the creation of the national organization, and to assist with the plans for a national 'Women in Trades' conference this fall.