

***Kootenay Women In Trades and Technology  
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July 9, 1997

The Honourable Corky Evans, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food  
MLA Nelson/Creston

Dear Corky:

I am writing in the hope that you will share my concerns at the cabinet table, and that we may use the opportunity to revise the Industrial Training and Apprenticeship Legislation to ensure effective representation from those who advocate an increase in the participation rates of women, visible minorities, aboriginal people and persons with disabilities.

While I am pleased that that increasing the participation rates was acknowledged and built into the Mandate of the new Commission, it was only accomplished at the 11th hour and required the date of tabling to be moved forward. It is a credit to equity advocates in the community, and to the Minister responsible, that the Ministry of Women's Equality achieved a place at the table. All of these voices were raised for 6 - 8 months prior to the June tabling, with little effect. That there was finally a breakthrough, I credit to the Honourable Paul Ramsey's shop. But that seat for a government ministry does not take the place of constituent voices which have the experience and expertise to identify the necessary elements and effect real change in the current shameful participation rates. It only proves the importance of having a place at the table.

Someone asked me recently why I had not been able to achieve those changes during my tenure as a Provincial Apprenticeship Board member, and Chair of the Equity Committee. It is a good question. I enclose a report, written by Gail Thomas, Director, Fed/Prov. Relations which documented the lessons learned from another Province which had great success in increasing their participation rates. I was able to move recommendations based on that paper through the Equity Committee and the Provincial Apprenticeship Board. As I tried to foster the implementation of those recommendations through appropriate channels, the Chair of that Board told me more than once that the PAB was a recommending body, not an implementing body. Implementation should be left to the bureaucrats.

For four years I have rattled the chains of the bureaucrats at all levels and asked for the support of their political masters. The subtle and overt resistance to putting programs and policies into practice that would actually effect change has been notable. Only Elizabeth Carriere, Exec. Director of Policy for Women's Equality who was seconded to Skills, Training and Labour, acted to move the issues forward, and she was gone after six months!

Now something has changed. For many years the Provincial Apprenticeship Board made

decisions required by legislation which had fiscal implications, but the Board had no contact with the budgets that were affected by those decisions. With the new legislation, not only does the new Commission have fiscal responsibility for the decisions, it also has the power to implement.

Now is the time when there is a potential to see initiatives put in place to change the demographic face of apprenticeship and industrial training. This will require changes at the entry-level, and there is potential for that. There is now even a mandate for it. But if there is no representation at the table who has the knowledge and expertise along with the responsibility, we will continue to flounder in resistance and good and not so good intentions. (I believe the Boston Tea Party emerged under such a misguided policy).

I understand that the negotiations with business, labour and education have been hard-headed and sometimes difficult, but that is the Government's problem, as it was Moe Sihota as Minister of Labour who created these problems in the first place by setting up the Minister's Committee on Governance last fall without representation from the Equity community, while at the same time cancelling the BC Labour Force Development Board which had Equity representation.

I sincerely hope that you can assist in setting up a meeting for WITT and WETC with the Minister of Women's Equality, the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Education Skills and Training as soon as possible after their Estimates have been debated next week. I will be available on July 17, 18, and 21, and would make myself available on the 22nd if necessary.

Many thanks for your efforts so far.

With regard,

Marcia Braundy  
VP - Kootenay WITT  
Member, Women's Employment and Training Coalition

cc: WITT, WETC  
The Honourable Sue Hammell  
The Honourable Paul Ramsey  
The Honourable John Cashore