

**Women's Employment Strategy**

**Options for Initiatives**

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*J. Beebe*

March 5

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Dorie Foster  
9407 Pines  
Hapner  
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Cherise

Wanda Jendry  
Katherine  
Carolee  
Suzanne  
Burrill  
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**Option 1**

A list of qualified women candidates could be developed and maintained for use by government in *appointments to agencies, boards and commissions* concerned with economic decision-making, with a specific goal of women comprising 50% of all appointments, and with an emphasis on social, economic and cultural diversity of representation.

**Option 2**

A *forum on women in economic decision-making* in B.C., could be organized to provide recommendations to government, labour and business on practical steps to increase the presence of women in the management positions where economic decisions are made. Women political representatives at the local, provincial and federal level could be invited, together with women in labour and business management positions. Sponsorship of the forum could be sought from business associations, trade unions, the Union of BC Municipalities, and other representative organizations whose members would benefit from shared experience and suggestions for improved practices in achieving greater inclusion of women in economic decision-making.

new  
profit  
sector

**Option 3**

A working group could be convened to examine best practices, and suggest ways of increasing *women's representation on the boards of financial institutions* in BC. In particular, the BC Securities Commission, the Financial Institutions Commission and the Superannuation Commission, could work jointly on a publication that builds on the work of the Conference Board of Canada to highlight the business benefits of increased diversity in management, and outline the "how to's" of including women in the management of BC's financial institutions.

**Option 4**

Support could be provided for *regional forums* of women involved in economic development, to strengthen networks and coordinate initiatives that enable women to participate more fully in economic decision-making at the regional level.

community  
economic  
dev.

B. The recognition of women's work in economic data.

**Unpaid work and women's workplace issues**

Women's unpaid work in family, household and community care has economic and social value not captured in traditional economic data. Better measurement of unpaid work could help evaluate aspects of women's contribution to the economy significant to

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adjustment and economic development strategies and would help monitor changes in work and family time that affect women's participation in the economy. Changes to the Census will provide some additional information on unpaid work, however, this information will be limited. In addition, there are very few existing sources of information on women's own experiences and perceptions of barriers in the workplace.

### Option 5

An annual survey could be conducted across B.C. to provide business, labour, government and women's organizations with accurate *data on women's unpaid work, work time trends, and issues affecting women in the workplace*. The Ministry of Women's Equality could work with BC Stats and Stats Canada to develop appropriate resources and methodologies to conduct this work, with a view to incorporating the data in future annual reports on women's status (in B.C. Women Count), and build on changes to the Labour Force Survey and Census that will give more information on women's unpaid work. The survey could be combined with self administered questionnaires distributed through media and community outlets to heighten awareness and public interest in workplace issues affecting women.

### Women in Business

There is little data on the number and economic significance of business owners, in particular women business owners. General statistics indicate a growing number of women in self employment, however there is no hard data from provincial regulation and business registration functions on how many women are now owners of, or partners in, business, the types of enterprise they are located in, and the number of jobs they create. This information would be useful in assessing business development potential and needs over time specific to women entrepreneurs.

### Option 6

The Ministry of Small Business, Tourism and Culture could work with the Ministry of Finance and Corporate Relations on *gendered data collection for new business start-up* at the appropriate points of contact and registration. Similar data could be collected for existing businesses as well.

### Impact of the Provincial Budget

One of the major impacts that government has on women's economic participation is through its own budget and expenditures. Government's infrastructure investment activities create employment and finance the public facilities upon which business relies to be competitive. That investment activity can be geared to maximizing opportunities for women in business through government procurement and in employment on contracts to design and build facilities. Program and service funding decisions also impact the economy and women's participation in it. Taxation, user fees, and benefit systems have a

*budgeting language*

differential impact on women and men. Other jurisdictions (e.g. Australia) have introduced annual reporting on government budget impacts on women to better monitor the effects of government's own fiscal and economic decisions on women's economic status and opportunities to participate in the economy.

#### **Option 7**

The Ministry of Finance and Corporate Relations could work with the Auditor General to develop an *annual reporting system on B.C.'s budget impacts on women*, working with other ministries to collect data on how women's employment and business opportunities have been enhanced by government expenditures, to incorporate in the annual Financial and Economic Review.

### C. Women's capacity to contribute to business development.

#### **Women Entrepreneurs**

Women business owners and self-employed entrepreneurs are a growing proportion of new business start-ups in B.C. This small business sector now contributes the majority of employment creation and is the source of innovation for economic growth. Achieving stability and managing growth in small business is often a challenge. Skills training and mentorship can be critical supports for women to be successful in small business development. Access to capital is also a critical issue, and there are barriers for women trying to access loans for business development. Young women would benefit from entrepreneurship training to make career choices related to small business ownership and self-employment. key creators of work for the future. The Office of the Business Women's Advocate provides unique support to addressing these issues. A new Women's Enterprise Society has recently been established in B.C. to provide enhanced support for women in business and a loan fund to improve access to capital, with funds provided by Western Economic Diversification Canada.

#### **Option 8**

A *Women's Entrepreneurship Training and Mentorship Program* could be implemented to build on work of the Business Women's Advocate to promote employment and growth through women's small business enterprises at the local and regional level. The program could enhance entrepreneurship training for young women and new initiatives to support women's enterprises, in partnership with the Women's Enterprise Society and local business networks. Such partnerships could focus on communities and groups facing multiple barriers to employment, such as women with disabilities, young women, immigrant women, women in resource dependent communities, and women impacted by industrial restructuring. The training and mentorship needs of women who are small business owners managing growth in their

enterprises could also be addressed. Flexible access and delivery will be key to making this program work successfully for women.

### Option 9

*An Entrepreneurial Skills Training Program* could be developed for all secondary students. This program would combine theory and practice, with emphasis on the experiential component.

### Government Procurement

Government procurement involves buying goods and services from the private sector to meet government capital and operating requirements. A Government Purchasing Commission oversees the regulation and management of purchasing arrangements. Competitive tendering ensures that the best price, quality and value is obtained in all government contracting. Ensuring a level playing field for business to access opportunities to contract with government is important to the integrity of the tendering process, and with an increasing number of women business-owners and entrepreneurs, a focus on their access to procurement strengthens the equity and the competitiveness of the process.

### Option 10

The Government Purchasing Commission could initiate educational activities with women entrepreneurs to encourage them to *access procurement opportunities*. These activities could include holding workshops with women business owners, and ensuring that women's organizations are included in existing business development seminars organized by the Purchasing Commission.

### Option 11

Government could implement *guidelines for contracting services* which would cover employment, health & safety and environmental standards for contractors obtaining service contracts valued over \$100,000. Specific standards could be included relating to employment equity to ensure safe and accessible opportunities for women in contracted work for government. This practice would mirror the "Federal Contractors Program", and would build on current activities at BC Hydro.

### International Trade

Support for growth sectors of the economy related to trade opportunities is a focus for the BC Trade Development Corporation and the BC Investment Office of the Ministry of Employment and Investment. Women business owners and women in the senior management of medium-sized businesses engaged in trade have an important role to play in the expansion of B.C.'s export potential. Recent initiatives of the ASEAN and APEC

countries promoted women's role in trade development to the benefit of participating individuals, companies and countries.

### **Option 12**

A forum for women in business could be organized *to promote leadership in trade development* and to support women entrepreneurs in market development, access and product promotion. This forum could build on similar initiatives of the ASEAN countries. Forum organizers could include the BC Trade Development Corporation and the BC Investment Office.

### **The Glass Ceiling**

Women's advancement to managerial positions is identified as a business advantage by the Conference Board of Canada and the Department of Labour in the U.S. Enhancing the diversity of management and professional levels leads to more responsive business and organizational practices. It can realize the full potential of women and other groups to contribute to business development, and can be more sensitive to the diversity of potential consumers and clients in the marketing and management decisions of organizations. In an increasingly competitive global market there is also an important business case for ensuring gender and cultural diversity in management positions to take advantage of opportunities to enter new international markets where gender and culture are important determinants of market opportunity.

A number of B.C. workplaces and employers have already recognized the management advantages of gender equity and have worked to remove systemic barriers to advancement for women (the "glass ceiling") with positive results.

### **Option 13**

The Labour Force Development Board (LFDB) could establish an annual award for the *best practices* of B.C. employers and unions to remove "glass ceiling" barriers to advancement for women, and could promote those practices more generally by allocating resources from its "Best Practices Fund" to encourage further development of systemic initiatives to enhance women's leadership in business management. The LFDB could also work with the Ministry of Employment and Investment, and the Ministry of Small Business, Tourism and Culture to develop a *profile of equity initiatives and their economic benefits* in different industries to demonstrate the business case for equality of women.

#### Option 14

B.C.'s Crown Corporations could initiate an *Inter-Crown Women in Management Exchange and Mentorship Program* to promote women in leadership positions, build on the strengths of certain crowns, increase networking capabilities, and provide opportunities for on-the-job training and skills development.

#### Option 15

B.C. could work with other jurisdictions in the Pacific Northwest to *strengthen linkages between women business owners and managers* providing leadership to growth sectors of the economy.

#### Option 16

The Business Women's Advocate could work with industry and women's business associations to promote *Success Circles* to mentor women in business and management positions in specific sectors and industries. These circles could provide both networking and mentorship opportunities.

### D. Changing Work Conditions

#### Employment Standards

The nature of work is changing as a result of international economic restructuring and technological change. Women are disproportionately represented in self-employment, contract and home-working situations involving piecework. There is a danger that avoidance of benefits, employment standards and regulated work conditions in these work settings will result in increased inequalities for women in work-related entitlements and protections. Part-time work, in which women are over represented, are often ineligible for the benefits available to full-time employees. Saskatchewan has recently amended labour standards to extend protection and benefits to part-time workers in larger firms (over 20 employees) on a pro-rated basis, and a similar proposal was made by the recent Thompson Review of Labour Standards in B.C.

B.C. has a small, open economy that requires a competitive regulatory environment to continue to attract investment and economic growth. Its action on regulating "contingent" work situations needs to be undertaken in the context of federal-provincial relations and international conventions.

over-represented  
part-time

### Option 17

The Labour Standards Act could be amended to extend pro-rated benefits and protection to part-time workers of employers with over 20 employees, and the Ministry of Skills, Training and Labour could work with federal/provincial counterparts to develop appropriate proposals to *apply employment standards and benefits to "contingent" work settings*, in conjunction with work by the *International Labour Organization (ILO)* on these issues, and in consultation with business and labour.

### Home-working

In other jurisdictions, home-working and other types of contract employment have given rise to the development of business co-operatives to market products, strengthen financial viability, and improve conditions of work. This pooling of resources in networks or co-operatives have provided cost effective ways of servicing and strengthening a growing component of the labour market that is highly feminized. In B.C., homeworkers are now registered in particular industries such as domestic and garment workers.

### Option 18

A "*Home Workers Initiative*" could be implemented to provide tools by which home/piece workers can improve their networking, marketing, and organizational strength through co-operative development or other mechanisms. The initiative could help home/piece workers and their organizations secure improved working conditions and growth in their own enterprises to increase employment and income.

### Workplace Health

The Ministry of Health's (MOH) Women and Work Initiative is tasked with examining workplace health issues faced by women. For the past year, MOH has been consulting with federal and provincial governments, and women's health organizations to identify key strategies for addressing issues of violence and harassment, ergonomics, and long hours of work. A final report on these consultations was released in early 1996.

### Option 19

An inter-ministry working group could be established to implement the recommendations of the consultation process, such as: developing a policy framework for *women's workplace health*; conducting a comprehensive audit of women's workplace health issues, including an assessment of the social cost in terms of lost productivity and injury; and piloting demonstration projects to enhance women's workplace health.

## Harmonizing family and work responsibilities

Flexible employment conditions can help promote a more equitable sharing of family care responsibilities between men and women and help balance career goals and family care responsibilities. Loss of earnings and labour market advancement barriers experienced by women due to career breaks for child care can be mitigated by employment agreements that introduce greater flexibility in work time and organization. There are documented business advantages to flexible employment practices that foster retention of skilled employees, thereby reducing turnover, retraining, and recruitment costs.

### Option 20

The Labour Force Development Board could develop and disseminate, in partnership with business and labour, a *profile of "best practices" in flexible private-sector employment* that help to balance work and family responsibilities. In addition, the Public Service Employee Relations Commission (PSERC) could identify current *"best practices" in flexible broad public sector work arrangements* that help to create and maintain employment opportunities for women. PSERC could also investigate the feasibility of new initiatives for employees in this area. For example, mentoring and job rotating initiatives could provide on-the-job training opportunities for women in management skills. These types of initiatives could be particularly beneficial to women wishing to move from administrative support functions to higher management positions, and could also encourage off-site skill upgrading, through educational institutions.

## E. Creating Employment and Adjustment Opportunities

### Government Investment

The Build BC Act sets out government objectives for creating employment and training opportunities for local people, women and those from traditionally disadvantaged groups in its investment activities. Employment and training opportunities for women have been a specific focus for employment equity strategies in government contracts for some capital projects as a result. There has been some progress in increased employment of women in trades and technical positions in government construction projects such as the Island Highway. There is scope for building on these initiatives in other partnership and investment activities.

### Option 21

Employment strategies for women could be developed for additional *major government investment projects* including high skill technical and trades positions. Several hundred

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new employment opportunities for women could be created through government investment in infrastructure and partnership projects with the private sector, including:

- The Columbia Basin Power Projects, involving new power generating facilities in the Columbia Basin;
- Large scale construction projects related to health care and education facilities such as new hospitals and college campuses in regions throughout B.C.;
- The Vancouver Convention Centre;
- The expansion of the Quinsam mine in Campbell River involving a public-private partnership in road and dock construction and expansion of an existing, productive mine; and
- Ship building associated with the Fast Ferry construction contract for BC Ferries that could provide employment opportunities to women graduates of British Columbia Institute of Technology, Women in Trades Program.
- Other public-private sector partnership projects, including those coordinated by the B.C. Investment Office;

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Contract tender language concerning employment and training in government capital contracts, could be developed for the major capital projects above and those (over \$5 million) managed by the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Skills, Training and Labour, and the Ministry of Health. To provide ongoing guidance and support to ministry staff and contractors responsible for fulfilling equity objectives, an inter-ministry working group could be established, and chaired by the Ministry of Employment and Investment. Mechanisms for monitoring implementation could be incorporated into all employment strategies.

### Regional employment

There are additional barriers to women's economic participation and employment in the non-metropolitan regions of B.C. These barriers relate to traditionally male dominated occupations in resource industries and relatively less developed service sectors and support infrastructures traditionally important to women's participation in the labour market. In single-industry towns these barriers and lack of opportunities can result in significant hardships for women and their families, particularly where industry is down-sizing, household incomes and employment are insecure, and access to training opportunities are limited. As a result opportunities to contribute to household and community stability are also limited.

Despite these limitations, many women in resource-dependent communities play a vital role in economic development and diversification. Many value-added industries in the forest sector rely on women's employment, women entrepreneurs are contributing to growth in the service and other sectors, and technological and work-place change is opening up opportunities for increased women's economic participation. However, at the same time, occupations and jobs that have been male dominated in resource industries are

facing insecurity. Balancing the adjustment needs of male workers in relatively highly paid positions in resource industries with the need for continued opportunities for women to contribute to household income and community stability will be a challenge for community economic development and labour adjustment strategies in many regions of B.C.

Opportunities to build on strategic investment in sustainable development exist in the three regions with Land Use Plans, where a commitment to action on these issues exists.



### Option 22

*Women's Adjustment Projects* could be developed in the three regions with regional Land Use Plans, involving industry, labour, and other stakeholders (e.g. Industrial Adjustment Committees and Resource Jobs Commissioners). These projects could provide resource-dependent communities with strategic support for adjustment strategies that explicitly address women's roles in community economic adjustment and sustainable development. Outcomes could include enhanced employment opportunities for women in value-added sectors of resource industries, such as forestry, fishing and mining, in other growth sectors, and in local contracting to supply industry with goods and services that contribute to economic diversification and balance the adjustment needs of men and women.

### Option 23

Baseline data could be collected on *the status of women's employment and economic participation in the forest industry* and forest dependent communities, and pilot projects could be developed to enhance the economic utilization of women in forest dependent communities/industries. This option could be coordinated by MEI with support from Forest Renewal BC.

### Apprenticeship Opportunities in Growth Sectors

Occupational segregation continues to exist in many industries and sectors. Access for women to occupations in growth sectors of the economy require special measures to break down barriers and promote equality of career opportunity. Those measures can assist industries with their own growth management and human resource development needs and ladder young women into higher-skilled, better paid careers. The Ministry of Skills, Training and Labour's Revitalizing Apprenticeship initiative is expanding and can play a lead role in creating opportunities for women in new and innovative apprenticeship areas. The Ministry of Skills, Training and Labour is currently working with *Women in Trades and Technology* (WITT) to revise the *Orientation to Trades and Technology Curriculum Guide for Women* to meet national standards. Once completed, this guide will be utilized in the delivery of five WITT Exploratory demonstration projects in the post-secondary system.

#### Option 24

Implement a *reporting/monitoring system* to ensure that women, in particular young women, are included equitably in all initiatives under the Revitalizing Apprenticeships program. In addition, workplace supports could be built into all initiatives that assist organizations to undergo changes necessary to making work environments more friendly to women. Partners in implementation could include the Ministry of Women's Equality, the Ministry of Employment and Investment and the Ministry of Skills, Training and Labour and Women in Trades and Technology.

#### Option 25

A *Women in Information Technology Apprenticeship Initiative* could be developed with the Ministry of Employment and Investment and the Ministry of Skills, Training and Labour. This activity could target funds under the Ministry of Skills, Training and Labour's Revitalizing Apprenticeships to create appropriate opportunities with InfoTech companies, FreeNets, and educational institutions to provide women with structured workplace training that leads to jobs in a growth sector. In addition, four other models and sites for demonstration projects could be developed to provide apprenticeship opportunities in occupations in growth sectors and resource-dependent regions of the Province. Potential partners in these projects include Crown Corporations, power utilities, and the environmental technology sector.

#### Option 26

The Ministry of Skills, Training and Labour could work in partnership with the Provincial Apprentice Board and the Federal Government to *establish new apprenticeable trades* in the rapidly growing service sector.

#### Option 27

B.C.'s Crown Corporations could develop, in partnership with trade unions, a *Women in Trades Initiative* which would conduct systematic outreach to and recruitment of women enrolled in trades programs at colleges such as the BC Institute of Technology and North Island College.

#### Women in Science, Technology and Engineering

In recent years, women have made some progress in science and technology. The number of Canadian women employed in natural sciences and engineering has increased from 9.1% in 1975 to 17.6% in 1991.<sup>i</sup> However, women continue to be under-represented in most science and technology occupations. For example, women make up only 3% of certified technologists in Canada, and 3% of registered professional engineers in B.C. are women<sup>ii</sup>. This under-representation begins in high-school, and continues at

the post-secondary level: the percentage of women learning about and teaching in science and applied science courses is low throughout the education system.

In 1995, the Premier's Advisory Council on Science and Technology developed a Science and Technology Strategic Plan for the province. This Plan emphasizes the need to work with all education and training institutions to increase the levels of enrolment of women in science, engineering and technology. The Science Council of BC's also recognizes the need to increase the total number of women studying, receiving training in, and being employed in science and technology. In 1993, the Science Council established a Women in Science, Technology and Engineering Taskforce with a two-year goal to promote opportunities for women in the areas of science and technology.

### **Option 28**

The Ministry of Employment and Investment could work with the recently formed, cross-sectoral *Women in Science and Technology committee* to implement recommendations of the Science Council's Task Force to: promote networking opportunities among organizations working to increase the representation of women in science and technology; develop baseline data to assist in tracking the interest of women in science and technology; develop and disseminate resource materials and information to schools, colleges, and science and technology companies.

### **Health Care**

Women predominate in nursing, and other health-related occupations, where they make up 86% of the work force. In addition, 36% of doctors and dentists are women. Federal cutbacks to health care resources are resulting in major restructuring of jobs and responsibilities within the health care system, and consequently having a significant impact on women working in the health care industry.

### **Option 29**

Develop a *Women in Health Workforce Adjustment Initiative* to help women in the health care industry determine ways to remain employed in related professions or trades or to transfer skills into new occupations. Partners in this initiative could include labour and employers.

### **Women in Agriculture, Fisheries and Food Processing**

Two preliminary studies have recently been conducted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food industries (1993 Workforce Profile, 1994 Labour Force Study) which examine the representation of women in the agriculture, fish and food processing. The initial findings indicate considerable inequities between women and men employed in the agriculture, fish and food processing industries. Women are consistently paid lower wages than men. In addition, the majority of female workers in these industries are

immigrant women with low levels of literacy and english language skills. Most high skill, full-time, high paying jobs in agriculture are filled by men (83% male). There are over 15,000 people employed in B.C.'s fishing industry, of which only 10% are female (this figure is 13% for aboriginal women). Eighty-five percent (85%) of food processing workers are employed part-time. Women represent 42% of the work force in this industry. The vast majority of on-shore fish processing workers are women, most of whom are live in isolated communities that are being severely impacted by the downsizing of the fishing industry, as well as by the reduction in Federal support for salmonid enhancement.

### Option 30

A "*Women in Agriculture Initiative*" could be implemented to identify and implement strategies to address key issues for women in this industry, such as child care, low pay, low levels of unionization, and the need for English language training. Partners in this initiative could include labour and industry.

### Option 31

Develop an *adjustment program for women in the on-shore fish processing industry* which would provide employment opportunities for women in Forest Renewal BC's Watershed Restoration Program.

## E. Access to training and skills development.

### Women's access to skills development

Increasingly women are acquiring the skills necessary to compete in the labour market as evidenced by their secondary school graduation and post secondary qualification rates. However, barriers to career progression and choice arising from the educational and vocational system continue to be in place. As a result, women remain concentrated in certain jobs (clerical, sales and service), and are under-represented in many other occupations, most notably those in growth sectors of the economy (science, technology, trades and engineering). Consequently, women's ability to access the training needed to enter those occupations becomes even more significant to their economic equality.

Additional barriers to accessing all occupations exist for women on income assistance, older women, and single parents. Workplace-based training, through apprenticeships or government initiatives designed to assist people on welfare to get jobs are critical to enable women to develop the skills necessary to enter a diverse range of occupations. Re-training needs for older women in careers and jobs impacted by industrial restructuring require particular consideration, given the potential for skills gaps between existing jobs in some sectors and the new types of work required in changing workplaces.

Single parents with young children have particular support needs related to accessing training opportunities, such as flexible time schedules and child care. Investment in the training and labour market attachments of young women with young children is important because of the risks of poverty and dependency these families face. International research indicates that active labour market programs designed to get people off welfare into work often fail to achieve their objectives with single parents with dependent children because they do not take into account the specific needs of this group.

Ministers responsible for the status of women at the provincial and federal level have explored issues related to gender socialization in the educational system and developed a joint framework for training for women. Organizations such as Women in Trades and Technology, and the Society for Canadian Women in Science and Technology have developed recommendations and projects to advance women in occupations in growth sectors of the economy. Government programs have an opportunity to contribute to economic equality for women by explicitly addressing gender issues in training and skills development.

### Option 32

The Ministry of Employment and Investment and the Ministry of Skills, Training and Labour could work to *strengthen access for women to skills development and training programs*. Specifically:

- guidelines could be developed for Assessment, Counselling and Referral Services, to ensure that women are supported to train in high-skill, high-wage occupations in growth sectors, and where these services are contracted out, contract language could make this focus on women a measurable requirement of the service
- customized guidelines and funding criteria could be developed for Workplace-Based Training and Community Employment Training programs to accommodate the additional and specific needs of single parents with young children, and where appropriate, specific programs for single parents with young children could be developed to provide a combination of pre-employment and workplace-based training activities customized to this group's specific needs
- adjustment programs could focus on the re-training needs of older women in industries/sectors under going restructuring, and include access to training in higher-skill, higher-value occupations that offer alternative employment opportunities
- request for proposals and contracts with service providers could contain specific language and performance requirements with regard to women's (and other equity group's) equitable access to, and enrolment in programs. Program design standards could ensure that training is gender sensitive and provides a safe and encouraging environment for women to succeed. Performance measurement and evaluation criteria could include these aspects of program design and delivery.
- consultation at the regional and local level could solicit means to better coordinate and integrate community training resources to respond to the access concerns of

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women, including the coordination of Welfare-To-Work, Adjustment, Community Skills Centres, and Community College programs.

### Option 33

Other aspects of educational, vocational, skills training and human resource development responsibilities of government could be the subject of a *coordinated audit* to identify incremental action which could be taken to improve women's access to and promotion in high-skill, high-wage occupations in growth sectors of the economy. This audit could address the recommendations of the Labour Force Development Board to encourage greater participation of equity groups in trades, technologies, sciences and other applied programs, and could be undertaken by the Board, in conjunction with relevant ministries.

### Immigrant women

Immigration is a major factor in economic growth in B.C. and has traditionally added skills, entrepreneurship and value to the economy. Recent studies have revealed that while net gains to B.C.'s economy from immigration continue to be strong, most immigrant women face barriers to integration into the labour market. These barriers result in an average 10 year integration time for immigrant women to achieve the same average income as their Canadian-born counterparts. Some evidence suggests that immigrant women with professional qualifications never achieve the same level of average income as their Canadian-born counterparts. Adjustment needs include: accreditation for foreign qualifications; English language training specific to the workplace/occupation; work experience opportunities to gain Canadian experience in their occupation; and initiatives that assist immigrant women in entering and ladder within the labour market. A new accreditation service at the Open Learning Agency has started to address the issue of equivalency and recognition of foreign qualifications. A federal-provincial consultation on the future delivery and financing of immigrant settlement programs in B.C. provides an opportunity to meet specific labour market integration needs for immigrant women. A recent federal research program "The Metropolis Project" provides new resources for applied research on the integration needs of immigrant women.

### Option 34

The Provincial Government could address the *labour market integration needs of immigrant women*, through initiatives such as:

- A pilot project to provide workplace experience and mentorship opportunities to immigrant women relevant to their occupational qualifications, in partnership with immigrant settlement agencies and industry, and funded jointly by the ministries of Skills, Training and Labour, Attorney General (Immigration), and Employment and

Investment. Projects could include an evaluative component to ensure outcomes are considered in future program design.

- A specific labour market integration priority for immigrant women in the revised settlement programs system being developed through joint provincial-federal consultation with stakeholders.

### **Sectoral human resource development**

The Labour Force Development Board has recommended an industry-led (business and labour) workforce development strategy to enhance workforce skills and the competitiveness of B.C. industries. They envision that sectoral councils would be necessary to achieve that strategy, bringing together unions and employers in a particular sector or industry to develop agreed strategies to invest in their human resources. Sectoral approaches to labour bargaining, and human resource development, have advantages for women's position in the workplace because they enable working conditions affecting particular groups in the workplace to be addressed across employer groups. Flexible working practices important to women's retention in industries and other aspects of their skills and training needs can best be addressed on a sector-wide basis.



### **Option 35**

*A pilot industry-led workforce development strategy* could be developed and implemented with a focus on the training needs of women to advance into occupations and managerial positions that make better use of their skills and abilities, within an industry where better utilization of women's skills and capacity would have major competitive advantages. Implementation of the strategy would be monitored to gain information which could be of use in implementing similar strategies in other industrial sectors.

### **Flexible learning opportunities**

Because of the imbalance in responsibilities between men and women for family care, women are more likely to experience interruptions in education and career paths. In addition, they are more likely to use part-time and temporary work to harmonize work and family responsibilities. Recognition of prior learning through a variety of educational and work settings is important to being able to gain qualifications and re-enter the workforce. Post secondary institutions need to build in assessment procedures that enable women to get recognition of prior learning to enter vocational and academic programs at levels appropriate to their skills.

*fewer  
mgt  
positions*

In addition, learning institutions and employers need to increase opportunities for credentialled learning opportunities in the workplace, or in work time, for women who cannot take institutionally-based courses on top of work and family responsibilities. This

kind of "lifelong learning" approach has major business advantages in terms of cost effective partnerships to develop skills relevant to the changing workplace, and offers opportunities for advancement to women who would otherwise not be able to spend time on training. The Labour Force Development Board has advocated this approach in the context of an industry-led workforce development strategy.

### **Option 36**

Implementation of the Labour Force Development Board proposals for an industry-led workforce development strategy could include *pilot initiatives that develop accreditation for prior learning, and credentialled learning opportunities in the workplace*, or in work time, targeted to the career advancement needs of women. These pilots could be developed, on the basis of industry agreement, for occupations in a growth sector of the economy where there are potential competitive advantages to business from greater management and professional advancement by women.

### **Option 37**

To increase access to flexible learning opportunities for rural women, the Open Learning Agency and the Community Learning Network could *examine ways of delivering distance learning materials* through women's centres and women's training programs in regions.

### **Career Preparation**

Changes to the K to 12 educational system in BC have increased emphasis on career preparation and development, including new requirements and programs for students to gain first-hand workplace learning opportunities. Local Career Development Advisory Committees have involved local employers working with School Districts to develop innovative and appropriate opportunities for young people to get workplace and career-related experience. Gender socialization within the curriculum has been addressed with new life skills resources focused on promoting gender equity. Specific activity to help young women get career preparation and development opportunities that don't perpetuate stereotypes can open up a full range of career choices by which they can fully develop their skills and options in the labour market.

### **Option 38**

School District Career Development Advisory Committees could be invited to *develop and showcase model Career Preparation Programs* that have broken gender stereotypes by promoting young women's access to career opportunities in occupations in which women are currently under-represented.

## G. Women's role in community economic development.

### **Participation by First Nations women in economic development**

Despite the economic potential and desire among First Nations women to take control of their economic futures, significant barriers need to be overcome before women can fully participate in developing and sustaining viable local economies. Some of these constraints are related to education and training, such as restricted access to culturally-appropriate and community-based education and training, on-the-job training and leadership development. Other barriers include participation in decision-making, financing and access to capital and the availability of quality, affordable child care.

Initiatives that provide governance and administrative training are seen as key to increase the economic participation of First Nations women. Although in many parts of B.C. Bands have become primary employers of First Nations people, women are often excluded from employment opportunities in First Nations communities and are under-represented in aboriginal administrations. First Nations women are also under-represented in treaty negotiations and in the self-government process. The Ministry of Women's Equality is conducting a research project to examine the role of First Nations women in these processes.

In addition, small business presents a unique development opportunity for many women in First Nations communities. Barriers to small business development for First Nations women include access to capital, and marketing and management counselling. Initiatives designed to address these needs must be developed directly by, or in conjunction with First Nations women. The Ministry of Small Business, Tourism and Culture recently completed a successful pilot project to provide small business development training and mentorship opportunities for First Nations women.

For all economic development activities, access to dependable child care is integral to the successful participation of aboriginal women in the labour market. First Nations women experience particular barriers to accessing child care due to federal and provincial policies concerning subsidies to parents living on-or-off reserve. The Province has recently amended procedures which prevented on-reserve parents from being eligible for child care subsidy, and are currently negotiating with the federal government about the federal/provincial implications of providing this funding.

### **Option 39**

The Ministry of Employment and Investment could work with *women graduates of First Nations community economic development programs* at educational institutions such as the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology and the Chemainus Native College towards

enhancing the ability of these programs to produce high-value work experience and economic development opportunities for women.

#### Option 40

The Ministry of Small Business, Tourism and Culture's *Small Business Development for Aboriginal Women initiative* could be expanded to increase business training for aboriginal women in all regions of the Province and to provide more intensive training in business start-up and growth management, and business planning/marketing in niche sectors with growth potential.

#### Option 41

In partnership with First Nations women, the Ministry of Women's Equality, and the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, could develop a *resource package on self-government* for distribution province-wide as part of Government's treaty negotiation activities. This package could contain information such as an analysis of the impact on women of the self-governance process and recent changes to the Federal Indian Act, and could enhance the effectiveness of First Nations women at the treaty negotiation table.

#### Option 42

Guidelines could be developed to ensure the *equal participation of First Nations women in governance and administration training programs*, such as those offered at the Institute for Indigenous Studies and customized pilot training projects could be developed in post-secondary institutions, in collaboration with all college First Nations representatives, to increase women's access to training opportunities.

#### Community-based economic development

At the international, national and provincial levels, women's involvement in community-based planning and decision-making often does not reflect their significant level of participation in communities and the economy. The inclusion of women's interests in these processes is critical to ensuring sustainable economic growth.

In response to globalization and a changing economy, communities are increasingly involved in planning and decision-making for their own economic development. Several structures are currently in place to assist communities in their planning and economic development efforts. As part of the province's Land Use Strategy, regional Land Use Plans (LUP), and sub-regional Land and Resource Management Planning (LRMP) processes are providing direction on land and resource management decisions. In addition, the Growth Strategies Act provides regional tools for managing high growth areas and represents a unique, interactive, inclusive and flexible approach to regional planning.

Community forestry, tourism, wood re-manufacturing, and other enterprises have come out of community economic planning processes that identify strengths and opportunities in the community on which employment and economic growth can be built. These activities are often characterized by alternative financing arrangements and innovative partnerships with business.

In some cases, co-operatives have played an important role in new enterprise development, combining employment with social and community objectives. In other communities, credit unions have played a role in investing in community development, to strengthen the capacity of people to participate in growing the local economy. Non-profit societies have also combined economic enterprises with traditional community social service roles.

Small business development has also been a focus for community economic development initiatives, and often involves looking at how to diversify a local economy by creating new services and opportunities. Some larger business enterprises are also increasingly aware of the business advantages of investing in communities in which they are located, and building bridges with other sectors to contribute to the social and economic vitality of communities.

Despite their under-representation in planning and decision-making processes, women are leaders in many of the above activities. Their leadership is a valuable asset in building bridges between communities and business, and generating new opportunities and enterprises that lead to sustainable economic development.

#### **Option 43**

In order to ensure the inclusion of *women's interests in land, resource and growth management processes*, the multiple account analysis could be modified to include data collection and issue analysis related to women's economic participation. This activity builds on the findings of the joint Ministry of Employment and Investment/Ministry of Women's Equality report "Women in Port McNeil and the Vancouver Island Land Use Plan".

#### **Option 44**

A *Women's Community Economic Development Program* could be established to provide seed funding to stimulate economic development by/for women in communities around the province. This initiative could be based on the model developed by the Making Women Count project currently underway in three B.C. communities and would require multi-stakeholder involvement at the local level.

#### Option 45

A *Women's Employment Initiative* could be implemented based on best practices in projects like the Sandy Merriman House in Victoria and the "Bridges For Women" program, to provide skills training and employment to women on low incomes in inner city communities where the greatest concentration of poverty exists. The Initiative could target funds to community-based projects that can provide bridges to employment for street women and others on low incomes with multiple barriers to employment, who are homeless, at risk, have been the victims of abuse, and alcohol or drug addiction. The Initiative could provide an integrated approach to pre-employment training, life skills, counselling, treatment, and workplace experience to women most at risk and excluded from participation in downtown areas. Partnerships could be sought with business, women's transition and shelter agencies, community training agencies, credit unions and the co-operative sector to implement the initiative.

#### Single industry communities

The position of women in single-industry communities was raised in the consultation process. There are particular barriers to employment and training for women arising out of the traditionally male-dominated occupational segregation associated with resource industries, and the limited economic base of single-industry communities that restricts the opportunities for employment and work experience for women.

#### Option 46

A "*Women in Mining*" project could be developed to increase the participation of women in the sciences, particularly the earth sciences and in mining technology, and could be piloted in Tumbler Ridge. This project could involve working with the two mines in Tumbler Ridge to match trained local women with employment opportunities, instead of hiring men from outside the area, and to create working environments supportive of a diverse workforce. Partners in this project could include the Ministries of Employment and Investment, Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources, and Skills, Training and Labour, and the mining industry.

#### Option 47

A pilot project could be developed to address the *employment and training needs of women in Port Renfrew* who are already playing a significant leadership role in community economic development. This project could provide women with the business development and leadership skills and supports necessary to developing employment opportunities in areas such as value-added wood processing and tourism. Partners include: the ministries of Employment and Investment, Skills, Training and Labour, Small Business, Tourism and Culture, and Environment, Lands and Parks, and the First Nations community, community groups, schools and colleges, and the forest and fishing

industries. This project could include an evaluation component to ensure other communities experiencing restructuring benefit from this model.

#### H. Investing in women, and community infrastructure that contributes to women's equality, to address poverty and exclusion.

##### **Single parent families on welfare**

The number of families or individuals receiving welfare in B.C. has increased by two-thirds (66%) in the past six years. One in every 10 British Columbians and 1 in every 7 children lives in a family receiving welfare. The welfare system is increasingly strained by growing costs, severe cuts in federal funding, the limited ability of taxpayers to pay more, and the inability of the system to help people gain independence. The human costs of these problems are severe - especially to children and youth, many of whom are becoming dependent on welfare early in life.

Growth in the number of single-parent families has placed increasing pressure on the system. In the 1960s, fewer than one in 10 B.C. families was a single parent family. Today, the figure is 1 in 5. Most of these families are headed by women, who tend to receive significantly lower incomes from employment than do men. Single parents have particular difficulty in getting out of the system. Over half of single parent families receiving welfare have been for 2 years or more. More than 40% of all B.C. welfare recipients are in single-parent families, most of whom are children. 92% of these families are headed by women.

These figures are indicative of the fact that poverty is prevalent among women, who earn less than men in all occupations, and who live below the poverty line more than men. 62% of single parent families headed by women live below the poverty line in Canada. Single parent families headed by women are home to a disproportionate share of all children living in low income situations.

The BC Benefits initiative is government's response to the changing nature of the economy and the needs of low income families. BC Benefits represents a major renewal of B.C.'s social safety net. BC Benefits provides a number of new programs and financial supports to assist people making the transition from welfare to work. These include a new monthly allowance for all low income working families with children, new dental and vision care benefits for children in low income working families, and new job search and work preparation programs for youth.

Given the prevalence of poverty among B.C. women, in particular single parent mothers on welfare, changes to B.C.'s social safety net may disproportionately impact women.

## Option 48

An inter-ministry working group could be established to *monitor the impacts of BC Benefits on women* and to identify priority areas for program design and implementation to enhance positive outcomes for women from changes to B.C.'s social safety net. Established by the ministries of Social Services and Skills, Training and Labour, the working group could also involve Employment and Investment and Women's Equality.

### Child care

There is a growing and unmet demand for child care that meets the particular needs of working parents. These needs include part-time and flexible hours care, and programs for young parents. Addressing this need is critical to current federal and provincial efforts to reduce unemployment and move people from income assistance to training and jobs, as well as to assist them to remain in the labour force. Many entry level jobs are part-time, and involve working evenings and weekends. There is a growing need for before-and-after school programs to meet the needs of working parents. Young parents have particular child care needs to remove barriers to continuing their education.

Unlike the growing demand for child care, the options available to parents to help bridge the gap between child care subsidy rates and actual fees are decreasing. Reductions in the top-up allowance available to people moving from the welfare system to work, and for people receiving training through the unemployment insurance system, are making it more difficult for parents to afford the child care necessary to stay in the labour force.

Wages for child care providers are extremely low, particularly in the unregulated sector which provides 80% of B.C.'s child care spaces. Many unregulated caregivers operate out of their homes and cannot access capital grants to help remove some budgetary pressures, stabilize spaces for children, and keep parent fees affordable. The Ministry of Women's Equality is exploring options for addressing this issue, such as grants administration at the local level and enhancing parent and caregiver resource services.

The development of new community facilities, offers opportunities for cost-effective investment in child care, by including appropriately designed space for child care in other facilities. In particular, all schools, colleges, government office buildings, and health facilities could be designed to include provision for child care to serve workers and residents of the community in which they are located. Integrating child care provision in this way is much more cost-effective than having to develop separate facilities or retrofitting public buildings at a later date to meet child care demands. A considerable contribution can be made to unmet demand for child care spaces by this kind of planning and design strategy.

#### Option 49

The Ministry of Women's Equality, with the ministries of Social Services and Skills, Training and Labour, could *monitor and evaluate the child care needs of parents*, such as single parents moving from welfare into employment and training opportunities, to determine the numbers of families who are unable to remain in the labour force due to unmet child care needs, and how to address these needs in terms of program design. In particular, this information could assist the Ministry of Women's Equality in allocating funds according to needs such as the age of the child and type of care required (family, group, on-site), and could assist the Ministry of Skills, Training and Labour in designing initiatives that address parents at high-risk of leaving the labour force because of family care responsibilities.

#### Option 50

Planning and design of new government facilities could be required to include *designed space for child care* where appropriate. A task force of relevant ministries and government agencies, coordinated by the Ministry of Women's Equality and Ministry of Employment and Investment, could establish cost, design and planning standards for all future developments.

#### I. Implementation.

#### Option 51

An inter-ministry group, led by the Ministry of Employment and Investment, could be established to oversee *implementation of the Women's Employment Strategy*. Business, labour and community partners could be consulted and involved at various stages of implementation and with particular projects as they develop.