



December 12, 2008

Letter to the Editor
Ottawa Citizen

Exporting attitudes toward women needs concrete commitment from our federal government

Re: The Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women (OCTEVAW) thanks Michael Kaufman for his Op-Ed piece in the Ottawa Citizen on December 6, 2008 titled “*Exporting attitudes toward women.*”

As a coalition of organizations and individuals dedicated to ending all violence against women and children, OCTEVAW believes that connecting with other groups around the world to mutually assist and inspire one another in the struggle for women’s equality and security is important.

Mr. Kaufman is right in pointing out how Canada has been at the forefront of groundbreaking initiatives such as the *White Ribbon Campaign* and *Shelter from the Storm*, nationally, and the *Step It Up* and *Neighbours, Friends and Families* campaigns, in Ontario. Canadian women’s groups and their supporters have been pioneers in creating awareness about women abuse and sexual violence. In fact without their support and hard work, the 1993 Statistics Canada survey on violence against women in our country would not have been so successful.

Unfortunately in the last decade much of the funding for women’s groups has been drastically slashed. The current federal government continues a dangerous trend of clawing-back commitments to address gender inequality and violence against women. By changing the mandate of Status of Women Canada and eliminating the Court Challenges Program, they have ensured a lack of support for grass-roots organizations to do essential work such as advocacy, lobbying and research. In short, this means that women’s organizations and their supporters do not have the necessary tools to effectively continue to be at the forefront of fighting this global epidemic. Just this fall Ontario announced an \$18.9 million investment to address violence against women and restore funding cut by the previous provincial government. We look now to our federal government to follow their lead and restore support across the country.

Women’s shelters and community groups helping women and children in crisis and transition are lacking in resources. Our country needs national educational campaigns and prevention strategies. Gender equality means accessible housing, childcare, education and employment. If Canada’s women’s organizations and our men allies are to continue being leaders on the world stage, we need the commitment of our government to back us up.

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