



A TURNING POINT
FOR WOMEN



The Honourable Greg Sorbara
Minister of Finance

January 15, 2007

Dear Minister Sorbara:

Thank you for the opportunity to express the views of YWCA Toronto, the city's largest multi-service organization by, for and about women and girls, on what measures the Ontario government might take to foster economic growth and job creation in the province and what the government's top priority for this year's budget should be.

YWCA Toronto improves the lives of over 35,000 women annually across the GTA by offering services in the four vital areas of shelter and housing, girls and family programs, employment skills and development, and advocacy.

We would like to acknowledge the provincial government's work in recognizing foreign and international credentials, which we feel are essential steps to fostering economic growth and job creation in the province. As a key employment and skills development resource for women, offering nine programs from Scarborough to Etobicoke, YWCA Toronto would like to speak to the issue of job creation by expressing our concerns that the provincial government make it a priority to fund programs that target marginalized groups within the population. Many women fall within this category for priority attention.

Now that funding for these essential services has been transferred to Employment Ontario from Service Canada, we would like confirmation from the province that it will fund women-only resources such as the ones we provide. We offer quality training and employment opportunities, providing marginalized women equal opportunity to participate in the workplace, thereby increasing their self-esteem, emotional health and ability to address violent and abusive circumstances. Access to income through employment is a fundamental need. Despite generally improving economic trends, the labour force has seen an overall increase in low wage and uncertain employment, which disproportionately affects our client population of women, many of whom are new immigrants, youth and racialized community members – who experience rates of unemployment and underemployment significantly higher than the general population. Research has demonstrated that many marginalized women thrive in a women-only environment. Our work in our multicultural city confirms this on a daily basis.

Advocacy | Employment & Skills Development | Girls & Family Programs | Housing & Shelter

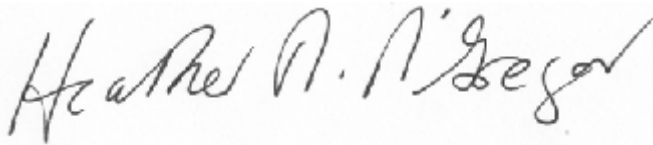
80 Woodlawn Avenue East, Toronto, Ontario M4T 1C1 T 416.961.8100 F 416.961.7739
info@ywcatoronto.org www.ywcatoronto.org charitable business number 10822 9865 RRO001

From our vantage point as direct service providers for over 130 years, YWCA Toronto sees affordable housing as the provincial government's top priority for the 2007 budget. With over 70,000 people in the GTA alone waiting for affordable permanent housing, this issue is of paramount importance in the lives of Ontarians. By the end of 2009 YWCA Toronto will be opening 368 more units of permanent and affordable housing for single women and women with children to add to our portfolio of eight permanent, transitional and emergency shelter options. That we are able to address the issue to such an extent speaks to our organizational size and expertise. There are in fact very few organizations that are positioned to undertake the kind of complex development and fundraising effort that is required in the present development environment. But with more provincial support, many more non-profit organizations would be able to contribute to resolving our crisis of homelessness. In our opinion, it should be possible for community-based organizations to contribute their commitment and expertise to this essential work as was the practice in the late 1980s under a previous Liberal government. More affordable housing projects are urgently needed.

By recognizing the importance of funding permanent, affordable housing in Ontario, we also address the key issues of poverty and exclusion, helping to create a society based upon the safety, equality and well being of all its members.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to speak to these pressing issues.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Heather A. McGregor". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Heather McGregor
Chief Executive Officer
YWCA Toronto | A Turning Point for Women