

No money for women's lobby groups

Conservatives target Status of Women 'Equality' dropped from agency goals

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OTTAWA—The federal Conservative government says it will no longer fund women's groups that do advocacy, lobbying or general research.

The drastic change to the mandate and operation of Status of Women Canada also drops the word "equality" when listing the agency's goals.

Previous objectives such as helping women's organizations participate in the public policy process and increasing the public's understanding of women's equality issues have been eliminated from government literature.

Organizations that receive funding from the Trudeau-era agency were stunned.

"When you look at this Conservative government's policy it's like, 'Be good girls, be quiet.' It's shocking really," said Monica Lysack of the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada.

Groups initially thought the agency's core program had escaped the axe during a government-wide spending review that was announced last week, when only the administrative side of Status of Women Canada was cut.

But they were told this week by Status of Women Minister Bev Oda that they would no longer be able to receive funding for projects that involved advocacy work, lobbying of the government or general research, as part of new terms and conditions for grants.

Oda was not available for comment yesterday.

But last week she made reference to the changes in the Commons.

"The new terms and conditions are consistent with our commitment to accountability and value for money," the minister said.

"That makes it very difficult, because if you don't lobby and you don't advocate, you're not going to make systemic changes," said Hogben.

The changes were welcomed by REAL Women Canada, a socially conservative group that has been advocating the total elimination of the federal agency.

"If a group can't support itself and its lobbying activities across the country, then it just isn't a grassroots organization and shouldn't be funded by the taxpayer," said vice-president Gwendolyn Landolt.

Also in the new terms for grants is a statement of objectives for the women's program.

A 1993 document said the program supported organizations that sought to "advance equality for women by addressing women's economic, social, political and legal situation." The new stated objective is to "facilitate women's participation in Canadian society by addressing their economic, social and cultural situation through Canadian organizations."

Needing cash

Some groups that have received funding from Status of Women Canada:

- ? Canadian Council for Muslim Women
- ? Canadian Federation of University Women
- ? Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action
- ? Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women
- ? Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada
- ? Community Microskills Development Centre