

Status groups consider call for new look at equality [CA] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

It's time for Ottawa to examine why equality continues to elude women in Canada, members of status of women advisory councils from across Canada said Tuesday in Halifax.

Almost 32 years after the ground-breaking Royal Commission on the Status of Women presented its report to Parliament, large numbers of women are facing abuse and living in poverty, they said.

It's also a time when Prime Minister Jean Chretien is fishing around for legacy projects.

Newfoundland and Labrador advisory council president Joyce Hancock said it wouldn't cost a lot to formulate a plan for improving the lives of women.

"Our country is poised to see change," she said.

"Change in leadership, and likely change in government direction."

The 1970 Royal Commission report made 167 recommendations, many of which were followed over the last three decades. They included changes to education, health care, reproductive rights and women's role in the workplace. Others, like a national child-care program, were never implemented.

"Why is it that 30 years after the Royal Commission, women only make 79 per cent of men's wages?" said Patricia Roy, chairwoman of the Prince Edward Island advisory council.

In 1971, women earned an average of 57 per cent of men's wages.

Nunavut council president Madeline Qumuatuq said her territory didn't exist in 1970, and many women were living in remote camps, unaware they were even Canadians. They had no say in the last Royal Commission.

The groups said it may be time for a new Royal Commission, but they stopped short of demanding one. They said they want to return to their home provinces and territories and find out if that's what women want.

"We are putting it out to the women of Canada and our colleagues and our sister groups," said Barbara Saunders, executive director of the Northwest Territories council.

-Reprinted from The Daily News (Halifax)

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