

## **Women and the Economy**

- More women are working than ever before: more than 1.036 million, as of May 2006.
- The unemployment rate among women in 2005 was 5.9 per cent – the lowest annual number on record.
- More than 84 per cent of female job creation since December 2001 has been full-time.
- B.C. boasts one of the five highest rates of small businesses owned by women in Canada – 35 per cent across the province.
- Female labour force participation is at an all-time high at just over 61 per cent.

## **Support for Advanced Education**

- Educational opportunities for women show a pattern of growth; women now make up 57 per cent of students in B.C.'s universities. More women than ever are enrolled at the graduate level and in trade schools.
- Our new loan-reduction program is aimed primarily at low-income households and people with dependents. Last year, we forgave more than \$65 million in student loans, and of the 25,000 people who benefited, 61 per cent were women, receiving 63 per cent of the amount forgiven.
- Women receive 60 per cent of the student loans provided interest-free to students from British Columbia while they are studying full time.
- The Industry Training Authority is increasing awareness and access for under-represented groups to consider industry trades or technology. This group includes women.

## **Support for Child Care**

- This government is committed to the development of a high quality, accessible and sustainable early learning and child care system that meets the needs of children and their families in all parts of the province.
- B.C. will continue to raise child care issues with the federal government so B.C. gets as many child care spaces as possible.
- The provincial child care budget is \$200 million.
- Funding for day care operators was last fall raised by 36 per cent.
- \$12.3 million has been invested in capital construction to create about 1,500 new child care spaces across B.C.
- We've invested \$2 million to provide professional development for child care providers.
- We changed subsidy eligibility so that about 6,500 more children are eligible for subsidized child care and about 6,000 families will receive an increase in their existing subsidy.

## Employment and Income Support

- Through [Empowered to Work](#), a women's mentoring project, we allocated almost \$500,000 for four innovative mentoring programs. Empowered to Work is for women re-entering the paid workforce after a prolonged absence, as well as those entering for the first time, including single mothers, women with disabilities, immigrants, Aboriginal and mature women and women in the trades.
- This government is committed to assisting women who are able to work, find and keep jobs and become self-reliant, so they can build brighter futures for themselves and their families. That's why we're investing over \$70 million each year in employment programs that assist women and men throughout the province to move into good jobs.
- These programs include a specialized \$4-million [Bridging Employment Program](#) that assists women and men who have faced violence and/or abuse to overcome their barriers and move towards independence and employment.
- Since 2001, 113,000 fewer British Columbians are dependent on income assistance; that includes parents and the 50,000 children who depend on them. The number of single women on income assistance has declined by over 6,000 women. Studies show that 90 per cent of people leaving income assistance leave for a job, education or a better financial situation. Those who are working are earning two to three times what they received on income assistance.

## Support for Families

- We provided \$40 million to help B.C. families of children with special needs and individuals with developmental disabilities to buy equipment, convert vehicles and renovate homes so loved ones may remain at home and gain greater access to their communities.
- We provided \$550,000 to Douglas College to train more qualified behavioural interventionists and support workers for children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).
- We provided \$10-million to the Victoria Foundation to establish the Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Action Fund, to promote prevention and support projects for children and youth. We also provided \$150,000 for research, assessments and diagnoses for youth with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) who are in the youth justice system.
- We invested \$2 million to the BC Council for Families to strengthen and support families through training and prevention programs and services.

## Health Care Support for Women and Their Families

- We have a provincial women's health strategy – designed to improve the health and health care of girls and women in B.C. We invested \$2 million to support the Women's Health Research Institute to improve our understanding and treatment of disease and injury among women and to work closely with researchers and training programs across B.C. and across Canada.
- We provided \$3 million to increase the number of screening mammograms for women between the ages of 40 and 79. To improve the survival rates of women with breast cancer, we will provide \$8 million annually to give eligible patients access to the drug Herceptin.
- The [BC HealthGuide program](#) provides health information and advice 24 hours every day to help women and their families make better health decisions. Callers can get information on health concerns, symptoms, home treatment and other care options. They can also find tips on how to prevent illness and when to consult a doctor. Free copies of the new, updated BC HealthGuide handbook are available at local pharmacies.

- Women can call the BC NurseLine and speak to a registered nurse (24 hours a day) or a pharmacist (from 5 p.m. to 9 a.m. every day). These services are confidential and translation services are available in over 130 languages. Nutrition information is available from a registered dietitian at Dial-A-Dietitian (from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday), with translation services. Visit [www.dialadietitian.org](http://www.dialadietitian.org) for more information.
- The BC HealthGuide OnLine provides current, medically approved information on over 3,000 health topics, tests, procedures and resources. Click on [www.bchealthguide.org](http://www.bchealthguide.org) or the Women's Health Channel at [www.bchealthguide.org/womens.stm](http://www.bchealthguide.org/womens.stm)
- BC HealthFiles fact sheets cover a range of topics including public health, safety and other tips. They're available [online](#) and at public health units in B.C.
- We're funding a \$3.5-million expansion of diagnostic and assessment services to benefit children with special needs, including those with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.
- Government is spending close to \$400,000 a year for expectant mothers in need and their babies by increasing monthly natal supplements from \$35 to \$45 each month for pre- and post-natal nutrition and infant formula.

### **Legal Aid Support**

- Legal aid is an essential component of our justice system and has an important role to play in maintaining access to justice. B.C. invests more than \$60 million annually in a broad range of legal aid services to assist lower income individuals.
- Legal aid funding continues for emergency interim orders on family matters (such as restraining orders), supervised access orders, threats to permanently remove a child from the province, or child apprehension by the Ministry of Children and Family Development.
- Government provides more than \$40 million per year for options for families that encourage cooperation, like Family Justice Centres, Family Duty Counsel and mediation.

### **Support for Aboriginal Women**

- We invested \$500,000 to fund projects in the northern region to help reconnect Aboriginal children in government care to their communities, culture and extended families. We also provided \$160,000 in grants to 11 Aboriginal agencies throughout the province to strengthen children's ties to their culture and traditions.
- We provided a total of \$120,000 to 24 regional delegated Aboriginal child and family agencies to support the work of their Aboriginal Elders Advisory Committees.
- We funded a forum in Prince Rupert to address the high incidence of suicide among Aboriginal youth.
- The First Citizens Fund offers a [Student Bursary Program](#) for Aboriginal people. In the 2004/2005 academic year (most recent stats), \$87,550 in financial assistance was provided to help 63 Aboriginal women realize their educational goals.
- In fiscal 2004/2005, 124 Aboriginal small businesses in BC started, expanded or made improvements with the support of the First Citizens Fund [Business Loan Program](#). Approximately one-third of them were owned and operated by Aboriginal women.
- In March 2006, the Province provided just over \$1 million in [Community Action for Women's Safety grants](#) to help 53 community-based organizations develop responses to violence against women, especially Aboriginal women, immigrant and visible minority women, older women

and women with disabilities. Almost 50 per cent of the grants went to organizations with projects aimed at preventing violence against Aboriginal women.

### **Support for At-risk Women and Women Affected by Violence**

- In January 2005, this government allocated the [largest funding increase](#) in over a decade (\$12.5 million) for transition houses and front-line services to help women escaping violence. This funding increase brings the yearly funding for these programs to \$46.7 million.
- This increase funded 118 new services and enhanced 214 existing services. Women in over 100 communities throughout British Columbia are benefiting as a result of the services available through this funding increase. Ninety-five per cent of women in British Columbia now have access to services within an hour of their home.
- The Province has committed more than \$2 million in funding for transitional housing developments in Victoria, Terrace and Vancouver's Downtown Eastside that assist and support at-risk women and women and children fleeing abusive relationships.
- In March 2006, the Province provided just over \$1 million in [Community Action for Women's Safety grants](#) to help 53 community-based organizations develop responses to violence against women, especially Aboriginal women, immigrant and visible minority women, older women and women with disabilities.
- Reforms to the Spousal Assault policy are having the desired effect. There are fewer stays of proceedings that leave women unprotected and more women are being protected through court-ordered protection orders. Since the revisions there has been no change in the percentage of spousal assault charges approved to court.

### **Support for Women Who Are Immigrants**

- Through the Canada-BC Immigration Agreement, B.C. provides \$36 million for settlement and adaptation programs for new immigrants and refugees. These programs help immigrants adjust to life in their new country.
- Settlement and adaptation programs include English language services for adults, to help new immigrants adjust to life in British Columbia. To help new immigrants attend, transportation costs are covered, and free child care is provided.
- [BC NurseLine](#) gives people the information they need, when they need it, where they need it, and includes services for people who are deaf and hearing impaired as well as translation services in more than 130 languages – improving access for all British Columbians.
- The [BC Newcomer's Guide](#) is available online in five languages (English, Korean, Punjabi, French and Chinese) and includes information on health care in B.C.
- The Province provides just under \$900,000 a year for multicultural outreach services to women who have experienced abuse and for whom English is not their first language. These services are provided in 10 communities and in 20 different languages.

**Updated: August 2006**

**For more information, contact**  
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