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MINISTERS TO MEET ON ISSUES OF CONCERN TO NORTHERN WOMEN

WHITEHORSE – The territorial and provincial ministers responsible for the Status of Women are meeting on Feb. 1 in Toronto to discuss issues of importance to women in Canada.

Elaine Taylor, minister responsible for the Women’s Directorate, will be raising issues of particular concern to northern women. Issues include funding for women’s shelters, the creation of a regional northern Status of Women Canada office and developing a national action plan to collectively address violence against aboriginal women.

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada recently announced funding increases for women’s shelters located on *Indian Act* reserves. While this is welcome news, there is concern that this funding will not be accessible to the northern territories due to the ‘on reserve’ criteria for funding.

“Statistics continue to demonstrate the need for shelters for women fleeing violence and abuse. In the North, there are additional complexities compared to elsewhere in Canada. Not only do we have higher rates of violence and abuse, but we also have small community populations and isolation,” Taylor said. “The ‘on reserve’ concept has little application in the North, so we are working to ensure that aboriginal women living in the territories realize benefits from the new federal funding.”

Taylor will also be seeking the support of her colleagues to serve the programming and research needs of northern women.

“The creation of a regional northern Status of Women Canada office would better address our diverse needs and challenges,” Taylor added. “This office would be an effective channel among the three territories, northern women and the federal government.”

The recently released summary of the March 2006 National Policy Forum, on *Aboriginal Women and Violence*, highlights the fact that violence against women needs to be a priority in Canada.

“Ministers responsible for the Status of Women made a commitment to address violence against aboriginal women in a collaborative manner,” Taylor said. “This next meeting in Toronto will form the basis for developing an action plan that will collectively advance many important issues.”

Taylor looks forward to productive discussions that will advance efforts in enhancing access to safe environments and reducing violence against women.

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