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To all BCGEU members  
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March 8, 2007

# International Women's Day

*Celebrating gains, and renewing the struggle  
for women's rights on IWD 30th anniversary*

A message from **Judi Filion**, BCGEU Secretary-Treasurer and Chair of the Provincial Executive Women's Committee

We have much to celebrate as we mark the 30th anniversary of International Women's Day. But our struggle to achieve equality for women in all areas of society continues.

Supporting the rights of women migrant workers was the focus of discussion for the 65 women who attended the BCGEU Region 2 Women's Conference, this March 2-3 in Vancouver.

At this "Sisters Across Borders" conference, BCGEU members and community guests participated in a series of workshops that looked at how globalization is affecting our workplaces and communities - and how women pay the greatest costs from exploitation and poverty.

Women's work here and around the world continues to be underpaid and under-valued. Women also continue to be under-represented in the political sphere.

Conference keynote speaker Shelagh Day, a long-time poverty and human rights activist, reviewed the unprecedented erosion of Canadian social programs over the past decade, and the impact on women here.

She emphasized that women continue to be the principal caregivers in our families. It makes a big difference, she noted, when some of that burden is shifted from women's shoulders to social programs such as child care, education, health care and elder care. Public services also provide women with good jobs and benefits.

Women and their children continue to live in stunning rates of poverty in Canada. Close to 40 percent of single mothers live below the poverty line.

But the Harper government has cancelled the national child care program, denied pay equity, eliminated the Charter of Rights court challenges program, and closed Status of Women offices across the country. BC's Campbell government has also cut funding for child care, women's centres, and legal aid.

At the same time as our "Sisters Across Borders" conference, members of BC's women's community were meeting with Bev Oda, federal minister for the Status of Women. Oda refused to reverse any cuts to programs that support women.

We must gather ourselves and fight back for women's rights, for the benefit of all.

