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To all BCGEU members
Please post and distribute
March 3, 2008

International Women's Day, March 8

Women's voices ~ women's votes count

On this International Women's Day it's important to reflect on how far we've come – and how far we have left to go in achieving equality in women's rights and political representation.

British Columbians will soon be asked to vote in three key elections. While a federal election is mandated for this fall, it may be called at any time before then. Municipal and school board elections will be held on November 15 across BC. Our provincial election is scheduled for May 12, 2009.

Currently, just 22% of BC's 79 elected Members of the Legislative Assembly are women. Nationally, 21% of seats in the House of Commons are held by women. Canada now ranks 50th internationally in the representation of women in its lower house of parliament, according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Geneva.

Herstory is being made in the United States as Hillary Rodham Clinton seeks to become the first female Democratic presidential candidate.

The *Women's Vote Project* was launched in America in 1982 with the memorable rallying cry "It's a man's world unless women vote." Those words continue to ring true for women everywhere – and in our country in light of recent sweeping cuts to women's services.

At the federal level in Canada, the Conservative government has cut five million dollars from Status of Women, closed 12 of 16 regional offices, and dropped the word 'equality' from the agency's funding mandate. It is no longer funding women's groups that do advocacy, lobbying, or gender-based research.

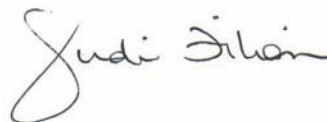
Since 2003, BC's Campbell government has cut \$1.7 million from 37 women's centres, and cut funding to women's 24-hour crisis lines, transition houses, and support services. The Minister's Advisory Council on Women's Health, the Ministry of Women's Equality, the Women's Health Bureau, the Human Rights Commission, and pay equity legislation have all been eliminated.

I urge all members to 'vote smart' in our upcoming elections. Vote for the candidates you believe will stand up for women's services, universal child care, working families' needs, and union rights.

Please note that the BCGEU also offers support to our members who are considering running for local government office.

Here is another quote to remember – this one from BC's own Rosemary Brown, the first black woman elected to a provincial legislature in our country: "Until all of us have made it, none of us have made it."

In solidarity,



Judi Fillion
BCGEU Secretary-Treasurer and
Chair, Provincial Executive Women's Committee

Please see www.bcgeu.ca for IWD event listings around BC. Contact your local area office for BCGEU IWD 2008 posters.

