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A DISAPPOINTING BUDGET

Kahnawake, January 27 2009 - Quebec Native Women (QNW) is gravely concerned about the effects of the federal government's budget during this global economic crisis as it has not announced any specific measures to effectively protect the rights of Aboriginal women and improve their situations.

In 1995, the Government of Canada adopted a policy as part of its larger commitment to gender equality that requires "all federal departments and agencies to conduct gender-based analysis of future policies and legislation ..."¹. However, this budget clearly does not present an effective means for the government to achieve this obligation. Instead their investment plan in infrastructures and in industries tends to benefit the sectors of activities which are predominantly comprised of a male workforce. More than just a transversal approach, specific actions need to be taken that will support Indigenous women entrepreneurship as well as their access to sufficient jobs and credit.

The double discrimination faced by Aboriginal women has already led to a feminization of poverty and the economic struggle will no doubt, exacerbate their marginalization. Nevertheless, it is important to stop seeing them only as victims, but rather to incorporate them as credible and legitimate stakeholders of their own development. In its most recent report on Canada, the United Nations provided numerous recommendations on key areas of concern in regards to its human rights obligations. Sadly, these recommendations were blatantly ignored in its present budget.

Finally, the revival of the economy should not be done at the expenses of environmental sustainability. The status quo is no longer acceptable in these difficult economic times which are exacerbated by environmental concerns, in particular the effects of climate change. It is unfortunate that little care is given to the stewardship of this planet for future generations as is evident in the equating of energy security with supporting and promoting the gas and oil industry. Investing for the future towards sustainable and renewable energy as is evident in US president Barack Obama's administration should be a prime example of where Canada should be investing their tax-payers dollars.

The Government of Canada must prioritize support for businesses that respect environmental norms and who practice sustainable development. Canada must also concede to the fact that Aboriginal peoples economic prosperity includes the right to access their lands and natural

¹ Status of Women Canada, *Gender-Based Analysis: A Guide for Policy Making* (Ottawa: Status of Women Canada, 1998), p. 1.



FEMMES AUTOCHTONES DU QUÉBEC INC.
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resources. Particularly in Quebec, forest exploitation is generally conducted without proper consultation and accommodation with Aboriginal communities. This activity contributes greatly to climate change and therefore more emphasis must be put on the protection of old growth forests and sustainable lifestyles for the Canadian population.

Thus, federal investments must consider a holistic vision in its quest to stimulate the economy and not separate environmental issues. The Government must also remember its obligations to be inclusive of a gender perspective on these important issues.

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