

November 2006

Honorable Stephen Harper
Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons

Dear Prime Minister Harper,

The objective of this letter is to express my/our concerns about the direction in which your government is taking and how it is changing our country. More specifically, I am deeply troubled by the fact that that it is becoming increasingly difficult for ordinary citizens, and the groups that represent their concerns, to exercise their democratic rights.

As a specific example I would like to cite the recent changes made to the Terms and Conditions of the Women's Program at Status of Women Canada which will now prohibit funding for women's groups to advocate, lobby and carry out research on behalf of women. In the absence of a critical mass of women in either Parliament or the Cabinet, advocacy by women's groups has been a hallmark of Canada's democracy. The elimination of the Court Challenges Program is yet another example of how the rights of citizens are being eroded. It is clear that your government is not only "shutting out" women's groups but also environmental groups, anti-poverty groups and literacy groups. It is clear that addressing social justice issues and engaging with civil society have been deemed by your government as no longer necessary. This is not the Canada I/we believe in.

On December 10th, International Human Rights Day and the 25th anniversary of Canada's ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination, I/we stand in solidarity with women's groups across the country who will speak out for the rights of ALL women.

Sincerely,