

# Report to Provincial Council of Women Semi-Annual Meeting Nov. 19, 2007

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## Women Issues/Media

# 1 - "Women for Fair voting", Newsletter (April 19, 2007) reports the importance of having a fair representation of women in politics. It is still difficult for women to overcome certain barriers; lack of appropriate funds, lack of corporate support, male executive network (internal party politics/nomination system). Doris Anderson, a mentor for "Women for Fair Voting" spent her whole life promoting the need for a voting system reform.

A Proportionate representation system failed to win support although it was beneficial for women candidates because it allowed for an increase in a number of female candidates by regions. Unfortunately the referendum was badly promoted and women did not succeed in communicating the message to other groups. A lot of information was available only on a website not always accessible to some women. There was insufficient information available about the benefit of this reform.

There are several remaining issues: a lack of transparency in the nomination system; no built in mechanisms to promote women during elections. And lack of sufficient funds to support women candidates when they compete with men backed by banks and corporations. This is one of the areas that requires further strengthening, better networking and building support systems by women for women.

#2 - Bill C-254, a Private Member's Bill to amend the Criminal Code Act was presented in the House of Commons by Borys Wrzesnewskij, MP for Etobicoke Centre on April 19, 2007.

Currently the hate propaganda law only protects those identified by race, colour, religion, ethnic origin and sexual orientation. It does not protect women who are so often objects of violence and hatred in our society.

This year's International Womens' Day theme was "Ending Violence against Women: Action for Real Results ". Hate crimes against women should be addressed in this context. In his news release, which I received from his assistant Linda Hooper, Borys Wrzesnewskij stresses the need to level the playing field for women in politics. He says: Mr. Dion is setting a target of 33% women candidates for the next election and a target of 50% for the following election.

The proposed amendment of the Act was supported by Media Violence Coalition and by OFL – Ontario Federation of Labor and Ontario English Catholic teachers Association. During the last meeting of the Executive the Polish Canadian Womens' Federation decided to express its support for the Bill. I would like to suggest that the Provincial Council of Women will support it ,too.

#3 - Zofia Cisowski's tragic story wins support of many organizations.

On October 13, 2007 a young immigrant from Poland – Robert Dziekanski was supposed to join his mother in Canada as a new immigrant. Instead he died at the airport after being jolted four times by tasers used by RCMP. There were a lot of media reports, articles, stories on various website showing sympathy for the mother. The events, as they were unfolded, showed that Mr. Dziekanski could not communicate with any of the immigration officials as he could not speak English. There was no interpreter available. His mother, Zofia Cisowska was waiting outside but not allowed to get inside. She was told that his son did not arrive so she left at about 10.00 pm (he arrived at 3.30 pm) As soon as she returned home she was notified that her son was found. When she returned he was dead. It is not clear from these reports why Mr. Dziekanski was kept so long by security, why RCMP behaved so violently and why his mother was not given proper information. There is a sense of incompetence and a lack of coordination and care on the part of officials. Under the personal protection rules a member of family cannot be informed about who is

on a passengers list neither he nor she is allowed to get inside to the luggage area. In this case, the result was tragic. It could have been avoided with a little bit of care and flexibility.

The Provincial Council of Women could support our plea to Diane Finley, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration to provide an explanation of what had happened and why and how the immigration services at the border can be improved to avoid such incidents in the future. We also demand that mother should be compensated for the loss.

#4 - New documentary video "Red on White" directed by Leona Gilbert and produced by will be shown on Channel 4 - OMNI TV on Dec. 29, 2007 at 9 pm.

This is a story of three Polish women who were sent to Siberia but later on escaped and built their new lives in Canada. I happen to be one of the commentators in this movie. Credits are given to the Polish Canadian Women Federation because in this case the producers were interested in the fate of the Polish women during the Second World War. However, I would consider that it is possible to create and record stories of other women combatants, women who served during the war in various capacities as nurses, underground contacts, reporters etc. and who survived due to their courage, persistence and help provided by others.