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**ELEMENTARY TEACHERS' FEDERATION OF ONTARIO**

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Attention News Editors:

**Criminal Code Omission Endangers Girls and Women**

TORONTO, March 6 /CNW/ - On March 8 during International Women's Day Canadian women will be among those who will be demanding that their governments act to protect them against hatred and violence.

"It is a national scandal that the safety of Canadian girls and women continues to be compromised by Canada's Criminal Code," said David Clegg, President, Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario.

Clegg is referring to an omission in the Criminal Code provisions on Public Incitement of Hatred that results in the complete exclusion of girls and women as a group entitled to protection from such crimes.

The omission puts the Criminal Code at odds with Section 15 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms which specifically mandates that equal access to the protection of Canadian laws be granted to girls and women. Currently, the Criminal Code provisions on Public Incitement of Hatred only protect those identified by colour, race, religion, ethnic origin, and sexual orientation.

Clegg pointed out that public incitement of hatred is prohibited in the Criminal Code because it is an acknowledged contributing factor in encouraging violence and discrimination against a target group. Omitting girls and women from the list compromises their safety, he said.

"During its appearance before the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women last month, the Canadian government indicated it is taking a 'more focused approach' to achieving equality between women and men with the goal of 'achieving real and measurable results'. These will continue to ring as hollow words until Canada acts to revise the Criminal Code so it affords Canadian girls and women the protection they deserve," Clegg said.

The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario represents 73,000 elementary public school teachers and education workers across the province and is the largest teacher federation in Canada.

For further information: David Clegg, President, ETFO, (416) 962-3836 (Office); (416) 948-1592 (Cell); Larry Skory, ETFO Communications, (416) 962-3836 (Office); (416) 948-0195 (Cell)

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