



**NEWS RELEASE**

## **LIBERALS MUST HONOUR ELECTION PROMISE TO AMEND HATE PROPAGANDA LAW TO PROTECT WOMEN**

Toronto, Ontario, November 9, 2008: During the federal election campaign, the Liberal party promised to amend the *Criminal Code* hate propaganda law to include protection for women, a critical legislative change that past governments have refused to make. In their platform document, they stated:

**"While the Conservatives claim that law and order is their biggest priority, they have taken no real measures to combat violence against women. A new Liberal government's efforts to fight this problem will begin with an amendment to the *Criminal Code* to include 'gender' in the hate propaganda provisions to help end societal acceptance for those who would incite hatred against women." (Richer, Fairer, Greener: An Action Plan for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Liberal Party of Canada election platform, September 2008)**

Currently, Section 319 of the *Criminal Code* prohibits the public incitement of hatred against a limited list of "identifiable groups", those being set out in Section 318(4) as "any section of the public distinguished by colour, race, religion, ethnic origin or sexual orientation". The public incitement of hatred is illegal because it is acknowledged to be a contributing factor in the promotion of violence and discrimination against the target group. Women are subjected to extraordinary levels of violence, and yet, for decades, politicians have refused to provide us with this basic and essential legal protection.

The Liberals didn't achieve a majority, but they don't need one to fulfill this election promise. All that's required is for the Liberal party to have one of their MPs introduce a Private Member's Bill similar to the one introduced previously by Liberal MP Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Bill C-254, a Bill that adds "sex" to the list of identified groups). In past discussions with both the Bloc and the NDP, the Liberals obtained their support for this important legislative change. This means the opposition parties, acting in concert, can pass a Bill to amend the *Criminal Code*, even without the support of the Conservatives.

During the election, the Liberals promised women they would change the law, and now it is time for them to follow through. Most of their election promises can't be achieved in opposition because legislation that costs money to implement must be approved by the government. This particular election promise, however, is unique – there is no cost for implementation and they already have the support of the other opposition parties.

Liberal leader Stéphane Dion wanted his legacy to be a cleaner environment, but that will not come to pass with the party in opposition. He can, however, leave a **safer environment** by taking immediate action to have this law changed, and that's a legacy anyone should be proud of.

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**About The Free Radical** ([www.thefreeradical.ca](http://www.thefreeradical.ca)): The Free Radical web site is maintained by Toronto anti-violence activist Valerie Smith to provide information on media violence and strategies for combating it. Smith has lobbied on media violence issues since 1990, with a particular focus on the mistreatment of women and girls in popular culture. She is the author of the *Action Agenda: A Strategic Blueprint for Reducing Exposure to Media Violence in Canada*, funded and published by Ontario's Office for Victims of Crime, an agency of the Ministry of the Attorney General. The report is available for free download from The Free Radical web site.

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### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Women's Equality section from *Richer, Fairer, Greener: An Action Plan for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Liberal Party of Canada election platform, September 2008

<http://www.thefreeradical.ca/Liberal-2008-election-platform-womens-equality.pdf>

Free Radical fact sheet: Exclusion of women from Canada's hate propaganda law

Updated November 1, 2008

<http://www.thefreeradical.ca/Hate-propaganda-and-women-fact-sheet-November-2008.pdf>

September 19, 2008 news release:

**Liberal Platform Includes Wrzesnewskyj's Proposed Change to Hate Crimes Legislation**

MP Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Liberal, Etobicoke Centre)

[http://www.thefreeradical.ca/NR\\_BW\\_Hate\\_Crimes\\_19\\_Sept\\_08.pdf](http://www.thefreeradical.ca/NR_BW_Hate_Crimes_19_Sept_08.pdf)

#### **Additional information**

For additional information on the exclusion of women from hate crimes legislation, visit the Hate Propaganda and Bill C-254 sections on The Free Radical web site.

[http://www.thefreeradical.ca/Women\\_and\\_Hate\\_Propaganda.htm](http://www.thefreeradical.ca/Women_and_Hate_Propaganda.htm)

[http://www.thefreeradical.ca/Bill\\_C-254\\_add\\_women\\_to\\_hate\\_propaganda\\_law.htm](http://www.thefreeradical.ca/Bill_C-254_add_women_to_hate_propaganda_law.htm)