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YOUR CHANCE TO AFFECT THE ISSUES: LOBBY!

In the last issue of the OCSW Newsletter we talked about the importance of letting politicians know where we stand on the issues. The last OCSW general meeting brainstormed several questions that we as an organization should be asking our provincial elected representatives.

The following list is a compilation of those questions. The task before us as the Ontario Committee on the Status of Women is to broach the issues with our Members of Provincial Parliament. This Newsletter suggests you follow the steps outlined below to do that.

Please let OCSW know which politicians you intend to lobby -- or interview, if you find the former word intimidating. Please write or call Lee Grills (488-1486) or Carol Sutton (961-3333, days; 690-3213, even.) so that we can keep track of who is approaching which Members.

LEGISLATURE REOPENS MARCH 20

You can visit your MPP at Queen's Park when the legislature is back in session (March 20) or you can conduct the conversation at her/his constituency office. In either case, make an appointment soon.

If you feel you need more background on the issues listed at the end of this article, ask your MPP for a copy of Bill 141 ("An Act of Amend the Employment Standards Act"); the Ontario Family Law Reform Act; the recommendations of the Social Development Committee re Family Violence; the Ontario Theatres Act. (In addition, contact your Member of Parliament for the proposed amendments to the Divorce Act; the proposed Canada Health Act; the Attorney-General of Manitoba,

Winnipeg, R3C 0V8, can provide you with a copy of the booklet "Family Law in Manitoba." From CARAL, 40 St. Clair Ave East, Suite 310, Toronto M4T 1M9, (416) 961-1507 "Quotations from the Report of the Committee on the Operation of the Abortion Law". "We know a majority when we see it", Commons Debate 21294, Dec 6, 1982.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO GO ALONE

Find one or two people to accompany you. One of you can read the statements and ask the questions; the other one can rebut or explain on the politicians comments. (If s/he asks something you cannot answer, say so and promise to get an answer. OCSW will help you find the information and get back to your MPP with a response.)

Then, contact OCSW (Lee or Carol) and let us know what you discovered in the course of your discussion.

We suggest, too, that you send a summary of you findings to your MPP so that there are no misunderstandings.

As you read over the flip side of this page you will see that below each lobbying question there is space for you to record whether your MPP "agrees", "disagrees" or is "undecided", as well as space for your comments.

Members of the OCSW based in Toronto will most likely be approaching MPPs at Queen's Park, after March 20. But any time that is most convenient for you is acceptable. Please let one of us know when you plan to interview your MPP.

In making the appointment you do not have to give details. It is acceptable to say only that you wish to discuss some issues, on Family Law, Health, Employment, etc.

I. EMPLOYMENT

OCSW favours the federal principle of compensating women in the paid labour force with equal pay for work of equal value which considers skill, effort, responsibility and working conditions.

The Ontario legislature unanimously endorsed this method in principle on October 20, 1983. Bill 141 was introduced on Dec 5, 1983 but falls far short of what is required.

Despite some people's fears to the contrary, the introduction of equal pay for work of equal value has not led to exorbitant monetary awards at the federal level.

The question is: In view of this, will you support embodying this principle in the Employment Standards Act in place of the suggested changes to Bill 141?

___ Agree ___ Disagree
___ Undecided

Comments: _____

II. FAMILY LAW

The OCSW is pleased with the 'no fault' provisions and the one-year waiting period contained in the proposed amendments to the federal Divorce Act. We are concerned with the way the financially disadvantaged spouse is treated in the provincial Family Reform Act.

Many courts have narrowly defined "family assets" when property is divided. Many people believe Ontario has full "community property" provisions on marriage breakdown which means all assets acquired during marriage excluding inheritances and gifts are divided at divorce.

The question is: Would you support broadening the definition of "family assets" in the Family Law Reform Act?

___ Agree ___ Disagree
___ Undecided

Comments: _____

III. FAMILY LAW continued

It has been stated that 75 to 80% of court ordered child and spousal support awards are not currently honoured. The Maintenance Enforcement Program in Manitoba is a model system for collecting support awards.

The question is: Would you support introducing this system in Ontario and encouraging reciprocal collections?

___ Agree ___ Disagree
___ Undecided

Comments: _____

IV. FAMILY VIOLENCE

After 10 days of public hearings and lengthy deliberations regarding violence in the family, the Social Development Committee submitted 47 recommendations. One of these was for a more secure funding base for shelters for battered women and their children.

The majority of existing shelters are still in a precarious financial position. The demand for shelters is escalating.

The question is: Will you support a system of block funding for battered women's shelters?

___ Agree ___ Disagree
___ Undecided

Comments: _____

Specialists are more likely to extra bill, even though such services are just as essential as general practitioner services.

Extra billing will negatively affect women in particular because women earn less than men. Some specialties such as gynaecology and obstetrics have high rates of "opted-out" physicians. The elderly, a majority of whom are women, require good health care, including, specialists, even though they have very low incomes.

V. HEALTH ISSUES - ABORTION

The OCSW is concerned about access to abortion services in Ontario. As far back as 1977 the "Report of the Committee on the Operation of the Abortion Law" (the Badgley Report) documented the inequities of access to abortion services.

The question is: Will you support banning extra billing in Ontario?

_____ Agree _____ Disagree
_____ Undecided

A number of recent polls demonstrate strong public support for a women's right to make the abortion decision and for the establishment of free-standing clinics. The federal Minister of Justice has repeatedly stated that the provincial government has the mandate to establish free-standing clinics.

Comments: _____

The question is: Are you prepared to support the establishment of government funded, free standing clinics that provide birth control information and abortion services?

VII. PORNOGRAPHY

The OCSW has a deep concern with the proliferation of pornographic materials.

_____ Agree _____ Disagree
_____ Undecided

Our working definition of pornography is: "any printed, visual, audio or otherwise represented presentation or part thereof with a theme of violence for the sexual gratification of another or others, including the depiction of submission, coercion, lack of consent, degradation of any human being where such behaviour can be taken to be condoned.

Comments: _____

"For the purposes of this definition, the depiction of any person under the age of 16 or who is depicted as being under the age of 16 will be sufficient to deem the material pornographic."

VI. HEALTH ISSUES - Canada Health Act

We have been following the formulation of the Canada Health Act with great interest. Under the proposed CHA, extra billing will be prohibited. The federal government has indicated that the Provinces that do not comply will suffer financial penalties.

The question is: In view of this definition, will you support altering the Ontario Theatres Act to reflect this definition and to include videotapes?

_____ Agree _____ Disagree
_____ Undecided

Comments: _____

