

NEWS

Harper's cuts will affect those who are most vulnerable

Bethany Lassaline
Reporter

Hollye MacKinnon is a student at UPEI and a volunteer at UPEI's Women's Centre and he is determined that Islanders know and understand what is happening.

"I want everyone to at least know some facts about what is going on, it seems like nobody knows about this."

She is organizing a protest for Nov. 23, in the Student Union's visitor parking lot.

"We are doing this to raise awareness, it's a really big deal and people need to know that it is not just women who are being affected. Aboriginals and people with disabilities are also going to experience the cutbacks."

Along with the plans for the protest, Hollye has made some fact sheets that have been distributed throughout campus.

"People need to know. If people knew what was going on I know they wouldn't be OK with it."

Harper's cuts have prevented aboriginals, women and people with disabilities from accessing crucial services. For instance, the court challenges program that assists Canadians in defending their constitutional rights will no longer be funded.

This means people who are at a disadvantage in the legal system, in particular women and minorities, will no longer be given funds or guidance to help with the legal process.

Status of Women Canada is a major organization that distributes funding and services to smaller regional programs.

"They take care of various issues, like pay equity legislation, that promote women's equality," Hollye said.

Harper's government has indicated that the cuts are partially because the government feels that women are already equals.

What You Didn't Know

- The status of Woman Canada will no longer be able to provide funding for any groups who do research, advocacy and/or lobbying. The word 'equality' has been completely removed from their mandate.
- The Court Challenges Program, which gives average Canadians a doorway to the legal system, has been eliminated. Constitutional cases are too expensive for women to mount on their own. Without this test case fund, women simply do not have access to the courts when their rights are violated.
- The cancellation of the National Child Care agreements represents a loss of \$3.7 billion in early learning and child care programs.
- Failure to support the adoption of Pay Equity Legislation means women will continue to be paid less money than men for work of equal value.
- Closure of Regional Equity offices means a loss of support for aboriginal people, women, minorities and those with disabilities find jobs.
- The elimination of the volunteer Canada Initiative will directly affect volunteer organizations and millions of Canadians.
- Harper boasts about a \$13-billion surplus, yet he is cutting funding from women's groups, literacy groups, volunteers, students and people want to make minority challenges under the Charter of Rights.

"This is a slap in the face for everything women have been working for these past 30 to 40 years. It was just like, bam! It's all gone."

There have already been closures as a result of the cuts around Prince Edward Island.

"There are Regional Equity offices in each province, they are there to help people in need to find jobs. The P.E.I. office has already been closed down. Harper wants to have one centralized office that is located in Ottawa," Hollye said.

"The advantage to having an office in each province, especially Prince Edward Island, is that the people get to know you, and you get to know them, it's an entirely personal experience, now you will just be a case number."

Hollye adds, "two weeks ago an aboriginal shelter was shut down due to the elimination of volunteer Canada. Now these people have nowhere to go."

Harper's budget cuts came as a surprise as there was no public forum to address the possibility of the cuts.

"There was no debate or discussion that informed the public that these programs were in danger of being cut. On the 25th he just came out and said this is cut."

Hollye is urging students to get involved.

"Bring your signs and come out on the 23rd. Show people that we are not okay with these cuts."

Hollye also encourages everyone to send a letter or an email to the Prime minister, as well as our

local representative Pat Binns.

"Please remember this come election time. Harper has been boasting about a \$13.2 million surplus.

These cuts aren't warranted, they are taking services away from those who need it most."

For further information you can contact Hollye at,

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