



VWHC WOMEN'S HEALTH INFORMATION CENTRE

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January 25th, 1999

The Honorable Glen Clark
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC

Dear Premier,

Child apprehension policies, BC Benefits, Legal Aid...all very serious issues that impact women enormously. Changes definitely need to be made in those areas. But what is equally important, perhaps even above all, is women's health. How can a woman argue for appropriate BC Benefits, demand better legal protection, or have the strength to fight for custody of her children *if she is not healthy?*

The Vancouver Women's Health Collective, for the past 27 years, has clearly shown that *women who learn about their bodies and take control of their own health are stronger when it comes to all the other difficulties faced in life.*

I do not know a more empowering experience than for a woman to be proactive in her own health care...to educate herself...to stand by her choices so that health care practitioners are not making decisions about *her body* without her informed consent.

More has to be done to help women feel empowered about their health so that they are treated with respect, dignity, and honesty in the health care system. The Vancouver Women's Health Collective is one organization among many that works passionately towards to this end and *our ability to operate is threatened each day as funding becomes more uncertain.*

We need a commitment that women will not be denied the ability to learn about *their bodies and their health*. We need a commitment that *women's issues become a priority in health care decisions*. I appeal to you, Premier Clark, to ensure that the Ministry of Women's Equality has a stronger voice in parliament so that they can continue to influence the citizens, policy makers, and health care providers about the realities of women and girls in BC.

Sincerely,

Brenda Kent
Community Health Advocate Coordinator