

De-gendering Engagement?: Gender Mainstreaming, Women's Movements and the Canadian Federal State

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ABSTRACT

This article assesses the impact of gender mainstreaming on Canadian women's movements' relationship to the federal state. The paper argues that while gender mainstreaming creates new spaces for integrating gender analysis into policymaking, it also contributes to the erosion of feminist organizations as legitimate participants in the policy process.

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article évalue l'impact de l'intégration des sexes sur la relation des mouvements de femmes canadiens à l'état fédéral. Cet article soutient que tandis que l'intégration des sexes crée de nouveaux espaces pour incorporer l'analyse des sexes dans la création de politiques, cela contribue aussi à l'érosion des organismes féministes en tant que participants légitimes dans le processus de création de politique.

INTRODUCTION

To fulfill the commitments made in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women in 1995, the Canadian government unveiled *Setting the Stage for the Next Century: The Federal Plan for Gender Equality*. This document outlined a five-year strategy charting the Chrétien government's broad vision for the advancement of gender equality into the new millennium. Of particular significance was a promise to develop a systematic process to inform and guide future program and policy development through an assessment of the differential impacts of public policy on women and men. The decision to integrate a gender mainstreaming strategy into the policy process through an approach termed *Gender-Based Analysis* (GBA) indicated compliance on the part of the Liberal government with emerging international trends in the area of women's equality. First used in international development work, gender mainstreaming became more visible in the mid-1990s when several states and multilateral organizations adopted gender mainstreaming strategies. Countries such as New Zealand provided leadership in this field while multilateral institutions, including the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the International Labour Organization and the Commonwealth incorporated gender mainstreaming rhetoric and practice into their programming.

Consistent with international trends, the *Federal Plan* outlined Canada's vision of gender mainstreaming, introducing a required vetting of all programs and policies from federal departments and agencies to assess their gender impact. Mounting such a strategy constituted a more systematic approach to addressing gender equality than had

ever been attempted previously in Canada. The adoption of the *Plan*¹ and gender mainstreaming, however, occurred within the context of the massive government restructuring initiative that dominated the Liberal government's first term (1993-97). The irony of the simultaneous introduction of the *Plan* in the midst of dramatic state reorganization was unmistakable. Within the *Plan*, the government pledged to apply a gender lens to all federal government policy and program development and evaluation processes, while ushering in restructuring initiatives, the gender implications of which were virtually ignored. The implementation of the *Plan* at the height of the government's restructuring agenda points to the valiant effort by Status of Women Canada (SWC) and HRDC's Women Bureau to ensure the ongoing institutionalization of women's equality perspectives within the bureaucracy, despite the neo-liberal agenda led by the Department of Finance. Together, the *Plan* and the state restructuring process recast the Liberal government's commitment to women's equality squarely within a philosophy of governance informed by neo-liberalism and framed around accountability, efficiency and cost-effectiveness. During the mandate of the *Plan*, the government also unveiled new initiatives targeted to foster "citizen engagement" by re-orienting the relationship between the voluntary sector and the state.

This paper analyses the impact of this changed institutional and ideological environment for federally-focused Canadian women's movements. More specifically, the paper critically assesses the opportunities available to women's movements for access to, and influence over, the policy process in an era of gender mainstreaming. We argue that although the shift towards gender mainstreaming as the central strategy for addressing women's equality demands across the federal government

created new spaces for integrating gender analysis into policymaking, it both complicated efforts to advance public policy analysis that addressed women's diversity substantively and exacerbated the erosion of women's organizations as legitimate interveners in the policy process. Consequently, women's movements now stand at the periphery of federal policymaking in Canada to a greater extent than at any other time in the past three decades.

This article neither evaluates the merits of Gender-Based Analysis as a tool of public policymaking nor assesses the relative success or failure of the *Federal Plan for Gender Equality* in advancing Canadian women's equality. Those topics have been addressed ably in recent treatments by Grace (1997) and Burt and Hardman (2001) respectively. Instead, we situate the institutional restructuring of women's policy machinery against the backdrop of neo-liberalism and map the impact of gender mainstreaming on redefining the relationship between women's movements and the Canadian federal state.

WOMEN, RESTRUCTURING AND CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

Gilles Paquet and Robert Shepherd (1996) explain that the Chrétien government faced two crises upon election in 1993: a public finance crisis and a crisis of governance. The urgency of reacting to these twin crises led to a flurry of reforms designed to "get government right" through increasing the efficiency, effectiveness and accountability of government actions and creating a results-oriented public service working in "partnership" with citizens, business, subnational governments and local communities. This new public management model involved "a preoccupation with the streamlining and downsizing of administrative operations and the systematic exploration of alternative forms of service delivery" (Bakvis 1997, 294).

As the government pursued a massive Program Review that included downsizing the federal public service by 45,000 employees and cuts worth an accumulated \$29 billion (Swimmer 1996), the reforms were cast as a gender-neutral exercise, when, in fact, the impact of these changes were significantly gendered (Brodie 1998). Throughout the mid to late 1990s, feminist scholars feverishly documented the disproportionately heavy burden endured by Canadian women as a consequence of the government's actions in the areas of state restructuring, decentralization and welfare state dismantling (Bakker 1996).

Along with other social movements in Canada, women's groups faced an additional attack both financially, through the loss of even more public funding, as well as through an undermining of their legitimacy as actors in the democratic process. These developments had a particularly adverse effect on women's organizations based in English Canada. Unlike francophone women's organizations based

in Québec that traditionally enjoyed strong representation and association with their provincial state, women's movements in English Canada experienced a difficult refocusing of activist energies away from the federal government toward provincial governments and international organizations as the federal government pursued its downloading agenda.

Women's organizations first began to absorb the deleterious impact of state restructuring under the Mulroney regime (1984-1993). Equality-seeking organizations had been excluded gradually from the policy process and women's movements in particular were squeezed financially through successive budget reductions (Bashevkin 1998). As the 1993 election approached, therefore, the women's community was excited about the election promises made by the Liberals in their campaign Red Book, written in part by Chaviva Hosek, a feminist and former President of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women.

The optimism on the part of women's movements that accompanied the election of the Liberals in 1993, however, quickly dissipated as a zealous concentration by the new Liberal government on fiscal responsibility and deficit elimination evidenced that there would be significant roadblocks to injecting women's equality onto the public agenda. A record number of women elected to the House of Commons in 1993 (with women now constituting 18% of MPs) did not translate into more Cabinet portfolios for women, and of those who did manage to obtain a Cabinet posting, few obtained high profile, senior Cabinet positions. The enthusiasm for fiscal responsibility championed by the Reform Party left little space for women's equality issues on the public agenda. With the virtual elimination of the New Democratic Party in Parliament, opposition within the House to hold the Liberal government accountable for its disregard of social justice and women's equality issues was minimal. As Sylvia Bashevkin aptly summarized: "If Chrétien and his team campaigned from the left in 1993, they clearly governed to the right after that point" (1998, 223).

In introducing the 1995 *Federal Plan for Gender Equality*, the Liberals, the original architects of women's policy machinery in the 1970s, withdrew from their longstanding commitment to advance women's equality through institutional means, pointing instead to the mainstreaming of gender as a panacea for ending women's oppression. Since tabling the *Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada* in 1970, the federal Liberals had promoted women's equality within the federal government through bureaucratic mechanisms which became known as the "women's state" (Findlay 1987). The institutionalization of a network of national machinery for the advancement of women, as well as positive measures such as the creation of programs, policies and legislation targeted to address women's systemic inequality, functioned as defining characteristics of

post-1960s Canadian feminism. At the federal level, the "women's state" consisted primarily of three bodies: Status of Women Canada (SWC), the coordinating agency charged with providing policy advice to government departments and reporting directly to the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women; the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women (CACSW), an arm's-length advisory body focused on research and policy analysis; and the Women's Program housed within the Secretary of State which acted as the pivotal funding source for women's organizations.

In 1995, in a move argued to reduce duplication of services and provide a more comprehensive approach to women's equality, the federal government quietly dissolved CACSW. The research and public inquiry functions of the CACSW were transferred, along with the Women's Program, from the already-defunct Secretary of State, first to HRDC and then to Status of Women Canada. A further example of the Chrétien government's diminished prioritization of women's equality was evident in the demotion of the Cabinet portfolio for the status of women to a junior Cabinet position represented by a Secretary of State.

Officially, the Liberals insisted that transferring the Women's Program to SWC would provide a critical mass of expertise on women's issues, enhance SWC's capacity to identify and target key policy issues for action, and increase the focus and effectiveness of the government's promotion of women's equality in collaboration with the voluntary sector (Canada 1996, 8). The messaging around this amalgamation, however, was set squarely within the economic rationalist discourse of Program Review, citing the enhanced efficiency and effectiveness of this new arrangement. Because the federal state, through long-standing practices of funding women's groups, helped build much of the infrastructure of institutionalized feminism in Canada, women's organizations were particularly opposed to changes to the funding guidelines of the Women's Program announced in 1998-99. Within the women's movement, the continued erosion of established funding practices were interpreted as blatant efforts to silence criticism of Liberal policies, constrain the capacity of grass-roots women to hold the government accountable for its domestic and international commitments, and inhibit effective interventions in public policy debates.

To counter the souring relationship between the Liberal government and the women's community, SWC launched a consultation process around funding issues designed to rebuild its relationship with women's organizations and involve them, along with other stakeholders, in the changing policy process. Such consultations were commonplace during Program Review partially because of the federal government's new goal of appearing to increase citizen engagement and accountability. Women's organizations, however, were not appeased by the olive branch of consultation. Feminists

stated explicitly that they did not want to see the demise of core funding that had long supported their organizations. Thus, when SWC unveiled the new direction for the Women's Program in the spring of 1998 that included the creation of a single funding mechanism eliminating the distinction between core and project funding, the women's community expressed its profound displeasure. The changes to the Women's Program, including the adoption of a performance framework to measure the impact of organizations' initiatives, evoked the following angry reaction from the National Action Committee on the Status of Women:

In 1996, after engaging women's groups in a national consultation process the Government proceeded to disregard the key recommendations made by equality-seeking groups for improvements to and expansion of the core funding mechanism. Instead, the Government's decision to end core funding will deny the equality rights of women in Canada, reversing the gains made by women and limiting the ability to actively advocate for the equality rights of all women. (1998, 1)

Despite these protests, SWC became the primary federal government mechanism for the advancement of women's equality. But given its independence from a line department, SWC faced restricted access to the policy process and Cabinet decisions. The horizontal mandate of SWC also constrained its capacity to advance an independent policy agenda, rendering SWC heavily dependent on other government departments to engage it in policymaking. For SWC, therefore, the reforms accompanying Program Review necessitated strategically narrowing its focus to key priority areas in order to enable the department to maximize its modest resources while still pursuing the objectives outlined in the *Plan*.

This reshaping of women's bureaucratic mechanisms unfolded in tandem with the federal government's newfound enthusiasm in re-igniting citizen engagement. Susan Phillips explains that the Chrétien government's attention to the role of voluntary organizations surfaced in the Liberal Party's 1997 Red Book II that identified the voluntary sector as "the third pillar of Canadian society and its economy" (2001, 146). Phillips argues that this focus on the voluntary sector was motivated by a recognition on the part of government insiders of the strong relationship between the voluntary sector and the democratic process; the pivotal role assumed by the voluntary sector in service provision (critical in an era of dramatic downsizing) and the necessity of re-establishing strong relationships with voluntary associations as a method of shoring up the visibility of the federal government in the everyday lives of Canadians.

In keeping with this new priority, the Liberals

announced the creation of the Voluntary Sector Initiative to mark the United Nations Year of the Volunteer in 2001. This five-year, \$94.6 million project, mandated to "improve the Government's policies, programs and services to Canadians, leading to increased public confidence" (as quoted in Phillips 2001, 152) sought to renew relationships between the government and those "engaged citizens" deemed useful to the state. Such efforts to redraw the parameters of Canadian citizenship echoed earlier efforts to cast the "good citizen" in neo-liberal terms as the self-sufficient, employed individual who did not make demands on the state. As Jenson and Phillips (1996) observe, the redefinition of citizenship that accompanied this embrace of neo-liberalism by extension meant that while *advocacy* efforts were dismissed as undermining to democracy, groups with mandates incorporating *service delivery* were exalted as pivotal to the public good. The new "partnership regime" between the state and civil society, therefore, endorsed service organizations over advocacy groups now denigrated as exerting undue pressure on an already-overburdened state.

THE MOVE TO GENDER MAINSTREAMING

The decision to adopt a government-wide gender analysis strategy as the cornerstone of the *Federal Plan for Gender Equality* derived largely in concert with the 1995 UN Platform for Action that called on governments and multilateral organizations to "integrate gender perspectives in legislation, public policies, programmes and projects [to] ensure that before policy decisions are taken, an analysis of their impact on men and women, respectively, is carried out" (UN 1996, 117). In introducing gender mainstreaming to Canada, the government trumpeted its many benefits (Canada 1997). At a macro level, a gender-sensitive approach to policy research was identified as yielding significant economic, social and political benefits. GBA-informed research would ensure the maximum participation by women in the economy; for example, if barriers to women's full integration were properly identified, they could be minimized through effective policy options. The GBA strategy encouraged policymakers to situate knowledge within its historical and contemporary context and consider comparative information from other jurisdictions. Such a holistic approach to generating research grounded in women and men's experiences was said to ensure a more effective targeting of policies and programs. Additionally, GBA tools were touted as useful in presenting policy recommendations in a credible and practical way, demonstrating how gender considerations can be balanced with other government priorities and considerations as well as effectively evaluated. GBA was recognized also as pivotal in answering appeals echoed cross-nationally for greater government accountability for policy actions.

At the level of policy development, GBA was

championed as having additional advantages. A GBA-informed approach could ascertain the gendered impact of research agendas and aid in determining whether specific policy options support gender equity and how women and men are affected by particular policy choices. Such an approach could improve the predictability of outcomes, exposing the gender bias embedded in allegedly "gender-neutral" policies and anticipating unintended policy consequences. GBA was also said to have positive implications for the democratization of political life insofar as GBA could encourage the involvement of constituencies in civil society usually excluded from both research and traditional channels of policy-making.

Given the federal government's preoccupation with the "bottom lines" of affordability, cost effectiveness and efficiency, GBA meshed well with the restructuring framework. GBA analysis, with its promise of generating efficient policy design and outcomes, was especially attractive given increasingly finite departmental resources. Within government, GBA was promoted as an effective vehicle for circumventing media controversy over particular policies and, even more importantly, avoiding costly Charter challenges.

The decision to integrate gender mainstreaming led to the adoption across the federal government of a variety of integration models and implementation approaches.² Some departments (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, for example) formed new gender units to oversee and develop GBA strategies. Citizenship and Immigration Canada embarked on a project to mainstream gender into its policy cycle to explore the differential impact of immigration policies on men and women. The Department of Justice assembled a network of legal experts drawn largely from academia to form part of its consultative community around gender mainstreaming. Within Health Canada, the Women's Health Bureau established in 1993 was assigned responsibility for the integration of GBA and the monitoring of gender equality throughout that department. Other federal departments with a longer history of attention to the status of women wove gender mainstreaming into existing bureaucratic units. Burt and Hardman (2001) trace the institutionalization of GBA within Human Resources Development Canada where the Women's Bureau, a focal point for work on women's labour force participation since 1954, assumed lead responsibility for GBA.³

With the advent of gender mainstreaming, the reconstituted Status of Women Canada was charged with providing departments with GBA tools, training materials and procedures, as well as monitoring the overall government implementation of gender mainstreaming. Thus while individual departmental bureaux worked internally to advance GBA, SWC's new role included the promotion of GBA externally through interdepartmental committees, reviewing and commenting on Cabinet submissions and Ministerial and departmental presentations to Standing

Committees of the House of Commons and the Senate, and developing training seminars for use across the public service.

For women's movements, however, realizing the promise of gender mainstreaming required activists to negotiate the new institutional and ideological environment in order to position themselves as active participants in the implementation of GBA. Our analysis of the institutional access and the availability of bureaucratic allies critical to such a project indicates that women's movements, in fact, have been unable to achieve these goals and are sidelined increasingly from the policy process.

ACCESS AND INFLUENCE IN A GENDER MAINSTREAMING CONTEXT

The prime consequences of restructuring the women's state were the redefined relationship between SWC and its external policy community and diminished access to the state for women's movements. Despite the rhetoric of "citizen engagement," women's movements became progressively dis-engaged from the federal state.⁴ The redesigned women's policy machinery narrowed the institutional framework within which women's equality demands were funnelled, causing many feminists in Canada to express grave doubts about the wisdom of consolidating the existing status of women machinery into a single institution. Assigning lead responsibility for women's equality to a department constrained by an already-limited capacity was interpreted by movement activists as freeing line departments from denying ownership of these issues. Although now tasked with responsibility for overseeing the adoption and implementation of GBA, SWC's capacity to guide this process was compromised, given its small budget, low visibility within the government and constrained power as a horizontal agency that relies primarily on persuading line departments to adopt gender analysis strategies. As former public servant Marika Morris explains: "[Status of Women Canada] is a small department with a diminishing budget... Some officials in other departments have never even heard of SWC and think it is an NGO" (1999, 36). The difficult balancing act for SWC, therefore, involved continuing its own policy analysis while simultaneously addressing its new mandate of providing leadership on GBA. It is important to note, however, that SWC assumed this balancing act willingly. SWC lobbied hard both for the government's initial adoption of GBA and then to be assigned responsibility for coordinating GBA across the government, despite the significant challenges the GBA mandate posed for SWC.

Not surprisingly, the already-deteriorating relationship between the federal government and feminist activists was not improved with the advent of gender mainstreaming. As outlined, improving the quality of policy advice from stakeholders was lauded as one of the benefits of GBA in that closer collaboration with relevant

constituencies would facilitate more efficient policy and programme development, implementation and evaluation. The creation of coalitions and mechanisms involving government and non-government actors were argued as having positive long-term implications for the success of policy recommendations. The mandates of the new gender units and other longer-established women's policy units, however, remain preoccupied with building support for gender analysis internal to their own departments through education and training. As one civil servant from a women's policy unit observes: "In the past there was perhaps more interaction with women's groups, but we're very focused on the department currently and have fewer relationships with women-only groups."⁵ Despite the existence of institutional focal points for gender mainstreaming, therefore, the position of women's advocacy organizations as accepted policy actors is tenuous.

Burt and Hardman's (2001) analysis of the Women's Bureau within HRDC documents the additional problem of the repeated institutional realignments of women's policy units that can weaken their capacity to pursue gender mainstreaming substantively. Given such institutional instability, linkages between state structures and women's NGOs are increasingly vulnerable. A report of a United Nations Experts Group on National Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women warns that one of the most significant obstacles facing women's equality today is frequent government restructuring. Repeated institutional realignment results in an interruption of the continuity of national mechanisms leading to significant constraints in their capacity to advance women's equality (1998, 3). Comparative study of women's equality machinery confirms that women's policy machinery can have an impact on public policy when conditions are favourable; however, when their policy agenda conflicts with the priorities of the government of the day *and the independent women's movement is isolated from activities within the state*, they can find themselves isolated, silenced and marginalized within the policy process and can even have their past achievements rolled back (Geller-Schwartz 1995, 53, emphasis added). In the Canadian case, the institutional changes that have reduced access for women's movement actors in federal policymaking, therefore, may well prove particularly damaging to the gender policy units themselves and would suggest the wisdom of engaging women's organizations more substantively in gender mainstreaming initiatives.

The changed structural and ideological environment within which gender mainstreaming emerged also affected opportunities for fruitful alliances between women's movement actors and civil servants. One example of this is the manner in which the validation of women's advocacy organizations as possessing reliable, legitimate knowledge on a range of issues related to women's equality has diminished. In part, the undermining of women's organizations as accepted partners in policymaking flows

from the re-framing of gender analysis as a scientific, objective process that can be conducted without the participation of advocacy groups. It is consistent also with the marginalization of advocacy more generally as reflected in the neo-liberal conceptions of citizenship and the recent citizen engagement initiatives. For example, the Gender Equality Analysis policy document produced by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada assures bureaucrats that "[g]ender-equality analysis does not promote any particular views, such as a *lobby group's* view" (Canada 1999, 10, emphasis added). Susannah Bush reads this as a concerted effort "to elevate this form of analysis from the *implied* subjective work initiated by national advocacy organizations" (2001, 78, emphasis in the original). Indeed, the new language of gendered policy research concentrates on the *processes* involved in the analysis, rather than the *outputs* of government (traditionally the preoccupation of feminists activists) and shifts the ground on which women's groups historically interacted with the Canadian federal state.

Substituting for the now-suspect expertise offered by women's organizations is the work of the newly-minted "gender expert." Much of the current energy of women's policy units targets the creation and delivery of "gender sensitivity" training within the bureaucracy to educate policymakers about GBA and familiarize public servants with its techniques. This approach has been adopted in the Department of Justice and the Canadian International Development Agency where internal networks of "gender-advisors" or "gender-equality specialists" form a cadre of internal gender experts assigned to supply information and advice at various stages in the policy cycle. This trend has two key consequences. For women's movements, the location of the "gender expert" inside government legitimizes the internally-focused approach to gender analysis that isolates women's advocacy organizations even further. Such gender experts may or may not have familiarity with feminist practice or principles and often only understand gender analysis in narrow methodological terms. Not surprisingly, linkages between women's movements and "gender experts" may be difficult to mount and/or maintain. This is a perennial problem for women's organizations and social justice organizations more broadly as the high staff turnover across the bureaucracy means that NGOs regularly confront new public servants unfamiliar with the substance of their files. Additionally, the vesting of expertise on gender with *individuals* rather than *communities* is consistent with the new framing of citizenship; the gender expert speaks only from the perspective of the individual, rather than the community and, as such, the complex realities of women's situations may be lost in an increasingly technocratic approach to gender equality.

This new definition of expertise has complicated further the historically problematic relationships between femocrats⁶ and feminists. Marian Sawyer's (1996)

comparative work on women's policy machinery reveals that such linkages are persistently difficult as tensions among femocrats and the women's community invariably arise because the "women's bureaucracy" is constrained by government agendas preoccupied increasingly with quantifiable outcomes. Public servants working within these institutions who may be sympathetic to feminism must simultaneously bridge the expectations of two distinct constituencies, the women's community and the bureaucratic community. In the current economic and political climate, femocrats are forced increasingly to adopt an economic-rationalist rhetoric and to justify their actions to advance equality within a market-defined discourse emphasizing the principles of efficiency, accountability and affordability. The daunting challenge for feminists within the state, therefore, is to position gender concerns within a framework of governance that constructs gender equality as an "expenditure" or a "cost" rather than as a goal (Franzway *et al.* 1989, 152).

In reflecting on these issues, public servant Lynne Dee Sproule (1998) characterizes the position of femocrats within the Canadian public service as "between a rock and a hard place." Sproule admits that the "old impasses" between feminists and femocrats still trouble relationships between bureaucrats and the activist community (1998, 9). Arguably, this gulf has widened with the move to gender mainstreaming. Bound by bureaucratic norms of neutrality and confidentiality, femocrats are perceived frequently as abandoning the women's movement. Conversely, femocrats who conceptualize GBA as simply implementing procedural changes within the bureaucracy may not recognize the relevance of input from the women's movement within this process and view criticism from the women's movement as unjustified. Frustration on both sides, as evidenced in difficult, acrimonious consultation initiatives such as those undertaken by the Department of Justice on violence against women in 1997 may impede further the access of feminists to the policy process and lead to deteriorating communication between femocrats and women's movements.

Sproule suggests also that some femocrats may see feminists' limited understanding of the changing policy environment as evidence of a lack of adaptability to the new realities. She argues: "the women's equality agenda would probably be more effectively moved forward were lobbyists' strategies to include a consideration of the parameters necessary for greater collaboration with femocrats on specific issues" (1998, 10). Given the new emphasis on policy-relevant research rather than advocacy, alliances within the bureaucracy may be most easy to establish for those organizations with a highly professionalized staff capable of generating research that conforms to the expectations of Gender-Based Analysis, a model that does not reflect the meagre financial resources currently available to most grassroots women's groups.

The move to gender mainstreaming potentially

affects alliances internal to women's movements as well if movements attempt to shape their responses to this new policy environment in line with state expectations. Although the rationale behind Gender-Based Analysis specifically calls for the integration of diversity agendas into the research process, gender mainstreaming can be criticized for encouraging *difference-neutrality* and too often representing only the priorities of majoritarian women. Given the privileging of expertise outlined above, the question of whether gender mainstreaming dislodges the prioritization of an integrative feminist analysis embraced by many women's organizations is an important issue for discussion. A pressing issue for feminists is whether the new pattern of "experts" speaking for women inspired by gender mainstreaming actually results in the needs of all women being heard. Because the bureaucratic culture of the federal civil service is increasingly hostile to advocacy, the ability to advance "objective expertise" is viewed as far more compatible with conventional civil service values of neutrality than feminist advocacy. But if such advocacy is removed from the mainstreaming process, GBA risks slipping into a status quo approach that represents the perceptions of well-educated, well-paid, predominantly white women as if they were the perceptions of all women, particularly as the analytic focus of gender mainstreaming rests squarely on comparing the situation of women against that of men. The substitution of GBA expertise for meaningful consultation with the relevant policy stakeholders, therefore, risks isolating femocrats even further from minority women's claims and silencing the voices of marginalized women within mainstream women's groups that must compete for space within a gender mainstreaming environment. Potentially, this risks framing of all "difference" as homogeneous, thus allowing the state to appear to respond to difference agendas promoted by women's movements without mounting substantive initiatives to actively integrate difference into policy outputs.

CONCLUSION

Slightly more than a decade ago, the role assumed by national women's organizations in Canada's constitutional debates marked a milestone in the maturation of Canadian feminism as a legitimate political force in federal politics. Since that time, we have witnessed the virtual erasure of women's movements as significant actors in federal politics; feminist organizations formerly focused on federal politics now concentrate on battling their resource crises and struggling to re-focus their energies toward provincial and regional arenas in response to decentralizing trends in Canadian politics. Clearly, the reforms instituted under Program Review in the 1990s ushered in the most comprehensive changes to the Canadian federal government of the post-war period. For women's movements, that restructuring process

fundamentally altered the institutional and ideological setting within which women's equality struggles are now waged.

During his tenure as Minister of Finance, Paul Martin once advised Canadians: "New realities require a new vision, new facts require new calculus and new challenges require a new resolve" (1995). The "new realities" of which Mr. Martin was a key architect obviously demand that women's movements devise a "strategic calculus" with which to address the current political context. An integral element of this altered political environment is gender mainstreaming. At an international level, the mainstreaming agenda has carved out space for considering gender concerns in fora previously unwillingly to incorporate such analysis. In theory, therefore, gender mainstreaming has the *potential* to advance women's equality struggles, even within restructuring periods. Gender mainstreaming may yet offer meaningful opportunities for women's movements in Canada to exert influence over policymaking, particular if GBA is undertaken from a *feminist* perspective. Practically, however, Gender-Based Analysis thus far has yielded modest accomplishments with respect to advancing women's equality in Canada. Despite its promise as a breakthrough tool for improving public policy for women and men, gender mainstreaming has done little to re-engage feminists in the policy process or resuscitate the relationship between women's movements and the Canadian federal state.

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ENDNOTES

1. Following the five-year review of the Beijing Conference, the Government of Canada approved the *Agenda for Gender Equality* in 2000.
2. Not all government departments adopted Gender-Based Analysis. The Department of Finance, for example, has rejected the need for a gender strategy. GBA implementation also varies at the provincial/territorial levels. Alberta and Ontario have shown resistance to this type of policy approach while in 1997 the Québec government undertook pilot projects using GBA in social services, health, finance, labour and immigration. See Teghtsoonian (2000) for an analysis of the Gender Lens Strategy in British Columbia under the NDP.
3. In 2000, the Women's Bureau of HRDC was renamed the *Gender Analysis and Policy Directorate*.
4. Bush (2001) offers an excellent analysis of the consultations undertaken by SWC.
5. HRDC Women's Bureau representative, Presentation at Carleton University, July 19, 2001.
6. First coined in the Australian context, this term describes feminist women working within government bureaucracies (Eisenstein 1996).

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