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Feb. 2, 2010

Open Letter to:

Hon. George Abbott, Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation

Hon. Kash Heed, Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General

Hon. Rich Coleman, Minister of Housing and Social Development

This morning I attended the public release of the submission to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), entitled “Nothing to Report,” from the B.C. CEDAW Group. I applaud the B.C. CEDAW Group for taking the initiative and releasing this report, given that the United Nations’ November 2009 deadline to provide an update on progress to implement recommendations following a review in 2008 was not met. I was disappointed that no one from the provincial government was there today to hear the concerns of so many dedicated organizations that work tirelessly to ensure equality for women and girls, and so am taking this opportunity to follow up with you directly.

No one should risk violence, poverty, or life on the street, simply because of the circumstances of their birth. But that is the case for Aboriginal girls born in British Columbia. The B.C. CEDAW Group’s submission highlights the lack of action by both the federal and provincial governments to address not only the UN’s two specific criticisms about poverty and missing and murdered Aboriginal women, but also the overall lack of action to address the systemic problems facing Aboriginal and impoverished people in this province.

New Democrats have repeatedly called on the government to take action on poverty and violence against women. We have offered constructive solutions, including legislating a provincial poverty reduction plan that includes explicit targets and timelines, reviewing income assistance rates and tying them to inflation, increasing resources to investigate the Highway of Tears murders, and holding an inquiry into missing and murdered women on Vancouver’s downtown eastside. Our suggestions have fallen on deaf ears, and I ask you today to show leadership and commit to righting these wrongs.

The United Nations demanded action from this government, yet has received none. I am writing today to urge you to take immediate action, together with the Government of Canada, to comply with the CEDAW's requirements. I am hopeful that the Government of British Columbia will announce steps in the upcoming Speech from the Throne on February 9 to finally address the systemic problems that have allowed so many women, disproportionately Aboriginal, to go missing or be murdered in British Columbia. Further,

we must see more than just promises, but action from this government during the upcoming spring legislative session to end the marginalization of Aboriginal women and girls.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kathy Corrigan".

Kathy Corrigan
New Democrat Women's Issues Critic
MLA, Burnaby-Deer Lake

Cc: Bob Simpson, MLA & Opposition Critic for Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation
Mike Farnworth, MLA & Opposition Critic for Public Safety and Solicitor General
Shane Simpson, MLA & Opposition Critic for Housing and Social Development