



## a women's training community

A Commitment to Training and Employment for Women (ACTEW) is a provincial umbrella group of supporters, trainers, agencies, and organizations delivering employment and training services to women. ACTEW's mission is to promote and support community-based training opportunities for women. ACTEW promotes women's full economic and social participation in the Canadian labour force by supporting community-based training programs through networking, information-sharing, and professional development with our members and within the community-based training sector; by undertaking capacity-building projects and sector development; and through the development of public education research and publications.

### Message from the Chair & the Executive Director

This has been another year of growth for ACTEW. Our membership continued to diversify as we welcomed more agencies working outside the Greater Toronto Area. Our 2001-2004 strategic planning initiatives concluded with the launch of our new corporate identity and redesigned web site. ACTEW also submitted an application to become officially registered as a charitable organization. This year we continued to expand the professional development workshops offered to our membership. Our innovative work in using online technology to support the needs of the community-based training sector was recognized as ACTEW received an Award of Excellence from Showcase Ontario for our Constellation project. We continued to distribute our email bulletin to over 1,000 subscribers. We welcomed a new Treasurer, Debbie Baxter, to our Board of Directors; we also hired several new staff. Deanna Yerichuk joined our team in November as Interim Project Coordinator and has since taken over our Entrewomen project. Fiona MacCool also rejoined our team for a brief period this year to help support our online project development. We hosted three placement students and as the year wrapped up we were in the process of recruiting 4 regional liaisons to support ACTEW's information-sharing across the province. Our members continue to tell us how much they value our work, our attention to their needs and the services we provide. Your involvement makes ACTEW's work possible. We appreciate and value your continued support.

Liz Creal, Chair  
Jen Liptrot, Executive Director

### 2003-2004 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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### ACTEW Staff

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Fatima Kanji  
*Placement Students*

ACTEW gratefully thanks our members, donors, and the following agencies and foundations for their generous support. Their contributions allow us to work on behalf of the women's training community.

#### Funders

Status of Women Canada; Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC); The Office of Learning Technologies (OLT) Program, HRSDC; The Volunteer @ction.online (V@O) Program, Ontario Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation; The Ontario Women's Directorate (OWD); The Initiatives in the New Economy Research Alliance Programme, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC); The Community Access Program (CAP), Industry Canada; The Trillium Foundation



## WHO WE ARE

A Commitment to Training and Employment for Women (ACTEW) began in 1985 as CATEW, the Community of Alternative Training and

Education for Women. In a proposal to Status of Women Canada they had a (then) growing concern that programs offered by traditional educational institutions "are not providing women with the essential core life and generic skills that will prepare them for long-term financial independence." The proposal noted that every effort must be made to ensure that women in and entering the labour force will have equal access to available employment and that the trends which have led to job and economic segregation be reversed. CATEW received a grant leading to the publication of "The Needs of Community-Based Training Programs for Women in Metro Toronto: Some Recommendations." This was the basis for the establishment of ACTEW.

Officially incorporated in 1987, ACTEW's membership has grown substantially over the years and now includes agencies in Cobourg, Waterloo, South River, Hamilton, Ganonoque, Oshawa, Thunder Bay, Ottawa, and Kitchener. Last year, in response to our 2001-2004 strategic plan and feedback from our membership, we officially changed our name to A Commitment to Training and Employment for Women (ACTEW), to better reflect our mission and our work. This year, to complete our strategic planning process we also updated our corporate identity, redesigned our logo and re-launched the Women's Online Training Community web site at <http://www.actew.org>.

## WHAT WE DO

### ACTEW's Mission:

We believe that education and training can be the bridge between poverty and economic independence. Our members provide holistic and comprehensive employment and training services that enable and empower women to obtain and retain quality employment. The women that our agencies work with, many of whom are older women, recent immigrants, women with disabilities, sole-support mothers, and/or women of colour, face systemic discrimination and remain disadvantaged by years of economic recession and severe employment displacement. Our members' unique sensitivity to the access issues women face ensure the provision of holistic and comprehensive employment and training services that enable and empower women to gain and retain quality employment. ACTEW's mission is to promote and support these community-based training opportunities for women.

### ACTEW's Core Functions:

ACTEW promotes women's full economic and social participation in the Canadian labour force by supporting community-based training programs through:

1. **Networking, information sharing, and professional development with our members and within the community-**

# 2003-2004 PROJ

- ❖ **Entrewomen.ca: The Canadian Website for Women Entrepreneurs!** — ACTEW's Entrewomen.ca web site at <http://www.entrewomen.ca> is designed to provide women entrepreneurs with business information, learning opportunities and networking connections. ACTEW is delivering this project in partnership with PARO Centre for Women's Enterprise in Thunder Bay. Entrewomen features a free marketplace for women business owners; an online library on financing, marketing, and technology issues; and a networking discussion area. Monthly "Ask the Expert" articles and an EntreNEWS email bulletin have also been launched. Over the next year, train-the-trainer and client workshops will be offered across Ontario on issues related to women's entrepreneurial issues. This project is funded by the Office of Learning Technologies (HRSDC).
- ❖ **Putting Women in the Picture: Labour Market Policy and the Women's Training Sector** — Funded by Status of Women Canada, this 3-year project worked to create a strong, coordinated network of women's training providers in Ontario. Changing federal and provincial policy regarding labour force development, employment insurance, and access to training services has resulted in programs that often do not meet the needs of the women trying to access the labour market. Over the last year a report on successful policies related to women and labour force development was released, as well as an information "toolkit" to help women's service providers do their own outreach about the impact of policy changes on women's training services in Ontario.
- ❖ **Content-Sharing Constellation** — Funded by the Office of Learning Technologies (HRSDC), this 3-year project is expanding the number of agencies sharing employment and training information online, making resources even more accessible throughout the community-based training sector. ACTEW's innovative work through this project was also recognized this year with an Award of Excellence from Showcase Ontario. At the end of the year, we were also in the process of hiring four regional liaisons to increase the locally-specific information provided through the Constellation. Formal partners for the project are OAYEC, OCASI, and Meta Strategies.
- ❖ **Women's Alternate and Informal Pathways to Work in the IT Sector** — This 4-year research study looks at women's alternate and informal learning pathways to jobs in the Information Technology sector. ACTEW is working with Dr. Shauna Butterwick at the University of British Columbia to explore the ways in which women acquire IT skills. This project is one of thirteen sectoral case studies being undertaken by the Research Network on Work and Lifelong Learning (WALL) at the Centre for Study of Education and Work at OISE/UT. Funding for this project is provided by the Initiatives in the New Economy Program (SSHRC).
- ❖ **Beautiful Beginnings** — More than 20,000 women complete job-training and employment programs at community-based

# ECTS & ACTIVITIES

agencies each year. The mission of this project, funded by the Trillium Foundation, was to provide women with help in creating and maintaining a professional look for the Canadian workplace. From January to August 2003, 240 clients from ACTEW member agencies participated in image consultation workshops. The program was supported by in-kind contributions and donations from salons, training centres, corporations, and 29 image consultation professionals who generously volunteered their time to the program.

- ❖ **Shortcuts for Career Development Resources for Girls and Women** — Funded by the Ontario Women's Directorate, this guide provides print and online resources that are sensitive to the career development needs of girls and women. Substantively updated last year, Shortcuts continues to fly off our shelves!
- ❖ **Skills and Knowledge Profile Online** — Over the year technical development of our "digitized" Skills and Knowledge Profile booklet took place, along with content production for the seven online modules. Funded by the Volunteer @ction.online Program, this self-assessment tool will help women identify and validate their prior skills and learning as part of their employment preparation process.
- ❖ **ACTEW CAP Network** — Now in its fourth year, ACTEW continued to support and coordinate a network of Community Access Program sites at 11 of our member agencies in Toronto. The CAP program provides free Internet access at community sites across Canada. Funding to support the network is provided by Industry Canada.
- ❖ **Advocacy and Community Participation** — ACTEW, along with our sister umbrella groups ONESTEP, OCASI, and OAYEC, met quarterly with HRSDC to bring members' concerns and issues to their attention. ACTEW members in the Toronto area provide input on women's local training issues as the ad-hoc Women's Reference Group for the Toronto Training Board; Jen Liptrot also serves as the Women's Representative for TTB. At the national level, ACTEW remains an Ontario representative to the Canadian Coalition for Community-Based Employability Training (CCCBET). ACTEW also participated at the National Settlement Conference II and the National Symposium on Career Development, Lifelong Learning and Workforce Development.
- ❖ **Workshops and Presentations** — ACTEW presented workshops at the Opportunities Conference and the Centre for Research in Lifelong Learning's "Experiential, Community, Workplace" conference in Glasgow, Scotland. As part of our research work we also conducted workshops and presentations in Kitchener, Ottawa, and Toronto.
- ❖ **Training Sessions** — Jen and Renata facilitated training sessions for the START Program at ACCES and the YWCA's new ARISE women's shelter.

based training sector — ACTEW collects, distributes, and shares information on women's training and employment issues for our member agencies, for women seeking training, for governments and other institutions, and for the general public.

**2. Capacity-Building Projects and Sector Development** — Driven by the needs of our members and the women they serve, this work includes:

- Developing resources and tools designed to aid member agencies in serving women needing training and education
- Providing professional development opportunities for member agency staff and volunteers

**3. Public Education** — ACTEW's research and public education work is designed to enhance our understanding of the training and education terrain by providing information related to the employment and training needs of women, as well as employment training, employment counselling and educational programs for women.

**4. Research and Publications** — ACTEW engages in research to document, analyze and report on women's training, employment and education needs. From our research activities we also develop accessible publications to disseminate our research findings and further our public education work.

ACTEW's Women's Online Training Community web site at <http://www.actew.org> continues to be a cornerstone of our public education and membership activities. The site features:

- The Looking for Training? Directory, a comprehensive database of our members' programs and services across Ontario
- Events and job listings, including free public postings
- News, press releases and community announcements
- Resources, a comprehensive database with information on women, education and training
- Member's discussion area, an online forum for working together
- The Skills and Knowledge Profile Online, an interactive series of modules that allow women to validate their prior skills and experience

**Our ACTEW-L email bulletin continues to grow** — this year we exceeded 1,000 subscribers across Canada. The Women's Online Training Community site was initially funded by the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship's Volunteer @ction.online Program.

**Our general members' meetings are well attended** and serve to introduce ACTEW members to a wide variety of services and resources. Topics this year included research on decreasing EI coverage for women, an overview of Canada's new privacy legislation, information about the consultation process used by local training and adjustment boards, an overview of mentoring programs for foreign-trained professionals, and a best practices session on women's training issues.

# OUR STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

**Core Functions:** ACTEW will continue to provide a mix of services including public education, information sharing, policy analysis and research, and professional development opportunities at member meetings, capacity-building projects such as Entrewomen and CAP, and workshops and presentations related to women's training needs and issues.

**Coordination and Planning:** ACTEW will continue working on local, provincial and federal partnerships and coalition efforts

in the sector. ACTEW will continue to be involved with the Canadian Coalition for Community-Based Employability Training (CCCBET), as well as the Toronto Training Board.

**Membership:** ACTEW will continue to outreach to women's training providers across the province. We also continue to network with women's service providers that are providing some career development services in related sectors (for example, housing, settlement, and violence prevention).

## What Members Say About ACTEW

*I just wanted to let you know that I love the new and improved web site, it's got so much life. Great work!*

*We appreciate the work that ACTEW does and have benefitted this past year from the meetings and information provided.*

*I was recently introduced to your site and organization. It is a much needed service for women and I applaud your efforts!*

*I appreciate receiving news about the issues — its great to be a part of the ACTEW network.*

*You folks are doing us a wonderful service by representing our views and challenges.*

*I love your mailings! — they always contain content useful to developing ideas and supporting concepts/proposals.*

### In-Kind Supporters

Ontario Association of Youth Employment Centres (OAYEC), Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI), Meta Strategies, Ottawa Women's Training and Employment Network (OWTEN), PARO Centre for Women's Enterprise

Special thanks go out to the many community-based presenters who generously donated their time this year to participate in our professional development events: Allison Pond (ACCES); Laurell Ritchie (Canadian Auto Workers); Barbara Nowers (Career Edge); Trish McNamara (Employment and Education Centre, Brockville); Kelly McGahey, Kathleen Brault and Farida Awal (LASI-World Skills, Ottawa); Carol Maingot (Niagara Training and Adjustment Board); Cathy Thornley (OWTEN); Farida Zuberi (Skills for Change); Sabita Ramlal (Toronto Training Board); Christa Van Daele, Lori McMaster and Stephanie Mancini (The Working Centre, Kitchener); and Victoria Peace and Teresa Costa (YMCA of Greater Toronto).

ACTEW also gratefully acknowledges the support we receive from our sister academic research network at the Centre for the Study of Education and Work (CSEW), Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/University of Toronto.

*Copies of ACTEW's audited financial statements are available upon request.*

### Membership in ACTEW

Membership in ACTEW is open to registered charitable and non-profit organizations that provide employment and training services to women. Other organizations, institutions, or individuals that support our mission are welcome to join ACTEW as associate members.

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