

BRIEF
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PREAMBLE

The National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC) appreciates this opportunity to present to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance our concerns and priorities for economic issues affecting women, their families and the state.

Founded in 1893, NCWC is a non-profit, non-partisan federated organization of women's groups representing a large number of citizens of diverse occupation, language, origin and culture. NCWC is composed of twenty local councils, five provincial councils, two study groups and twenty-seven nationally organized societies.

NCWC policy originates almost entirely by means of local council initiative and convenors. Policy additions and changes are proposed, circulated and voted upon by the general membership. Council members may speak only on approved policy when contacting government, the media, and the public. Thus, this Brief is the united voice of the federated membership of the National Council of Women of Canada.

NCWC enjoys consultative status (General) with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC). In addition, NCWC is a federated member of the International Council of Women (ICW), similarly a non-governmental organization holding consultative status with ECOSOC. Founded in 1888, ICW is composed of National Councils in seventy-four countries, bringing together women of many races, creeds, and cultural traditions.

In the preparation of this brief, NCWC has addressed the following three primary themes requested by the Standing Committee on Finance:

1. *ensure that Canada remains a major player in the new economy;*
2. *provide Canadians with equal opportunity to succeed; and*
3. *create an economic and social environment where Canadians can enjoy the best quality of life and standard of living.*

1. **ENSURING CANADA REMAINS A MAJOR PLAYER IN THE NEW ECONOMY**

The expression, “The New Economy” implies change. The phrase is epitomized by the words, “globalization and technology”. It defines many of the changes we are living through. Helped by modern technological communications, ease of travel, and international trade treaties, we live in a world that is interconnected as never before - one in which corporations, groups and individuals can interact directly across state frontiers, often without involving the state at all. We live in an era of mobile capital and of massive holdings by corporations which provide extensive power to the owners and managers of that capital. Global firms often control and coordinate world-wide production centres for their products. This style of global production and marketing requires governments to play an important role in the attempt to retain a degree of national sovereignty.

The benefits round the world from globalization are easy to see: faster economic growth, higher living standards, new opportunities for common action and better international understanding. Nevertheless, globalization provides a view of the world in which the interests of the powerful are defined as necessity, while the demands of the poor appear as greed which undermines economic success. Trade agreements are presented as mechanisms whereby increasing prosperity will automatically result from the effect of the activities of large corporations. In the long term, the new economy will be good for its citizens only if its relationship to people is recognized as front and centre and if its benefits are spread widely. According to the Canadian Council on Social Development, hard data showed an improvement in economic security during 2000¹. However, this masks the problems stemming from the participation of women and the continuing unequal distribution of opportunities between individuals, small businesses, corporations and nations. NCWC supports federal government measures to support small business and through tax income and expenditure to bring about a more even distribution of the benefits and opportunities of globalization, especially to those at the lower end of the social and financial scale.

Canada’s social programmes have been suffering from cuts in government spending, and from changes caused by deregulation. There is also a vigorous and well-funded campaign underway recommending the necessity to allow private business - often Transnationals - to assume the mandates and service-deliveries previously funded by the government acting as the taxpayers’ agent. NCWC members have protested, as have many others, that they object to these changes. Canadian sovereignty is being whittled away with no assurance that social, environmental and long-term economic effects have been properly analyzed. Women fear that these changes threaten their security. They question whether Gender-based Analysis has been used before such changes are proposed. The disruptive result is anger. The demonstrations such as those seen recently in Québec City and Ottawa are the tip of that iceberg.

1.1 Effects of globalization in Canada

Neither the texts nor the decision-making process of international trade agreements have been entirely transparent to the public. Since 1988, in face of multilateral trade agreements, NCWC Policy has urged the federal government to take care to maintain Canadian sovereignty in cultural, educational, environmental, financial and political matters. In 1998, NCWC policy was reiterated and expanded to request the release of the full text of proposed agreements in sufficient time to ensure widespread public consultation. In the same year, NCWC urged the government to prohibit bank mergers - internal and with foreign institutions. At its Annual General Meeting in June/2001, NCWC members again voted to urge the government of Canada to protect Canadian sovereignty in matters of the economy, and in particular with respect to the power being acquired by transnational companies over social, environmental, health and cultural programmes.

Canadians hold dear such programmes as health care, fair labour conditions, protection of the environment, and sustainable development. Under the treaties, these national government programmes are considered unfair subsidies, and are not approved under treaty regulations. Members of NCWC are adamant that health care and social programmes should not be on the bargaining table. They have been an equalizing factor for women and show the benefits in the high level of general good health enjoyed by older women today.

NCWC is particularly concerned about the effects on women and children. A potential underclass of about 1 in 10 working age households are being left behind in deep and continuing poverty². Their ranks disproportionately include single parent families, mostly headed by women. The several international trade agreements will severely and negatively restrict the ability of the federal government to fulfill its commitments made under the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies, the Beijing Platform for Action, and again last year in the Beijing +5 Outcomes Document. Women and children will continue to suffer if Gender Based Analysis (GBA) and Gender Equality Indicators, as contained in these documents, are not applied to new government strategies and policies.

NCWC recommends that the government:

- a) encourage investment in new business, particularly small ventures;
- b) defend economic sovereignty by increasing control over banks;
- c) set long-range policy to stimulate the economy and continue to invest in research and development particularly in technological, medical and other scientific research;
- d) protect Canadian social, environmental, health and cultural programmes;
- e) ensure the timely release of the texts of proposed agreements; and
- f) exercise the government's commitment to Gender Based Analysis.

1.2 Canadian Influence Abroad in light of Globalization

For the majority of Canadian businesses, adhering to fair practices, it is difficult to compete against manufacturers with the lower costs inherent in abusing the human rights of their workers. These abused workers are mainly women and children. To retain Canadian influence for an ethical approach in the new economy, NCWC policy urges that the government work both within Canada and internationally to fight against unfair and unethical labour practices.

Canada's influence matters in the work of the United Nations. Fleeing oppression and war, human migration has expanded to 21 million refugees and over 100 million displaced people. At least 75% of these are women and children. Canada's contribution to the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) ranks only #11 in per capita giving among industrialized states. An NCWC resolution was approved in June/2001 that money from the federal budget be allocated to increase Canada's support of the UNHCR.

In January/2001, NCWC wrote to commend Minister Martin for the declaration of the moratorium which began the process of forgiving debts of eleven of the world's poorest countries. We urge the government to take an international lead again and manage the budget so that more debts may be forgiven.

NCWC recommends that the government:

- a) establish fair and ethical labour practices at home and advocate such practices abroad;
- b) set aside more funds for UNHCR; and
- c) continue to forgive the unsustainable debts of the poorest countries.

2. PROVIDING CANADIANS WITH EQUAL OPPORTUNITY TO SUCCEED

Members of Council of Women commend the Standing Committee on Finance for addressing this important social issue; and HRDC for organizing the “Round Table on Globalization of the Economy” in May/2001 which two of our members attended. The vast majority of Canadians want the means to succeed in their chosen area and to earn an income which provides the necessities of life. The income derived from work and the quality of life are measures of this success. Canada has fallen from first to third place in the UN Standard of Living Index. Although the scores of the top few countries are quite close together, Canada’s fall indicates that other countries have done better in the last few years.

2.1 Opportunities:

The Council of Women agrees with last year’s Report of the Standing Committee that “social infrastructure is an important component of a growth agenda”³. Providing the opportunity to succeed entails a broad range of social infrastructures such as measures to alleviate poverty, to improve housing, education, good health and supply a safe, clean environment along with job opportunities under fair labour practices mentioned above.

NCWC recommends that the government work with the provincial, territorial and municipal governments to:

- a) help those, especially women, wishing to start small businesses - often the source of new jobs - by making grants, loans and advice easily obtainable;
- b) offer small grants to those on welfare for assistance in such as free transportation and child care especially for job hunting; and
- c) ensure that equal training opportunities are available in all areas, particularly for women re-entering the workforce, through the Employment Insurance Fund and other training programmes.

2.2 Poverty

NCWC commends the Standing Committee on Finance for its commitment to long-term reduction of poverty and for its support of the National Child Benefit⁴. However, our members strongly oppose the claw-back of the Child Tax benefit from families dependent on social assistance. This targets the poorest of poor families who live in deep poverty and are the most needy in our country.

Poverty negates the opportunity to be employed. Poor people are so busy finding ways to survive that they have few resources, emotional or financial, to look for work. The quality of life for the working poor is often little better. How a society distributes its income is a fundamental determinant of social cohesion. People left on the fringes economically tend to be on the fringes socially.

NCWC opposes a reduction of income taxes for middle and upper income earners at a time when social, health, and education programmes continue to suffer from previous cut backs. In order that citizens, especially families with children, can escape the penury of poverty and joblessness, we urge the government to take a leading role in eliminating poverty by ensuring a more efficient and equitable treatment of all.

Members remain worried that the necessities of life are no longer guaranteed by federal or provincial government. This entitlement, guaranteed in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, to which Canada is a signatory, was abolished with the ending of the Canada Assistance Plan. Provincial governments are putting more and more obstacles in the path of people needing social assistance. Moreover, provincial governments seem to target social assistance recipients with increasingly punitive measures, such as in the fields of rental accommodation and lifetime denial of aid based on allegations of fraud. We believe that this entitlement should be reinstated.

NCWC recommends that the government:

- a) make no more cuts in income taxes for upper income earners, but invest in income maintenance programs for the poor and working poor, working in conjunction with provincial and territorial governments;
- b) give assistance to and see that provincial and territorial governments reinstate entitlement to social assistance based on need; and
- c) amend the Charter of Rights to include “social condition” as prohibited ground for discrimination.

2.3 Children and Families in Poverty

Children are poor because their families are poor. NCWC commends the government for increasing the Canada Child Tax Benefit (CCTB) in the mini-Budget of October/2000, for restoring full indexation as of January/2000, for beginning to increase transfers to the provinces and for the increase in the National Child Benefit Supplement⁵. Nevertheless, the gap grows between rich and poor with the result that those who benefit the least from our national wealth are children living in families at and below the level of Statistics Canada Low Income Cut-off. Family poverty strikes hardest at children. The many debilitating effects of poverty on child development and adult well-being are well documented. The Canadian government has failed in its commitment to eliminate child poverty by the year 2000. According to The Canadian Fact Book on Poverty 2000, the child poverty rate in Canada increased from 14.9% in 1981 to 19.9% in 1997 resulting in 1.4 million poor children. In 1981, 32.8% of all poor children lived in lone-parent families; by 1997, this figure had risen to 43.2%. The circumstances of lone-parent mothers must be underlined: their rate of poverty was 53.5% in 1981; in 1997, it was 56.0%. In addition, the percentage of all poor households composed of lone-parent mothers had increased from 22.5% in 1981 to 28.4% in 1997⁶. NCWC commends the Finance Minister for the cut of 1% in the tax rate for modest income households last October. We would like to see bigger cuts

The paid work of mothers is essential to reducing child poverty. A national child care programme is an essential ingredient for poor parents to be able to participate in the work force, especially for mothers. The lack of available child care is clearly linked to women’s economic inequality relative to men⁷. High quality child care benefits pre-school children and therefore

benefits Canada⁸. The present child care tax deduction is still worth much more to higher income earners. Hence it is unfair to lower income earners and discriminates against families where one member is a full time caregiver⁹. NCWC supports the National Children's Agenda which proposes the federal government lead constructive co-operation into a common shared vision across provinces and territories that values children and provides opportunities for all children to achieve their full potential. Social investment is not just about fairness, but is directly productive in that it will yield long-term returns.

NCWC opposes the provincial claw-back (carried out by all provinces except New Brunswick and Newfoundland), of the Child Tax benefit from families dependent on social assistance. This targets the poorest of poor families who live in deep poverty and are the most needy in our country¹⁰.

Children from poor homes tend to have a poorer learning environment than other children. Education is still the key to escaping poverty and the level of education attained remains an important factor in distinguishing poor from non-poor households. The factors that correlate most closely with school failure and school dropout are parenting skills and income level. Parents require support in their task of preparing their children for adulthood, including participation in the workforce. NCWC, therefore, urges the federal government to include, in its negotiations with the provinces and territorial governments on the national Children's Agenda, the need for a universal comprehensive range of parent support services, including child and family Resource Centres.

Not all children have access to kindergarten which provides a critical learning opportunity, especially for children living in low income families. Although primary and secondary education is the responsibility of the provinces and territories, it is important that the federal government take a leadership role in this area through co-operative planning on the Children's Agenda.

NCWC recommends that the government create ways of escaping poverty by:

- a) allocating more of the surplus to remedy the plight of poor Canadians particularly women, and families with children, and by directing further tax cuts and benefits at those who earn little;
- b) raising the threshold level at which low income earners start to pay taxes;
- c) working with provincial and territorial governments to further increase the amount of Child Tax Benefit, and negotiating terms for payment without provincial claw-back from families dependent on public assistance;
- d) supporting the National Children's Agenda by making provisions for a national system of child care, accessible to all poor families requiring out-of-home care, with enough subsidized spaces to meet the need;
- e) working with the provincial and territorial governments to establish a foundation of early childhood education and parent support services across Canada.

2.4 Housing and Homelessness

NCWC commends the Minister of Labour for her action on homelessness, in particular the recent use of houses on the Rockcliffe Air Force Base in the Ottawa area, and the funds for transient support. Nevertheless, this initiative will not address the main underlying cause of homelessness across the country, which is the lack of affordable permanent housing. Homelessness is still evident in every major city across the country. In addition to the presence of the homeless on city streets, the number of homeless families with children is growing all the time and they are found more often in shelters. Many families are paying too much for their accommodation, are unable to pay increasingly high rents and are forced to rely on food banks. Over 40% of the users of food banks are children. In Ottawa alone, the waiting list for housing numbers 16,000 households; and almost 200 families are homeless at any time – which was unheard of 12 years ago¹¹. A recent report of the Canadian Policy Research Network¹² notes that Federal and Provincial governments' goals for enrichment of young children will fail if we ignore their housing needs. With municipalities largely financially responsible for social housing, it will be difficult, on the property tax base, to significantly expand the stock of affordable housing.

Children growing up in unstable housing are likely to suffer from physical and emotional ill-health. The stress related difficulties of frequent moves also affect their progress in school. Agreements negotiated with the provinces and territories have not been effective in addressing this problem. Canada has signed the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which commits Canada to work toward an adequate standard of living for all its citizens. Homelessness affects nutrition, mental and physical health, susceptibility to violence and increases the risk to communicable disease. Homeless people are much less likely to find and hold jobs¹³. Meanwhile the government of Canada continues to reduce a wide range of supports to the provincial and territorial governments who in turn cut their support programs.

NCWC recommends that the government:

- a) recognize that homelessness has reached unacceptable proportions in Canada;
- b) reinstate the social housing programme for affordable housing;
- c) collaborate with the provincial and territorial governments to facilitate the conversion of suitable buildings into hostels and shelters and provide medical support services.

2.5 Education:

Children from poor homes tend to have a poorer learning and reading environment than other children. Education is still the key to escaping poverty. The level of education reached remains an important factor in distinguishing poor from non-poor households¹⁴. If Canadians are to be successful in facing the challenges of the new economy, we must improve the capabilities of our future workforce¹⁵ by investment in education at all levels. Education of all citizens, but especially of children, leads to the creation of knowledge - as essential for the new economy as for past and present generations. Illiteracy and functional illiteracy continue to prevent a significant number of Canadians from participating fully in Canadian life. In the computer age, the ability to read is as important as never before. NCWC is concerned that the extra cost of books and other educational materials through the addition of the GST has a detrimental effect on literacy programmes as well as the Canadian publishing industry.

NCWC recommends that the government:

- a) take a leadership role in working with the provinces and territories to ensure adequate funding for all levels of education;
- b) recognize that advances in technology originate in the human mind making important the education of all Canada's citizens to their full potential¹⁶;
- c) support measures for education and skills development and negotiate with the provinces and territories to increase their accountability to the federal government for funds received;
- d) establish a nation-wide learning environment for children from earliest infancy to school entry by establishing parent resource centres, early education centres, child development programmes, and family and group day care centres;
- e) encourage and promote programs to eliminate or combat the problems of illiteracy; and
- f) ensure that the cost of books and other educational reading materials are not increased through the addition of the GST.

2.6 Public Health, Water and Health Protection Branch:

A sense of physical and mental well-being is essential for a well functioning citizenry. The prevention of disease and a means to better health for all is exemplified in a publicly funded health care system. At the Annual General Meeting of June/2001, NCWC discussed the role of the federal government in protecting the health of Canadians: licensing of pharmaceuticals; safe food standards; environmental controls against poisoning of air and water; and promoting healthy life styles. Members noted the funding cuts in 1985, 1990 and 1991 – the movement to early dismissal from hospital with no increase in provincial funding for community care; and the growing number of private, for-profit health businesses creating or supporting inequities in access to care. NCWC voted again to confirm its support for a firm federal role in setting standards of health care delivery as in the Canada Health Act of 1984, for transfer payments to the provinces and territories – in short for adequately funded health care services for all Canadians.

Water pollution is a deterrent to effective public health. Since 1976, the National Council of Women of Canada has approved many resolutions on water safety. To summarize these resolutions, NCWC advocates the development of a co-ordinated federal, provincial, territorial and municipal policy for the management of national waters; the development of a Safe Drinking Water Act; and the allocation of resources to prevent contamination of water supplies. While it is true that this nation's drinking water is safer than most, the motion passed in the House of Commons on 8/May/2001 addresses the significant continuing problems – as most recently shown in Walkerton, Ontario and North Battleford, Saskatchewan. As urban and rural developments further deplete and degrade drinking water sources like streams, rivers, lakes and wells, problems may worsen. Complicating this matter is Canada's aging water and wastewater infrastructure and the immense cost associated with renewal. In the absence of a more vigilant approach to protecting drinking water, more tragedies similar to those in Walkerton and North Battleford may occur.

Canadians have come to expect and to value an independent Health Protection Branch (HPB) as vital to Public Health. NCWC is concerned about cuts in staff and other fiscal restraints which

have had a negative impact on the ability of HPB to be effective in protecting the health of Canadians. There is evidence that the Health Protection Branch has failed to address adequately human safety requirements when determining whether food and drugs should be certified for public use under the Food and Drug Act. The private sector is taking an increasingly significant role in health product testing and this practice could lead to biased test reporting. The practice of requiring private companies to pay for the testing of their products leads to pressure on the Health Protection Branch to approve food and drugs before adequate testing has been done.

NCWC recommends that the government:

- a) invest sufficient funds to rebuild and further develop an effective and an adequately funded Health Protection Branch that puts the public's interests first;
- b) act immediately with the provinces, territories and municipalities, respecting their jurisdictions, to ensure enforceable national drinking water standards that would be enshrined in a Safe Water Act and allocate sufficient resources to prevent contamination; and
- c) ensure that an independent Health Protection Branch tests all health and food products.

2.7 Gender Equality Indicators and Analysis

- Recognition of Women's Unpaid Work as Parents and Care Givers

More women than ever are working in the paid labour force, more women are living alone and more women are lone parents. Cuts in social services relegate many women to stay-at-home care giving and are especially damaging to their standard of living. The cuts add to the feminization of poverty. Women as home care givers have less time to pursue paths to personal activities or financial security through paid employment. Women conceive and give birth; they remain the primary caregivers for children and the elderly, and a disproportionate number of single women live below the poverty line. Working in the home, many women are thus unable to contribute to pension plans and registered retirement savings. Women's work in the home remains undervalued and is not considered productive work in the GDP of a nation state¹⁷.

NCWC understands that mainstreaming of matters pertaining to women now means that special consideration be given to the particular circumstances and constraints of women's lives. The advancement of women includes understanding the unique constraints they face, as well as the varying needs of women across the country. NCWC has long advocated help for at-home parents and other care givers to include adequate family benefits, guaranteed income plans, and special programmes for single parents. This pension plan should have a specific component recognizing the work done by parents in raising children, particularly women who withdrew from the labour market to do so.

As emphasized in NCWC's resolution of 1998, the contributions of women's unpaid work are still not acknowledged in spite of the Canadian commitment - at UN conferences in Nairobi, Vienna, Rio de Janeiro, Cairo, Copenhagen, and in the Beijing Plan for Action - to publish auxiliary accounts annually showing the value to the Canadian economy of this work.

Statistics, such as those pertaining to pensions, unemployment and health care are not always collected and analyzed by gender - all of which signify discrimination against women and lead to blindness on the part of policy makers to the contributions and needs of women. Data from Statistics Canada and other departments are not often available to women's and community groups because of the cost of documents. Data on women are often presented in a comparison with data for men which not only hides the different constraints women face but also tends to emphasize an adversarial rather than a co-operative framework. Although the Government of Canada is committed to carrying out gender analysis of all new federal programmes, this commitment is qualified by the statement "where appropriate"¹⁸. As we have noted in our Briefs to the federal government of 1999 and 2000, our policy is quite specific on the need for gender equality indicators and gender based analysis in the development and implementation of policy and regulations.

NCWC recommends that the government ensure that:

- a) new approaches are developed for economic planning and development which affirm productivity in unpaid as well as in paid labour, include it in measures of growth and wealth and permit caregivers to earn credit for CPP and RRSP contributions;
- b) the costs of paid and unpaid work are recognized in tax policy so that no family is disadvantaged by caring for family members;
- c) Statistics Canada and other government departments consult widely with diverse women's groups about the types of data to be collected;
- d) gender sensitivity training be conducted for bureaucrats and politicians, and resources be allocated by the federal government for such training;
- e) data be separated by gender;
- f) data be made accessible without charge to women's and other community groups;
- g) funding be provided for organizations to ensure a compelling voice for women, and for government partnerships with such organizations to provide public information. This information will recognize the need to balance work and family and will emphasize women's distinct contribution and needs; and
- h) enabling legislation be passed to ensure that gender analysis is applied throughout the government in relation to all laws, policies and programmes, and that the reports on such gender analysis be made widely available to the general public.

2.8 Fair Labour Practices in Canada

Under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), Canada has relinquished a degree of sovereignty in exchange for the Agreement's rules which regulate aspects that are both negative and beneficial to Canada. Although negotiations for the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the FTAA Treaty are not yet complete, as of August/2001, the proposed treaty rules have power over competition and access to investment. In this way, industrial activity is controlled at home as well as abroad. NCWC is concerned about the working conditions that result from these imposed conditions and rules. Membership in the Treaties is restricted to countries considered to have a democratically elected government. Yet the treaty rules do not necessarily support what Canadian citizens think of as democratic principles of labour. Working conditions under trade treaty rules can negatively affect health, environmental, social, cultural and gender-based conditions of labour as is currently the case under NAFTA in the free trade exploitation zones.

NCWC recommends that the government:

- a) work with the provinces to achieve national standards in minimum wage, working hours, benefits for part-time workers, and industrial health and safety rules; and
- b) ensure that legislation be enacted that would require employers to provide prorated benefits, such as medical, dental, pension, and vacation, to all part time employees.

3. CREATING AN ECONOMIC & SOCIAL CLIMATE FOR THE BEST QUALITY OF LIFE

NCWC commends the government for protecting taxpayers against inflation by restoring full indexation of the personal income tax system¹⁹.

3.1 Taxation:

National Council members note with pleasure the actions of the Finance Minister that have eliminated the federal deficit and reduced the proportion of the National Debt owed outside Canada. These actions have been partly responsible for a present surplus of approximately \$6.2 billion²⁰. However, reports indicate that women's income has also fallen in recent years. According to Statistics Canada, the share of total after tax income received by the top 20% of families has grown at the expense of the bottom 80%. This trend has been driven by an increasingly unequal distribution of earnings, combined with cuts to income support programmes. From the mid 1990s, provincial governments in Alberta and Ontario delivered tax cuts to the relatively affluent at the expense of social assistance benefits and public services, and the federal government made major reductions to EI and to transfer payments. By reason of the benefits from social programmes to low and modest income earners, especially to women, NCWC continues to urge restoration and further investment in social and health programme funding.

NCWC recommends that the government:

- a) maintain a programme of gradual national debt reduction;
- b) make no further tax cuts to higher income groups; and
- c) provide the greatest benefit to low and modest income earners by setting an even higher threshold below which low income people pay no tax.

3.2 Defence Expenditure

An item NCWC does not want to see in the expenditures column is for a contribution to the US Ballistic Defence Missile project. As our President wrote to the Prime Minister in December/2000, we have been developing policy on disarmament since 1982. Our members support the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and feel that the proposed American Defence System is a profound danger to that Treaty, to international stability and to the planet and all its inhabitants. Also, any investment in this programme would be an extremely costly waste of Canadian public money

3.3 Unpaid Volunteer work

Since 1974, Council of Women has been asking for recognition of the economic value of unpaid volunteer work. The volunteer sector is essential to a healthy, pluralistic society, in initiating new ideas, planning and providing services, fund raising, and decision making. Volunteer participation develops and utilizes knowledge, skills and experience which otherwise might be lost to the Canadian society and economy. Volunteering involves personal expenditures which could limit participation when those citizens do not have access to private or Canada Pension Plan Benefits nor excess earned income to contribute to an RRSP.

NCWC recommends that the government:

- a) initiate a policy which would permit volunteers to earn credits for the Canada Pension Plan and RRSP contributions; and
- b) provide substantial tax credit for expenses (child care, transportation, meals) involved in providing volunteer service to voluntary organizations.

3.4 Health

NCWC commends the government for continuing to support the principles of the Canada Health Act. Nevertheless, the haste to reduce health care costs over the past several years has left a destabilized health system in its wake. Council members are increasingly afraid that through a gradual process of privatization the health care system might not be there when Canadians need it. Health is of particular importance to an ageing population. The poorest Canadian, unemployed or under-employed, has the right to the same quality of basic health care as the wealthiest. It is the Canadian way.

Drug costs have escalated greatly since 1984. People with lower incomes tend to have greater health care needs and spend a higher proportion of their incomes on prescription drugs. Since 1998, NCWC has been calling on the federal government to take a lead role with the provinces and territories to establish a national universal drug insurance plan for prescription drugs.

Women are facing serious barriers gaining access to abortion services as an essential component of reproductive health care. Prince Edward Island lacks services entirely. Also, Québec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Manitoba are in violation of the Canada Health Act by funding only hospitals; these provinces do not fully fund abortion clinics under medicare. Our members are worried about waiting lists at hospitals of up to six weeks that force women to pay for this medically necessary procedure in order to avoid greater risks later in their pregnancy. Poor women face greater jeopardy, especially in more rural communities.

Another aspect of the sexual health of women relates to prostitution. A Resolution approved in June of this year notes the UN Convention of the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (1979), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), and the Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of Prostitution of Others (1949). The resolution urges the provision of adequate funding for rehabilitation and education

programmes, arranged in co-operation with the provinces and territories, for all women and children wanting to leave prostitution with protection from their exploiters.

NCWC recommends that the government:

- a) retain a single-tier health care system - sustainable and accessible to all Canadians - which promotes good health as well as treating illness;
- b) ensure that all aspects of health care remain in the public sector so that no more private health companies enter Canada to lower the labour standards in such areas as staff training programmes, benefits, job stability, safety standards - all of which lead to lack of employee motivation and poor care for patients;
- c) return health transfer payments to the 1994 level and work co-operatively with provincial and territorial governments to commit to adequate long term funding especially of abortion services;
- d) allocate funds for a national drug plan;
- e) working with the affected provinces, oversee the full funding for abortion services in Prince Edward Island, Québec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Manitoba; and
- f) create funding for education and safe transition away from prostitution for those women and children wishing to leave prostitution and their exploiters.

3.5 Environment

We commend the government for Minister Martin's dedication of \$9 million in Budget 2000 and his related announcement of 25/May/2001 praising the joint work of the Round Table on the Environment and the Economy, Environment Canada and Statistics Canada. The result is an initiative of Statistics Canada to establish environmental indicators to advance the science of measuring progress towards a more sustainable economy. Members of NCWC encourage Mr. Martin to ensure the new indicators will provide the hard, quantitative data to ensure a sound basis for both environmental and economic policy in the future as protection against environmental complacency.

Any prescription for the best quality of life must take the environment into account. Since 1982, NCWC has advocated ways to clean up and protect the environment and to reduce quantities of gases that cause the greenhouse effect, whether these be created commercially or privately. Our members favour a large reduction in gas emissions mainly from the use of fossil fuels; as well as the production and use of soft energy such as ethanol and biogas, solar and wind power; the protection of forests; and scientific and financial assistance for efficient low-tech technologies in less developed countries.

Eighty countries, including Canada, have already signed the 1997 Kyoto pact, which requires industrialized countries to cut greenhouse gas emissions an average 5.2 per cent by 2012. The New York Times of 22/July/2001 noted: "The United States' leading allies told President Bush today that they intended to move ahead and ratify the Kyoto Protocol on global warming by next year, even without American participation". The same article praised Mr. Chrétien for saying, "as Japan, as Europe, as Russia: we are ready to ratify".

Since 1976, NCWC has repeatedly approved resolutions concerning conserving water as an essential resource. Again, at the Annual General Meeting in June/2001, members reaffirmed their resolve that the government should protect water as a national and provincial resource and should prohibit its exportation by pipeline, tanker, bulk carrier or by water-course diversion. NCWC is adamant that the federal government should not count on exporting bulk water as a way of contributing to the GDP.

NCWC recommends that the government:

- a) ensure the new indicators will provide the hard, quantitative data to ensure a sound basis for both environmental and economic policy in the future as protection against complacency;
- b) encourage and support, through increased financial assistance and tax incentives, research and development of such fuels as ethanol and biogas, solar and wind power, and their applications and inform the public of their advantages as sources of energy;
- c) take the lead and ratify the Kyoto Treaty without waiting for the US to do so; and without being unduly influenced by large lobbying corporations who claim it is not in their profit-making interests to reduce emissions; and
- d) ensure that water, as a valuable resource is not exported by pipeline, tanker, bulk carrier or by water-course diversion as a means of increasing GDP.

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