

# National Council of Women of Canada

## Annual Brief to the Government of Canada March 2006

### Preamble

The National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC) is pleased to present its new and updated policy positions in the form of this Brief to the Prime Minister and the Government of Canada.

Founded in 1893, the National Council of Women of Canada is a non-profit and non-partisan organization of women, representing a large number of citizens of diverse occupations, languages, origins and cultures and reflecting a cross-section of public opinion. NCWC comprises 18 Local Councils, 5 Provincial Councils and 25 Nationally Organized Societies.

NCWC is a federate of the International Council of Women (ICW), an international non-governmental organization holding consultative status (Category 1) with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations. Founded in 1888, the ICW is composed of National Councils in 74 countries.

NCWC holds consultative status (General) with ECOSOC, enabling NCWC to bring a Canadian perspective to the work of the United Nations Commission for the Status of Women. NCWC also participates as an Observer Non-governmental Organization with the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States.

NCWC is an organization of local, provincial and national organizations which are closely connected with issues at those levels and also is an organization which has a firm grasp of international issues and Canada's commitment to them. For this reason, NCWC is uniquely qualified to approach our Government with suggestions and recommendations, based on carefully researched and democratically approved policies, for improving the quality of life of Canadians.

All policy for NCWC is generated through resolutions originating with either Local Councils or NCWC Convenors (advisors on general areas of concern). These additions or changes to policy are circulated to and voted on by the general membership. When contacting the government, the media and the public, Council representatives speak only on existing policy.

This Brief, comprising new policies and updates of existing policies, is therefore the united voice of the federated membership of the National Council of Women of Canada.

## National Council of Women of Canada Annual Brief to the Government of Canada

For over 100 years, the National Council of Women of Canada has worked to improve the quality of life in Canada, through education and advocacy. The Members of Parliament are working toward the same goal, through legislation and regulation. NCWC is confident that we can work together to create a better Canada for all Canadians.

The Government has ample powers to improve the quality of life for Canadians. Fortunately, some of the things that can be done are simple and inexpensive. One of the simplest and least expensive things that can be done is to change the wording of our National Anthem.

This is not a minor issue.

The present wording of the Anthem excludes the majority of Canadians from being able to relate to it. "Native land" excludes all immigrants - a significant portion of our population, and "sons" excludes all females - over half of our population. Simply changing "native land" to "cherished land" and "all thy sons" to "all of us" would include ALL Canadians - as our anthem should.

### Current form

O Canada, our home and native land,  
True patriot love in all our sons command.  
With glowing hearts we see thee rise,  
The true north, strong and free.  
From far and wide, O Canada,  
We stand on guard for thee.  
God keep our land glorious and free.  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee

### Proposed form

O Canada, our home and cherished land,  
True patriot love in all of us command.  
With glowing hearts we see thee rise,  
The true north, strong and free.  
From far and wide, O Canada,  
We stand on guard for thee.  
God keep our land glorious and free.  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee

NCWC respectfully asks the Government of Canada to establish **Inclusive Wording for the National Anthem, English Version**, as per our policy which states:

***Resolved that the National Council of Women of Canada adopt as policy that the words of the National anthem, English version, be inclusive of everyone; and be it further***

***Resolved that the National Council of Women of Canada urge the Government of Canada to change the words of the National Anthem, English version, to make it more inclusive by changing "native land" to cherished land and "all thy sons" to all of us.***

After all of the other changes to our Anthem that have occurred over the past decades, we believe these two, simple changes would be quite beneficial for promoting a spirit of national unity.

A second change in policy and practice that would benefit many families without cost to the Federal Government is to request and require the governments of the Provinces and Territories to exempt Registered Education Savings Plans (RESP's), including the Canada Learning Bond (CLB), from inclusion as an asset when families apply for income assistance.

The CLB assures an initial contribution of \$500 and annual contributions of \$100 towards an RESP for families with annual incomes of less than \$35,000 in each year they are eligible for the National Child Benefit Supplement. Some of these families include recipients of social assistance - receiving either total or partial income support. In some provinces, the rules for recipients of social assistance deem contributions to RESP's an income asset to be clawed back, as happened with the National Child Benefit Supplement. Thus, children in families receiving social assistance would be excluded from possible benefit from the Canada Learning Bond.

Specifically, our policy on **The Canada Learning Bond and Registered Education Savings Plans** states:

***Resolved that the National Council of Women of Canada adopt as policy that Registered Education Savings Plan contributions, including the Canada Learning Bond and similar provincial programs where applicable, should not be considered an asset when families apply for income assistance; and be it further***

***Resolved that the National Council of Women of Canada urge the Government of Canada, when transferring funds for social assistance, to request the Provinces and Territories that they exempt Registered Education Savings Plan contributions, including the Canada Learning Bond, from inclusion as an asset when families apply for income assistance; and be it further***

***Resolved that the National Council of Women of Canada urge the Provincial Councils of Women to request their respective governments to ensure that RESP contributions, including the Canada Learning Bond, are not considered an asset when families apply for income assistance.***

The purpose of the Canada Learning Bond is to help the children of the poor to pay for their post-secondary education, thus helping them to escape the cycle of poverty. Therefore, it is illogical to deny this benefit to the poorest of poor children.

With great confidence in the intent of all governments of Canada to work toward the alleviation and eradication of poverty within Canada, we respectfully urge the Government of Canada to do everything possible to extend this benefit to the children of families receiving assistance.

Another financial matter of great concern to the members of the NCWC is the issue of defined-benefits pension plans. The Certified General Accountants Association of Canada warns that about 60% of defined-benefits pension plans in Canada are in a deficit position, unable to fully cover their current deficits and to provide for future indexation of accrued benefits. At the same time, they assure us that there still is time to improve the sustainability of these plans.

One major problem to sustainability of these pension plans is the fact that, when these funds grow at a greater-than-expected rate because of temporary fluctuation in the markets in which these funds are invested, the companies claim that the excess funds are theirs. However, when the funds grow at lower-than-expected rates because of temporary fluctuation of the markets, these same companies claim that they have no responsibility for replacing the lost funds to ensure sustainability of these pensions.

The existence of these pension plans protects the Government from significant pressures to increase the rates and benefits of government pension programs.

National Council of Women of Canada respectfully asks the Government of Canada to implement the changes necessary to ensure sustainability by :

1. protecting employee pension plans from bankruptcy proceedings and
2. creating a simple regulatory environment, greater transparency in accounting and clearer responsibility.

Our policy on **Defined-benefits Pension Plans at Risk** states:

***Resolved that the National Council of Women of Canada adopt as policy that legislation and regulations ensure the sustainability of defined-benefits pension plans; and be it further***

***Resolved that the National Council of Women of Canada urge the Government of Canada to implement, as a matter of urgency, protection for defined-benefits pension plans to ensure their sustainability; and***

***(a) strengthen the regulatory environment in order to require sponsors of employee pension plans to make additional payments in order to ensure sustainability;***

***(b) provide education to employers and employees (particularly their unions) to assist them to understand how employee-***

***sponsored pension plans work;***

***(c) implement the changes necessary to bring about a simple regulatory environment, greater accounting transparency and clearer responsibility;***

***(d) hold pension plan sponsors more closely responsible for investment decisions, subjecting estimated return on investment to a reality check and highlighting pension plan liabilities in corporate financial reports;***

***(e) take measures to clarify the ownership of pension surpluses and institute measures to encourage employers to invest in employee pension plans; and***

***(f) ensure that employee pension plans are set up as separate funds, not under the control of the company, and are protected from bankruptcy proceedings; and be it further***

***Resolved that the National Council of Women of Canada urge the Provincial and Local Councils to request of their respective Governments, as a matter of urgency, protection for defined-benefits pension plans to ensure sustainability.***

The employees placed substantial moneys in these pension plans, trusting that these funds would grow to ensure an additional income during retirement. It is patently unfair for anyone to place these vital pension funds at risk for any reason, and we trust that the Government will consider this matter to be of high priority.

Another financial issue that has very long-term repercussions for the public and the Government is the matter of Public-Private Partnerships or P3s. Extensive study of these arrangements around the world in health care and educational infrastructure shows that such partnerships have only a very short-term financial benefit, if any, while conferring no benefit in delivery of services and placing a heavy financial burden on the affected institution. This burden often results in poorer staffing and lower quality of care than before. In addition to being a more costly and less effective means for delivery of vital services, under international trade rules, P3s may render the Government less able to ensure efficient and adequate service delivery to the public, protect the environment and preserve or expand public services.

For these reasons, NCWC general membership has approved a policy on **Public-Private Partnerships** which states:

***Resolved that the National Council of Women of Canada adopt as policy the rejection of P3s in the areas of health, environment,***

***education and public service delivery, and be it further***

***Resolved that the National Council of Women of Canada urge the Government of Canada to cease the funding of P3s to all levels of government P3's in the areas of health, environment, education and public service delivery; and be it further***

***Resolved that the National Council of Women of Canada urge the Provincial Councils to urge their respective governments to cease funding private-public partnerships in the areas of health, environment, education and public service delivery.***

We hereby respectfully urge the Government of Canada to cease the funding of P3s to all levels of government, in order to protect the powers of Parliament in its ability to protect the health, environment and education of all Canadians, as well as the delivery of public services of all levels of government.

National Council of Women of Canada was quite pleased at the commitment by the leaders of the four major political parties during the last election to the principles of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The Convention signatories agree to work toward the full and equal participation of women in their society, including in the process of formulation of public policy.

A major barrier for Canadian women to being included in consultations and meetings to assess and advise on the formulation of new policy has been the practice of funding expenses of participating businesses but not of participating non-governmental organizations (NGOs). This policy unfairly excludes NGOs from helping to develop policy that affects their members.

Therefore, we respectfully urge the Government to promote the full participation of the women of Canada in assessing and advising on the formulation of government policy by providing funding for NGO's participating in consultations and meetings.

NCWC policy for **Funding for Travel and Accommodation Costs of Attending Government Consultations and Meetings** is as follows:

***Resolved that the National Council of Women of Canada adopt as policy that travel and accommodation expenses of Non-Governmental Organizations invited to participate in consultations and meetings with federal departments and agencies be reimbursed by the federal department or agency organizing the consultations and meetings, without compromising the members and numbers of NGOs invited; and be it***

***Resolved that the National Council of Women of Canada urge the Government of Canada to routinely make provision for travel***

***and accommodation expenses of Non-Governmental Organization representatives, without compromising the members and numbers of NGOs invited when issuing invitations to participate in consultations and meetings, and be it further***

***Resolved that the National Council of Women of Canada urge the Government of Canada to ensure provision for travel and accommodation be prepaid or reimbursed in a timely manner.***

An issue that involves the human rights of a particular segment of Canadian population and has life-long effects is the provision of community-based correction services, including long-term supervision and/or parole to Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal female offenders. The Corrections and Conditional Release Act (CCRA), ss.81 and 84, provides for decarceration of federally-sentenced women. The Criminal Code of Canada, section 718.2(e) provides for sentencing options.

The current classification process used by the Correction Service of Canada results in a significant over-classification of aboriginal women. NCWC believes this imbalance can be addressed by helping female offenders, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, to re-integrate more easily into society.

This can be accomplished by the Government and Correctional Service of Canada entering into partnership with communities and organization to review and identify barriers to the use of Section 81 and 84 of CCRA and create an action plan for its use, along with programs to address the needs of the offenders.

Such partnership would promote the successful re-integration of female offenders into society, reducing both the rate of recidivism and the costs of incarceration and saving the Government money.

We place the text of our policy on the **Corrections and Conditional Release Act, ss.81 and 84**, here for your convenience.

***Resolved that the National Council of Women of Canada adopt as policy that Aboriginal communities be allowed to provide correctional services, long-term supervision and/or parole to Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal female offenders. The services shall provide a range of programs designed to address the needs of offenders and contribute to their re-integration into the community; and be it further***

***Resolved that the National Council of Women of Canada urge the Government of Canada/Correction Services Canada to:***

***(a) enter into partnership with Aboriginal communities and***

**organizations to review and identify barriers to the use of Section 81 and 84 of the Correctional and Conditional Release Act and create and implement an action plan to encourage its use for federally-sentenced Aboriginal women. This partnership should include financial resources for those communities wishing to undertake the responsibility of assisting in the re-integration of Aboriginal female offenders; and**

**(b) ensure that federally-sentenced Aboriginal women are fully aware of Sections 81 and 84 of the Correctional and Conditional Release Act and are encouraged to apply under these sections.**

An issue of human rights that few people have addressed is the matter of the rights and protection of trafficked and temporary workers in the adult entertainment industry. These workers, the vast majority of whom are female, receive temporary work permits to engage in aspects of the industry such as exotic dancing. In practice, these women become vulnerable to exploitation and coercion to work in the commercial sex industry, which is dominated by organized crime.

Canada has ratified Article 3, paragraph (a) of the *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children*, which supplements the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Canada is now in a position to take a leadership role in this issue by ensuring that all employers in the adult entertainment industry in Canada are accountable for following Canada's immigration, employment and human rights laws.

Therefore, the NCWC respectfully requests the Government to assure the **Protection of the Rights of Trafficked and Temporary Workers in the Adult Entertainment Industry** in accordance with our policy, stated herewith, for the benefit and protection of all women in Canada.

**Resolved that the National Council of Women of Canada adopt as policy that the paramount principle governing any measures taken by Canada concerning foreign workers in the adult entertainment industry in Canada be the protection and safety of individual workers; and be it further**

**Resolved that the National Council of Women of Canada urge the Government of Canada to:**

**(a) monitor and enforce the working conditions of temporary workers in the adult entertainment industry to ensure that working conditions are legal and safe and meet all health standards;**



- (b) ensure that temporary foreign workers are entitled to work as full-time employees, with all the rights and protections given to Canadian employees and may work as independent contractors or part-time employees ONLY with the consent of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) and pursuant to a written agreement;***
- (c) ensure that an employment agreement must be signed in every case between the employer and the temporary foreign worker in the adult entertainment sector, such agreement to be translated into the language of the worker and filed with HRSDC before approval is given to hire the foreign worker and such agreement setting out the employee's rights under immigration and employment law, and other relevant information such as contact agencies available for reporting of abuse;***
- (d) institute amendments to relevant Acts to allow temporary foreign workers in the adult entertainment industry the right to apply for permanent resident status after two years without meeting the points-system requirement;***
- (e) introduce amendments to make the purchase of sex-related services from women and children who are trafficked into Canada a specific offense within the Criminal Code of Canada;***
- (f) establish "safe houses" for women and children seeking to escape their employers in the adult entertainment industry;***
- (g) develop a tracking system to enable authorities to know whether a foreign worker under such an agreement (item c) is still in the country after the work permit expires;***
- (h) ensure, when the rights of temporary foreign workers in the adult entertainment industry are violated, that these workers will not be penalized, charged or deported and shall be permitted to apply for permanent residence from within Canada on humanitarian grounds, be given valid temporary work status and granted federal health benefits during the process.***

International trade has been a subject for extensive study by NCWC Convenors, especially in the last decade, resulting in Council policies which call for

- greater democratization, transparency and accountability in those institutions which govern international trade and
- greater attention to attaining equality of development outcome from trade agreements, especially those which involve a developed nation trading with a developing nation.

Currently, the World Trade Organization, which dominates trade negotiations, focuses on economic considerations to the exclusion of social and environmental considerations. This results in situations in which developing nations must, for financial survival, sign away their rights and responsibilities to serve their own peoples' medical, educational and social needs, as well as their ability to:

- establish effective and economical internal and international communications,
- protect intellectual property and government procurement policies,
- promote investment and facilitate trade which benefits the country as a whole,
- control the transfer of technology and
- protect their nation's environment with a view to long-term, sustainable growth.

This kind of unbalanced negotiating power must escalate the already-existing inequities within and among states, significantly increasing tension and insecurity in the world. Therefore, NCWC respectfully urges the Government of Canada to do all it can to take a firm and committed role of leadership in promoting trade practices that result in greater prosperity and, thereby, long-term sustainability for developing nations.

NCWC's policy update on **International Trade** is as follows:

***Resolved that the National Council of Women of Canada adopt as policy that, in the interests of a more just and equitable world, developing state trade and sustainable development priorities take precedence over those of the relatively-better-off developed states; and be it further***

***Resolved that the National Council of Women of Canada urge the Government of Canada to promote a more balanced World Trade Organization (WTO) work plan, such that, in the best interests of a more just and equitable world, developing state trade and sustainable development priorities take precedence over those of the relatively-better-off developed states.***

Since the first days of the AIDS/HIV tragedy, private and governmental agencies of Canada have given substantial funds and medical aid to help the sufferers and survivors of this plague. Although there are some signs of success in stemming the pandemic in some African and some Latin American countries, it is expanding now into Asia and Eastern Europe.

The United Nations UNAIDS Program has determined that it needs at least \$10 billion per year to prevent and treat HIV/AIDS around the world, but only \$5 billion has been pledged.

NCWC respectfully asks the Government of Canada to support the UNAIDS Program. Our full policy asks that Canada **Increase Canada's Financial Contribution to the Global Fund for HIV/AIDS** and states:

***Resolved that the National Council of Women of Canada establish as policy support for HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment programs in Canada and abroad; and be it***

***Resolved that the National Council of Women of Canada urge the Government of Canada to support the United Nations HIV/AIDS Program goals by increasing its contribution to help reach the \$10 billion funding required annually to administer HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment programs where they are most needed; and be it further***

***Resolved that the National Council of Women of Canada urge the International Council of Women to request its National Councils to encourage their respective governments to take a proactive approach to the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS around the world by***

***(a) endorsing and following through on the UNAIDS Program Goal to raise \$10 billion annually; and***

***(b) developing regional strategies and campaigns to inform their citizens that HIV/AIDS continues to be a threat from which everyone, especially women and girls, needs protection.***

With Parliament working to improve the quality of life in Canada through legislation and regulation, and the National Council of Women of Canada working toward the same goal through education and advocacy, NCWC is confident that, by working together, we will create a better Canada for all of our people.

---

Respectfully submitted by  
Carla Kozak  
President  
20 March 2006