The National Council of Women of Canada
Le Conseil national des femmes du Canada

FOUNDED 1893
(INCORPORATED BY AN ACT OF PARLIAMENT)
IN FEDERATION WITH THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN

Annual Brief to the Government of Canada
January 2020

Presented by Patricia Leson, President
On Behalf of the NCWC Board of Directors
And the General Membership of the NCWC
Preamble

The National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC) is pleased to present its new and updated policies 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 (NCWC) is a non-profit and non-partisan organization representing Canadian women of diverse occupations, languages, origins, and customs and reflecting a cross-section of public opinion.

We were incorporated by an Act of Parliament and have received our own Coat of Arms. The NCWC is a non-governmental organization (NGO) currently composed of Local Councils in cities from Halifax to Vancouver, Provincial Councils in Quebec, Ontario, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Alberta, and British Columbia, along with several Nationally Organized Societies.

The NCWC is a federate of the International Council of Women (ICW), which was founded in 1888 and composed of National Councils in seventy-four countries. The NCWC holds Consultative Status (General) with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations, enabling us to bring a Canadian perspective to the work of the Commission for the Status of Women. The NCWC also participates as an Observer Non-Governmental Organization with the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States.

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

For the past 127 years, the National Council of Women has worked to improve the quality of life in Canada through education and advocacy. In 2005, the Hon. Stephane Dion announced the unveiling of an Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada plaque commemorating the national historic significance of NCWC in Allan Gardens, Toronto, the site of our first meeting.

We are proud of our work to expand opportunities for all women. We will continue to be the voice for those who have neither the courage nor the strength to do so for themselves. We continue to advocate for women from coast to coast to coast so they are able to participate in, and influence, our society through political equality and full citizenship. We continue our work with our Federates to press those in leadership positions to weave the strong tapestry of supports and programs necessary to improve the lives and living conditions for women, children, and families in Canada.
All policy for NCWC is generated through resolutions originating with either Local Councils or NCWC Committees. These are circulated to, and then voted on by, the general membership at our Annual General Meeting. This Brief is therefore the united voice of the federated membership of the National Council of Women of Canada.

At our most recent Annual General Meeting held in Winnipeg in June 2019, we continued the long history of NCWC’s policy development, and we are pleased to introduce these new policies and updates to existing policies. These policies are listed on the following pages.

Resolutions 2019

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ENDING CHILD MARRIAGE

Whereas 1:  early marriages cut short childhood, education, reduce the ability to be autonomous and self-supporting, and increase the incidence of experiencing violence; and

Whereas 2:  in Canada girls and boys are legally still children (minors) until the age of majority at 18 or 19 years, so they cannot enter into a contract to marry or divorce until that age; and

Whereas 3:  Canada’s Civil Marriage Act describes marriage as “free and enlightened consent of two persons”, and it specifies a legal minimum age of 16 years; and

Whereas 4:  the provinces and territories govern marriage practice, however there are exceptions where children of 16 and 17 years can be married because of parents’ cultural or religious practices, or a judge’s opinion; therefore, be it

Resolved 1:  that the National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC) adopt policy to protect girls and boys from marrying before age 18, with no exceptions; and

Resolved 2:  that NCWC urge the Government of Canada, working with the Provincial governments, to amend the legislation to restrict marriage to persons of age 18 years or over with no exceptions; and

Resolved 3:  that the NCWC further urge the Government of Canada, working with the Provincial governments, to refuse to recognize marriages performed outside of Canada of persons under the age of 18 years who are emigrating to or residing in Canada; and

Resolved 4:  that the NCWC urge the Government of Canada, working with the Provincial governments, to ensure that the reunification of families does not include an immigrant spouse, or intended spouse, under the age of 18 years; and further be it

Resolved 5:  that the NCWC urge the Government of Canada to present a resolution to the United Nations through appropriate channels to urge its members to adopt practices to prevent the marriage of children younger than 18 years of age.
Consumer Charter for Seniors

Whereas 1: our Federal public institutions and companies under Federal jurisdictions offer a lasting value for elderly consumers when they offer accessible customer support as a written and publicized policy that is promoted; and

Whereas 2: direct customer support needs to be offered to vulnerable consumers who are elderly and have no means or ability to use technology (tablets, computers, cell phones); and

Whereas 3: penalty fees are currently applied to those seniors who are unable or who are apprehensive to make an online purchase; and

Whereas 4: the independent financial ombudsman in Canada, the Ombudsman for Banking Services and Investment (OBSI), does not currently have the power to implement decisions following unethical business practices, nor for the high-pitch sales of services by banks, financial institutions and financial advisors; and

Whereas 5: good corporate citizenry should provide the conditions and terms of a contract in simple language, with direct access to a customer service representative, and with criteria for refunds or cancellation; and

Whereas 6: similar to the federal government’s “gender policy analysis”, there is a need to adopt a “senior’s policy analysis” for all federal government departments and agencies that will ensure the prevention of challenges for seniors as consumers: therefore, be it resolved that

Resolved 1: the National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC) adopt as policy there be a Consumer Charter for Seniors; and

Resolved 2: that the NCWC urge the Government of Canada to establish and implement a Consumer Charter for Seniors after consulting widely with seniors across Canada; and be it further

Resolved 3: that the NCWC urge Local and Provincial Councils of women to consult with their respective government representatives to establish and implement a Consumer Charter for Seniors.
HUMAN TRAFFICKING: CANADIAN COMPLICITY IN CYBERSEX TRAFFICKING OF CHILDREN

Whereas 1: The National Council of Women of Canada adopted policy in 2001, 2006 and 2012 addressing the issue of human trafficking; and

Whereas 2: human trafficking constitutes a violation of international covenants and conventions addressing human rights, most heinously as it relates to the sexual exploitation of children worldwide; and

Whereas 3: Canada is the third most active of 60 countries investigated and in Canada access to graphic online/live and video-taped child sexual pornography is being sourced, developed, directed and marketed by Canadians; therefore, be it

Resolved 1: that the National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC) adopt as policy that funding be available to curb, dismantle and expose human trafficking, and that the public and social services be educated cybersex trafficking of children; and

Resolved 2: that the NCWC urge the Government of Canada to:

a) provide sustainable funding for specialized online forensic tools and policing resources to curb, dismantle and expose illegal practices;

b) ensure that perpetrators are held accountable and prosecuted for human trafficking of children both here in Canada and internationally;

and be it further

Resolved 3: that the NCWC urges the Government to initiate public wide education programs to alert Canadians and those in the social services sector as to the indicators that suggest abuse including, but not limited to, abuse of children on the internet.
NANOPARTICLE ADDITIVES IN CONSUMER PRODUCTS

Whereas 1: the National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC) has called for a risk assessment prior to a “nanomaterial release into the marketplace” in 2011.05, and has policy on additives to consumer products, such as azodicarbonate in 2017.3, and has used the precautionary principle with respect to human health and safety; and

Whereas 2: nanoparticles are smaller than a human hair (1-100 nm) and metal oxides have been shown in animal studies to be present in tissue such as the liver, heart, brain, and outside the digestive system, as well as immune system effects; and

Whereas 3: the additive titanium dioxide is used as a colourant (white) in many food products such as yogurt, mayonnaise, chewing gum, cakes and candies, as well as medicines and cosmetics; and

Whereas 4: the European Union is looking for more toxicology testing, and France has indicated that it will ban the use of nanoparticles of titanium dioxide in 2020; and

Whereas 5: Canada has updated its labelling rules in 2016, but these do not have full effect until 2021, when added colours must be named, and Canada still permits titanium dioxide as an approved additive; therefore,

Resolved 1: that the National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC) adopt as policy that additives to consumer products that show potential harmful effects for humans be banned; and

Resolved 2: that the NCWC urge the Government of Canada to investigate to what extent nanoparticles in consumer products affect human health; and

Resolved 3: that NCWC further urge the Government of Canada to review the addition of metal oxides especially titanium dioxide in food and food products with a view to a ban; and be it further

Resolved 4: that the NCWC further urge the Government of Canada, in order to ensure the public interest is served, to use independent stakeholders, such as organic farmers, scientists, bio-chemists, Indigenous people who have maintained an arms-length distance from agribusiness, pharmaceutical, mining, energy, and petrochemical industries, to assess the impact of nanoparticles on human health.
NATIONAL SCHOOL FOOD PROGRAM

Whereas 1: UNICEF reports in 2017 that Canada ranks 37 out of 41 countries for food security and nutrition; and

Whereas 2: when children go to school hungry, their energy levels, memory, problem-solving skills, creativity, concentration and behaviour are negatively impacted; and

Whereas 3: many Canadian children are not eating enough of the right kinds of foods leading to an increase in the rate of chronic diseases; and

Whereas 4: current school food programs reach only a small percentage of students; and

Whereas 5: several provinces have guidelines for school nutrition, and municipalities may vary in what kinds of food are available; therefore, be it

Resolved 1: that the National Council of Women of Canada adopt as policy that there be a national school food program providing breakfast and lunch in both elementary and secondary schools; and

Resolved 2: that the National Council of Women of Canada urge the Government of Canada, working with the provinces and territories, to institute and fund a national school food program providing breakfast and lunch for both elementary and secondary schools; and be it further

Resolved 3: that the NCWC urge the Government of Canada to ensure that this program:

   a) encourages the current Canada Food Guide
   b) teaches children about nutrition and health
   c) prepares food using sanitary food handling practices
   d) respectfully accommodates health sensitivities – with reference to food allergies, medical conditions and cultural/religious restrictions.
BAN SINGLE USE PLASTICS PRODUCTS

Whereas 1: the European Parliament voted in favour of a ban on single-use plastic-products in the EU market; and

Whereas 2: plastic waste is choking our oceans, threatening to outweigh the amount of fish by 2050 if nothing is done; and

Whereas 3: recent studies show microplastics are in our bodies and it’s only a matter of time before we discover resulting health impacts; and

Whereas 4: Canada generates about 3.25 million tons of plastic waste every year, 1.6 million coffee cups sit in Canada’s landfills and Canadians throw out about 57 million plastic straws a year; therefore, be it

Resolved 1: that the National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC) adopt as policy that single-use plastic products be banned, and

Resolved 2: that the NCWC urge the Government of Canada to take immediate action to:
   a. Ban single use plastic products in Canada by 2021
   b. Provide leadership on the phasing out of single-use plastics
   c. Put the burden on manufacturers to replace single-use plastic products with readily available alternatives of environmentally sustainable materials.
   d. Reduce plastics where no alternatives are available by at least 35% by 2021, and, be it further resolved

Resolved 3: that the NCWC urge the Councils to urge their respective governments to:
   a. Ban single use plastic products in their province by 2021
   b. Provide leadership on the phasing out of single-use plastics
   c. Put the burden on manufacturers to replace single-use plastic products with readily available alternatives of environmentally sustainable materials
   d. Reduce plastic where no alternatives are available by at least 35% by 2021.
SEASONAL AGRICULTURAL WORKERS

Whereas 1: Seasonal Agricultural Workers (SAWs) do some of the most dangerous and difficult jobs in Canada, with some of the lowest wages and protections; and

Whereas 2: SAWs may experience poor standards of housing or are housed in/adjacent to buildings containing chemicals, fertilizers, boilers, industrial fans and heaters; and

Whereas 3: SAWs are subject to medical repatriation and are sent home when sick or injured; and

Whereas 4: SAWs often face language barriers in understanding workplace health and safety regulations and health coverage and are not eligible for some settlement and support services; and

Whereas 5: SAWs have taxes and Employment Insurance premiums deducted from their pay without access to the insurance benefits or the rights associated with citizenship; therefore, be it

Resolved 1: that the National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC) adopt as policy that Seasonal Agricultural Workers be protected and treated fairly and be informed of their rights and obligations; and be it further

Resolved 2: that the NCWC urge the Government of Canada and provincial councils urge their respective governments to take immediate action to:

a) enforce the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP) and the Temporary Foreign Workers Program (TFWP) to ensure that workers in these programs are paid the provincial seasonal average wage rate or better; and

b) inspect all SAWs housing before, after and randomly throughout the season; and

c) allow SAWs labour mobility to leave exploitative work situations; grant open work permits to workers whose employer is suspended; and implement an anti-reprisal mechanism to ensure employers don’t unjustly repatriate workers (for example for complaining or due to injury or illness); and

d) ensure that workplace health and safety information is provided to SAWs in their own languages; and

e) ensure that SAWs have full access to the Employment Insurance program and special benefits (parental, maternal and compassionate benefits); and
f) facilitate a pathway for SAWs to permanent residence in every province under the provincial nominee programs by eliminating barriers to migrant workers’ access to Provincial Nominees Programs and by reducing or eliminating language requirements; and

g) extend eligibility for settlement services to migrant workers and ensure that services such as translations and language instructions are adapted to the needs of these workers; and

h) ensure that all SAWs receive a free medical exam before they return to their home country to confirm that they are healthy and free from workplace illness or injury; and

i) commit to protecting migrant worker rights by signing the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families.
TEMPORARY FOREIGN WORKERS’ ACCESS TO PERMANENT STATUS (CAREGIVER PROGRAM)

Whereas 1: the entry of foreign caregiver workers, the majority of whom are women, is prompted by the unmet labour market demand for domestic caregivers to work full-time in caring for our most vulnerable citizens: our children, the elderly and the infirm; a demand which is projected to continue and increase as Canada's population ages and more families are supported by two incomes; and

Whereas 2: these workers by virtue of their labour, engage in and provide many personal services for our society and its most vulnerable citizens; and

Whereas 3: the current Caregiver Program offers Temporary Foreign Worker (TFW) caregivers restricted/provisional access and opportunity to apply for permanent residency; and

Whereas 4: many of the almost 30,000 foreign caregivers currently employed in Canada seek to secure permanent residency status but are thwarted by onerous restrictions and are compounded by a mandatory cap in the absolute number who can apply each year (2,750); and

Whereas 5: in view of Minister Ahmed Hussen’s announcement in February 2018 that the TFW program by which companies and families currently apply to hire childcare workers and/or carers for “People with high Medical Needs” will end in November 2019; and that a new program will be developed and introduced; therefore, be it

Resolved 1: that the National Council of Women (NCWC) adopt as policy that TFW Caregivers, upon entry to the labour force in Canada are granted all the rights as well as the protection guaranteed in our laws; and urge the Government of Canada to reinstate and implement and maintain a pathway to permanent status for Caregivers upon their entry into the labour market in Canada; and that it be further

Resolved 2: that the NCWC urge the Government of Canada to ensure that upon entry to the labour force in Canada TFW caregivers are made aware of all their rights and obligations, as well as the protection guaranteed in our employment laws for the duration of their contract.
TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION: HISTORIC SITES AND MONUMENTS

Whereas 1: Environment Minister Catherine McKenna has asked the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada to look at how to address concerns with historical figures like John A. Macdonald, whose role in establishing residential schools has made him a polarizing figure in reconciliation efforts with Indigenous Peoples; and

Whereas 2: the former chairman of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Senator Murray Sinclair, said, "We should stop arguing about whether schools should be named after Sir John A. Macdonald, and start thinking about how to honour overlooked Indigenous heroes"; and

Whereas 3: the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s document What We Have Learned: Principles of Truth and Reconciliation states, “Reconciliation requires sustained public education and dialogue, including youth engagement, about the history and legacy of residential schools, Treaties, and Indigenous rights, as well as the historical and contemporary contributions of Indigenous peoples to Canadian society”; and

Whereas 4: in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action, number 79 calls upon “the federal government, in collaboration with Survivors, Indigenous organizations, and the arts community, to develop a reconciliation framework for Canadian heritage and commemoration”; therefore, be it

Resolved 1: that the National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC) adopt as policy that historic sites and monuments in Canada be used to promote the principles of Truth and Reconciliation; and be it further

Resolved 2: that the NCWC urge the Government of Canada to:

a. Direct the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada to develop ways and means to communicate the principles of Truth and Reconciliation at historic sites and monuments;

b. Undertake steps to honour our country’s Indigenous heroes through the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada;

c. Embark on a program of public education regarding the historical and contemporary contributions of Indigenous peoples to Canadian society through the development of new and updated historic sites and monuments.

d. Amend the Historic Sites and Monuments Act to include First Nations, Inuit, and Métis representation on the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada and its Secretariat.

e. Ensure gender balance.
Update:
Advertising of Alcohol and Need for Continued Educational Campaign

Whereas 1: in 1974 National Council of Women NCWC asked the Government of Canada to prohibit advertising for Alcohol and Tobacco and, in 1976 NCWC asked the Government of Canada to launch an educational campaign on the dangers of tobacco and alcohol; and

Whereas 2: Federal, Provincial, Territorial and Municipal governments have managed to reduce consumption of tobacco through a suite of policies, educational measures and regulations; and

Whereas 3: Health Canada officials have warned of the considerable increase in the number of women drinking heavily and the wide range of harms, such as babies born with foetal alcohol spectrum disorder, and other social and health issues; and

Whereas 4: Health Canada ‘s 2018 Report: State of Canada’s Health, warned of the continued high rates of problematic alcohol consumption among youth, with data showing 25% of youth in grades 7 to 12 use alcohol excessively; and

Whereas 5: the tobacco industry has a number of restrictions on the promotion of its product, however, the alcohol industry continues to heavily advertise an enjoyable, stress free drinking lifestyle through marketing tools such as social media, magazine ads, internet sales; therefore, be it

Resolved 1: that the NCWC adopt as policy that there be a strong suite of federal government policies, regulations and educational measures regarding the promotional marketing of alcohol, and the dangers of alcohol consumption, particularly for women of child bearing age, and youth; and be it further

Resolved 2: that the National Council of Women of Canada urge the Government of Canada to:
  a) strengthen its policies and regulations regarding marketing of alcohol in all its forms
  b) initiate an intensive educational campaign regarding the dangers of alcohol consumption, particularly for women of child-bearing age and youth; and
  c) work with the Provinces and Territories to develop similar regulations regarding the promotion and sale of alcohol and educational campaigns regarding the dangers of alcohol consumption, particularly for women of child-bearing age and youth.
NCWC EMERGING ISSUE RESOLUTION 2019

CLIMATE CHANGE RESPONSE

Whereas 1: the National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC) has adopted policy protecting Canadians from changes in our environment, for example, air pollution from industry and transportation, water pollution from waste, nuclear energy production, fracking, agricultural run-off, antibiotics, other medications and food additives, and land pollution from industry and mining, fossil fuel drilling; and

Whereas 2: changing average rainfall and its annual distribution, and extreme weather episodes have contributed to food insecurity; and

Whereas 3: insects which were once kept in check in Canada by cold winters are now surviving and spreading, ex. spruce bud worm, leading to flammable dead trees and forest fires, threatening and destroying habitation of people and animals and causing massive release of carbon particles, carbon dioxide, and other volatile gases from burning wood and resin, compounds which accelerate warming; and

Whereas 4: rural and Indigenous people are affected by changing animal habitats, loss of natural habitat, loss of pollinating bees, new permafrost conditions and retreating sea ice; and

Whereas 5: from the publication of Limits to Growth in 1972, the regular reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the international conferences on the environment such as Rio de Janiero in 1992, through Kyoto 1997, Copenhagen 2009, Durban 2011, Paris 2015, Poland 2018, we have been warned of an impending crisis; and

Whereas 6: Canada is not on track to meet its Paris targets, and it is now widely acknowledged by experts that climate change is proceeding rapidly, and that this is having serious effects on the global environment, and on communities and individuals; therefore, be it

Resolved 1: that the National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC) adopt policy to recognize that our climate is changing and that measures need to be taken quickly to mitigate the effects on Canadians now and in the future; and

Resolved 2: to urge the Government of Canada to respond to the crisis and communicate its plan to meet the agreed upon targets which should mitigate the effects of climate change globally, and legislate those actions in Canada; and be it further

Resolved 3: the NCWC urge our federates and provincial and local councils to urge their respective governments to take appropriate actions, and to communicate with their members to educate the membership about the effects of climate change so that as many Canadians as possible will adopt practices that reduce each individual’s impact on the environment.