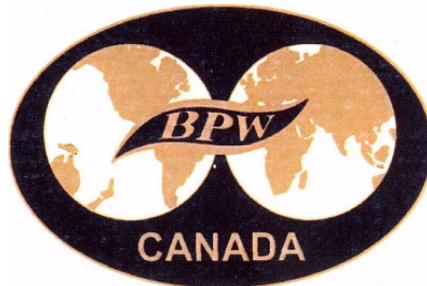


**POSITION STATEMENT**

**Prevention of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder  
(FASD): A Call for a Coordinated  
Comprehensive FASD Strategy**



The Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs  
La Fédération Canadienne de Clubs de Femmes de Carrières Commerciales et Professionnelles

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***Working towards improving economic, political, social and employment  
conditions of women.***

***"Women working for working women"***

**January 20, 2007**

# **Prevention of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD): Call for a Coordinated Comprehensive FASD Strategy**

**Position Statement: The Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs**

January 20, 2007

Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs (BPW Canada) commends the decisions of the Government of Canada for instituting a national Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Initiative in 1999 and subsequently working towards the implementation of the National Framework on FASD (Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder).<sup>1</sup> The Government of Canada has initiated and supported a number of strategies including Canada's Drug Strategy, \$2 million (\$1 million in 2004-2005 and another million in 2005-2006) in additional funding. These funds were invested in the National FASD Initiative "*to accelerate the development and dissemination of diagnostic guidelines and screening tools, as well as training and education resources for health care providers*"(1) in Canada.

BPW Canada has carried out an in-depth review of the research on this very important issue. BPW also reviewed the September 2006 Report of the Standing Committee on Health entitled "*Even One is too Many*": A Call for a Comprehensive Action Plan for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder." BPW also reviewed the letter by the Coalition on Alcohol and Pregnancy (CAP) addressed to Mr. Stephen John Fletcher, MP, outlining their response to the recommendations of the Standing Committee.

What is clear to BPW Canada – as a national federation of business and professional women in Canada that represents 52 clubs in communities across the country and that speaks for working women – that key stakeholders representing organizations in Canada fervently support continued efforts of Public Health Agency of Canada to mitigate the long term adverse and negative effects of FASD in Canadian society.

BPW believes a balanced approach to a coordinated comprehensive strategy should involve all levels of prevention activity which includes: universal primary prevention (awareness campaigns), secondary prevention (early intervention and diagnostic criteria) and tertiary prevention (treatment, rehabilitation and continuing care resources for FASD children and adults as well as education and skills training for parents, educators and social and health care workers who are responsible for providing care and/or services to this population).

This issue is a major concern to BPW Canada as women of child bearing age involved in post-secondary education and those in the workforce have been identified as most likely to drink alcohol. Women involved in post secondary education (18-24) and working women (35-44) with higher education and incomes (\$80,000) are most likely to engage in high-risk alcohol use (five or more drinks) on one occasion. These women are most likely to miss being identified as alcohol consumers during pregnancy by their doctors. Therefore, it is this target population that BPW believes can most benefit from the following recommendations:

- 1) **A Coordinated Comprehensive Multi-Component FASD Strategy** involving Federal, Provincial and Territorial organizations and agencies. Although there has been approximately \$70-100 million dollars provided to various agencies and organizations there is a lack of coordination and evaluation, outcome research and distribution and publication of results on funded FASD initiatives in the past two years.
- 2) **Health Canada Partnering with a National Substance Abuse Organization such as the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (CCSA)** which would have the primary responsibility for the development of a comprehensive FASD Strategy. BPW is concerned that a FASD strategy to be effective should not be separated, but integrated into the development of a comprehensive alcohol strategy.
- 3) **Participation by Provincial and Territorial Governments including NGO's and grass roots organizations such as CAP in the development of an FASD Strategy.** BPW believes that all sectors need to be involved in order to provide insights into the diversity of working women in the Canadian population and the communities in which they reside in order that specific action plans and strategies are appropriate and culturally relevant.
- 4) **The Development of a Professional Public Awareness Campaign as a Major Component of FASD Strategy.** BPW believes maximally effective awareness campaigns should be a major component of a broader plan to address the issue of FASD and should be integrated into an overall comprehensive strategy. Research indicates that in general it is safest to avoid strong fear or shame based approaches in alcohol and pregnancy awareness campaigns. The most promising use of awareness campaigns is in support of broader – multi component

campaigns designed to shift attitudes and behaviors among women towards alcohol use during pregnancy.

- 5) **Universal Prevention Programs Targeting Hi-Risk Age Groups.** Younger women are also more likely to engage in sex without the use of contraception when they are drinking, and tend to identify their pregnancy later in term than older women. Women in general in their first trimester whether a pregnancy is planned or unplanned are usually unaware that they have conceived. BPW suggests that women of child bearing age specifically the age groups who are most likely to report drinking five or more drinks on one occasion, and who are most likely to drink during pregnancy should be an increasingly important sub-group to target for universal primary prevention strategies.
  
- 6) **Implementation of Bill C-206 (Private Members Bill) – To legislate warning labels on alcoholic beverage containers.** BPW agrees that legislating warning labels on all alcoholic beverages containers as a component of a comprehensive environmental design strategy would provide an important source of information to women in these difficult to reach but significant age groups. In addition to the legislated labeling, signs, posters, print and electronic media advertisements an environmental approach should engage key stakeholders such as students, health care providers, licensed establishments, and the alcohol industry in identifying and pursuing strategies which reduce high-risk drinking during pregnancy.

BPW Canada strongly urges the Government of Canada to grant higher priority to FASD on the Health Portfolio by adopting BPW Canada's "*A Call for a Coordinated Comprehensive FASD Strategy*" based on the recommendations of this document in the 39<sup>th</sup> Parliament in 2007.

In conclusion, BPW Canada again commends the federal government on addressing this important initiative. As an national organization, we are prepared to assist in any way possible to ensure the recommendations of the Standing Committee and the issues raised by BPW Canada be taken into consideration.

## REFERENCES

Position Paper developed by the Coalition on Alcohol and Pregnancy (CAP) (January, 2007) outlining their concerns and conclusions regarding the report entitled “*Even One is too Many: A Call for a Comprehensive Action Plan for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder*”, (September 2006), Research Update “*Alcohol Use and Pregnancy: An Important Canadian Public Health and Social Issue*”, (2005) submitted to FASD Team, Public Health Agency of Canada (2006).

Report of the Standing Committee on Health, “*Even One is too Many: A Call for a Comprehensive Action Plan for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder*”, (September 2006), Rob Merrifield, M.P., Chair.

Report “*What We Have Learned: Key Canadian FASD Awareness Campaigns*” Ontario Maternal Newborn and Early Child Development Research Centre, Public Health Agency of Canada (2006)

Summary Report of the “*National Thematic Workshop on FASD*” hosted by the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse, March 29-30, 2005, Public Health Agency of Canada 2006.

## ENDNOTE

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<sup>1</sup> Substance Abuse and Public Policy in Canada: V. Alcohol and Related Harms

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