

SUBMISSION
to
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE STEPHEN HARPER
Prime Minister of Canada

By



The Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs
*La Federation Canadienne des Clubs de Femmes de Carrieres Commerciales et
Professionnelles*

Member of the International Federation of BPW Clubs

www.bpwcanada.com

bpw@bpwcanada.com

**Working towards improving economic, political, social and employment conditions
for women in Canada**

“Women working for working women.”

October 2007

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Resolutions carried at the BPW Canada Annual General Meeting
Montreal, Quebec July 6-7, 2007

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INTRODUCTION

In 1930, BPW Canada was a founding member of the International Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, which has grown to include clubs in more than 108 countries around the world. BPW International, the recognized voice of gainfully employed women in all professions and occupations, promotes equal opportunities and status for women. As a non-governmental organization (NGO), BPW International has Consultative status Category I with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

The Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs (BPW Canada) is an equality-seeking group working towards improving economic, political, social and employment conditions for women. We are "*women working for working women.*" Our membership includes women from a variety of professions and occupations, including women entrepreneurs, in clubs across the country.

For 77 years, we have been advocating for equality in the workplace, and have played a significant role in achieving advancement for women. For more information on our achievements, please visit our website at www.bpwcanada.com.

Currently, we have 46 local BPW Clubs across Canada. Our clubs offer a range of opportunities and activities to members based on the four pillars of our Membership Model: Awareness, Advocacy and Action on women's issues; Leadership skills and career advancement; Supportive networking; and Personal development.

Our Annual General Meeting was held in Montreal in July of 2007. Our conventions and our Annual General Meetings are where our policy is decided. Resolutions contained in this document were initiated at the club level, researched and formulated, and brought to the Annual General Meeting where they were discussed and debated. Once accepted, resolutions become part of the official policy of BPW Canada.

The issues raised by BPW Canada are issues of concern to our society as a whole. We look forward to the opportunity to meet with our federal government representatives to present our resolutions and our concerns in more detail.

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RESOLUTION #2007/01

STATUS OF WOMEN CUTS AND MANDATE CHANGES

Submitted by BPW MONTREAL AND SUDBURY

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that BPW CANADA strongly urges that the Government of Canada recognize, honour and be accountable to its commitment to defend the rights of the women of Canada by meeting its international obligations to women's equality in Canada as outlined by the United Nations under the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW);

AND FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that BPW CANADA strongly urges the Government of Canada to restore the original mandate and original funding to administration to the Status of Women Canada so that it can continue its vital role in providing the government with progressive, modern policy initiatives.

RATIONALE AND REFERENCES

During the election campaign, Stephen Harper said *"Yes, I'm ready to support women's human rights and I agree that Canada has more to do to meet its international obligations to women's equality. If elected, I will take concrete and immediate measures, as recommended by the United Nations, to ensure that Canada fully upholds its commitments to women in Canada"* (<http://www.fafia.afai.org/en/node/68>) However, this government's recent actions are not consistent with this commitment.

Minister Oda appeared for the first time before the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women on Thursday, October 5th, 2006, where she came under fire for her actions:

- NDP Status of Women critic Irene Mathysen called for Oda's resignation;
- Bloc Quebecois Status of Women critic Maria Mourani asked Oda if her government believes the ability to defend women's rights is no longer a legitimate activity; and
- Liberal Status of Women critic Maria Minna reminded the Minister that were it not for women and women's organizations, women would have not come as far as we have (and that there is still a long way to go).

RESOLUTION #2007/02

ABOLISHMENT OF THE COURT CHALLENGES PROGRAM

Submitted by BPW MONTREAL

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that BPW CANADA urges the Government of Canada to provide financial means for all individuals and minority and advocacy groups to challenge legislation that infringes upon their rights, in the best interest of all Canadians;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that BPW Canada urges the Government of Canada to respect and act on the UN Committee for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ECOSOC) recommendation that the Court Challenges Program be expanded to fund test case litigation against provincial laws and policies that violate constitutional equality rights;

AND FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that BPW CANADA urges the Government of Canada to immediately reverse its decision and restore full funding to the Court Challenges Program.

RATIONALE AND REFERENCES

The Court Challenges Program (CCP) funds test cases initiated by individuals and groups to challenge federal laws and policies that violate constitutional equality rights. With the help of CCP funding, women's organizations and other equality seeking groups have been able to access the justice system, and present progressive interpretations of the law. This has resulted in more egalitarian outcomes for women, aboriginal persons, gays and lesbians, persons with disabilities and other disadvantaged groups.

For example, the CCP provided funding for the Legal Education Action Fund (LEAF) to argue against the use of sexist myths in sexual assault trials.

The Court Challenges Program also funds test cases to defend the language rights of francophones outside of Quebec and anglophones in Quebec. This funding has been crucial in the struggle of francophones across Canada to obtain French language schools and health care services in French.

Source: Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women

RESOLUTION #2007/03

STRIDE CIRCLES FOR FEDERALLY SENTENCED WOMEN

Presented by BPW Cambridge

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that BPW Canada urges the government of Canada to provide stable funding for the equivalent of the Stride Program, a proven cost-effective alternative for the re-integration of federally sentenced women back into the community by reducing recidivism and benefiting society overall through safer communities, reduced dependency on social welfare, and decreased cost.

RATIONALE AND REFERENCES

The average annual cost of incarcerating a female inmate in federal institutions is approximately \$150,870. Research by the University of Waterloo verifies that the Stride Program is an effective tool for supporting women to re-integrate into the community.

The Stride program assists women in the Grand Valley Institute for Women to make the difficult, often traumatic transition from prison into the community by engaging and involving the community. Stride Circles for a woman released from prison mirrors that which most of us have through our family and friends. By supporting the women to re-integrate successfully into the community, we help stop cycles of abuse, addiction, poverty and crime.

With stable funding, Stride Programs, and equivalent programs Canada wide, could become the model used to develop a stronger support system for women in and out of prison. The children of federally sentenced women also benefit from Stride. Sixty-seven percent of federally sentenced women have children. By assisting these women to re-integrate into the community, the children truly benefit.

Resources:

Community Justice Initiatives, Newsletter December 2006

CRIAW *New Federal Policies Affecting Women's Equality: Reality Check*, November 2006

Alison Pedlar, University of Waterloo, *The Work of Providing Alternative Choices (PAC)* [former name of Stride] *Circles for Federally Sentenced Women*, May 2003

RESOLUTION #2007/04

ACCESS TO CERVICAL CANCER VACCINE FOR ALL CANADIAN WOMEN

Submitted by BPW Virtual Club

BPW Canada strongly encourages the Government of Canada through Health Canada to develop a public education and awareness program about the availability of the Cervical Cancer vaccine, including information regarding the benefits of inoculation, short and long-term effects as derived from ongoing government funded research and to continue the programs directed at the importance of PAP tests and screening already in place;

AND FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that BPW Canada urges the Government of Canada, most particularly Health Canada, to fund the above programs of education and sustain funding for the immunization of all girls and women ages 9 to 26, and that the immunization be free of charge to all Canadian girls and women in the specified age group; in addition, that the government continue to fund the existing programs directed at the importance of PAP tests and screening;

AND FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that BPW Canada commends Health Canada for moving very quickly to approve the vaccine for cervical cancer for use in Canada and the federal government for allocating \$300 million over the next three years for implementation of school based HPV vaccination programs;

AND FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that BPW Canada strongly recommends that the Provincial BPW clubs put forth a resolution urging their respective provincial governments to embark on a program of voluntary routine immunization of all girls age 9-13 and a catch-up immunization for girls and women ages 14-26 as recommended by the NACI.
(In June 2007, BPW Ontario adopted a resolution supporting access to the HPV vaccine.)

RATIONALE AND REFERENCES

Availability of immunization to prevent cervical cancer is a national issue. Current and future generations of Canadian women are at risk of cervical cancer as it is one of the top two causes of cancer deaths in women.

The main risk for developing cervical cancer is an infection of the cervix with Human Papillomavirus or HPV. The vaccine should be used as a complement, not a replacement, for cervical cancer screening. HPV vaccination would dramatically decrease the risk of cancer, especially in women who do not take advantage of current screening or where that screening is less accessible.

Programs must be designed to target young women before they become sexually active, hence the need to immunize young girls between the ages of 9 and 13. The cost of providing these injections must be weighed against the cost of treating women for cervical cancer and other HPV related diseases.

Resources:

Health Canada, Drugs and Health Products, Notice of Decision, Gardasil October, 2006

Medicine Net.com, Cervical Cancer Vaccine also Protects against Vaginal Cancers

Montreal Daily Press, January 23, 2007

Guttmacher Policy Review, Fall 2006, Volume 9, No. 4

National Cancer Institute, American Society of Clinical Oncology Conference, June 5, 2006,
Press Release, Cervical Cancer Vaccine Also Protects Against Vaginal Cancers.

Mayo Clinic, Tools for healthier lives, Cervical cancer vaccine recommended for girls 11-12.

US Food and Drug Administration, FDA Consumer Magazine, New Vaccine Prevents Cervical Cancer, September/October 2006

Canadian Cancer Society Press Release July 18, 2006, CCS welcomes approval of cervical cancer vaccine – Significant advance for women's health.