

SUBMISSION
TO
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE STEPHEN HARPER
The Prime Minister of Canada

BY



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

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

“Women working for working women.”

September 2006

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Resolutions carried at the BPW Canada National Biennial Convention
Toronto, ON – July 13 - 16, 2006

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The Emerging Crystal Methamphetamine (Crystal Meth) Epidemic in Canada: BPW Canada Position Statement, March 2006



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 75 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 40th Biennial Convention was held in Toronto in July of 2006. 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 convention 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.

At the end of this document, we attach two Position Statements developed by members over the past year on two very important issues for our membership: Incomes for Senior Women and Crystal Methamphetamine. We intend to continue our work on these issues in the coming Biennium.

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RESOLUTION #2006/01

by BPW Montreal, PQ

Violence against Women

BPW Canada urges the government of Canada to create a national symbol to perpetuate the memory of victims of violence in Canadian history by issuing a commemorative stamp on December 6, 2009, the 20th anniversary of the day when 14 women were murdered at École Polytechnique in Montreal in 1989.

RATIONALE AND REFERENCES

December 6, 2005 was the 16th anniversary of the slaying of 14 women at École Polytechnique. A \$1,500 bursary, funded by the university's Status of Women Committee, is one of a growing number of commemorative gestures that will allow family and friends of the victims to slowly withdraw from the limelight and to mourn in private.

The victims' families have dissolved the foundation that was set up in honour of the slain women, and have turned the funds over to the Foundation of Greater Montreal. This allows the funds and their mission to continue "in perpetuity."

A national symbol would increase awareness about the need to continually fight against violence. Canada Post issuing a commemorative stamp could achieve this.

Sources:

Carroll, Ann. Bursary remembers Polytechnique victims: 16th anniversary; families retreat from limelight; [Final Edition]. *Montreal Gazette*. Tuesday, December 6, 2005: A3.



RESOLUTION #2006/02

By BPW Brampton, ON

Bottled water

BPW Canada urges the Government of Canada to revise the regulations for bottled water under Division 12 of the Food and Drugs Act to:

- Improve the quality of information on labels of bottled water to properly inform consumers of its content;
- Include a visible bottled date and expiry date on the label.

AND BPW Canada urges the Government of Canada to work with the provinces to ensure that the standards for bottled water be as stringent as those that apply to municipal water supplies.

RATIONALE AND REFERENCES

Bottled water is regulated as a food product by the federal government through Health Canada. Bottled water comes from many sources and may undergo different kinds of treatment and alterations. Health Canada under Division 12 of the Food and Drugs Act determines the classification.

There is no requirement that the bottled water companies themselves do comprehensive or regular sampling of their sources or of their products. Nor is any information readily available to the public about the quality of a particular bottled water product. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency is responsible for checking contamination, yet it is not known how frequently or how thoroughly the Agency tests.

A study of the Ontario bottled water industry recommended co-operation between the government and industry.

Sources:

Canadian Bottled Water Association. www.cbwa-bottledwater.org

Fine Waters. www.finewaters.com

Gartner Lee Limited. *Evaluation of Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats to the Ontario Bottled Water Industry*. Prepared for Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, Food Industry Division. 2001. Accessed on January 29, 2006 at http://www.omafr.gov.on.ca/english/food/sector/pdf/ont_bottled_water_swot.pdf.

Health Canada. Environmental & Workplace Safety. *Drinking Water*. Accessed on January 1, 2006 at http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ewh-semt/water-eau/drink-potab/index_e.html.

Health Canada. Food & Nutrition. *Bottle Water*. Accessed January 1, 2006 at http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/securit/facts-faits/bottle_water-eau_embouteillee/index_e.html.

Water FAQs. www.ecolawinfo.org



RESOLUTION #2006/03

By BPW Trenton, ON

Prevention of teen pregnancy

BPW Canada urges the Government of Canada, especially the Minister of Health, to work with the provincial governments to mandate public health units across the country to establish teenage pregnancy prevention coalitions similar to the Hastings and Prince Edward County, ON Health Unit model to address local needs and provide information about healthy choices as well as supportive social environments to teenagers.

BPW Canada also urges the Government of Canada to undertake a national program of public information and education about the dangers and consequences of teenage pregnancies.

RATIONALE AND REFERENCES

Canada has an unacceptably high level of sexual and reproductive health problems such as a teen pregnancy rate that is higher than many other developed countries. A large number of young people are infected with sexually transmitted diseases including HIV, which often go untreated and which represent the leading cause of infertility in couples.

Social status affects the degree of control a person has over their life. Early initiation into sexual activity and risky sexual practice rates are higher among lower socio-economic youth. Teenagers of parents with lower educational levels are more likely to be sexually active. Teens of single parents are more likely to have multiple sexual partners and are five times more likely to become pregnant than teens living in higher income areas. Babies of teen pregnancies are 1.4 times more likely to have low birth weights, which is associated with higher risk of death, disease and lifelong health problems.

The Hastings and Prince Edwards Counties Health Unit in Ontario has established a Teenage Pregnancy Prevention Coalition in an attempt to address the issues associated with the teenage pregnancy rate, which is higher in those counties than the provincial average. Coalition members believe that teenage years are for education and growing up, not pregnancy and parenthood, and that it is the community's responsibility to ensure teens have opportunities to make healthy choices.

Sources:

Reports from Consultations on a Framework for Sexual Reproductive Health.
http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/srh/pubs/report/text_only.html.

Hastings and Prince Edward Counties Health Unit. Health Topics: Teenage Pregnancy Prevention Coalition Sheet. <http://www.hpechu.on.ca/Topics/SexualHealth/ITeenPregnancyCoalitionSH.php>

Teenage Pregnancy Prevention: A Literature Review Summary, "Strategies that Work." Hastings and Prince Edward Counties Health Unit Department of Nursing, Healthy Sexuality Program, December 2001.



RESOLUTION #2006/04

By BPW Trenton, ON

Healthy communities – Healthy youth

BPW Canada urges the government of Canada to investigate a screening system or strengthen any existing systems for funding that ensures that all organizations and institutions involved with youth receiving funding, directly or indirectly, from the government are using developmental asset building programs to ensure the optimal development of our children, especially girls who historically have lower self-esteem than boys.

RATIONALE AND REFERENCES

There is a lot of research to suggest that teenage girls have a lower sense of self-worth or self-esteem than teenage boys. Girls experience greater emotional sensitivity, compliance and dependency largely due to gender-stereotyped expectations and child-rearing practices. Depression is the most common psychological problem in teenage years but higher rates of severe depression occur in teen girls as a result of challenges of adolescence and gender-typed coping styles. Early teenage girls tend to display increased passivity, dependency and selflessness, which inhibit their mastering of developmental tasks and their ability to handle stressful life events. The widely accepted cultural belief that boys have much higher self-esteem may be due to girls internalizing this negative cultural message.

Healthy Communities – Healthy Youth is a promising approach from the Search Institute in Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA designed to help identify 40 development assets (strengths) that all youth need to succeed. The framework focuses on naming and increasing positive building blocks in young people's lives. The more assets that young people possess, the less likely they are to participate in risky behaviours (i.e. less violence, fewer problems with alcohol and drug use, less early sexual intercourse, less delinquency). More importantly, there is a direct relationship between assets possessed by an individual and their positive outcomes (i.e. school success, maintaining physical health, helping others). This program also stresses the informal daily acts of relationships that all community residents can perform.

Sources:

Calhoun Research and Development. *Girls in Canada 2005/Filles aux Canada en 2005*. Canadian Women's Foundation, 2005. www.cdnwomen.org/eng/1/index.asp

Healthy Communities – Healthy Youth. Search Institute. www.search-institute.org

Teenage Pregnancy Prevention Coalition of Hastings and Prince Edward Counties Terms of Reference.



RESOLUTION #2006/05

by BPW Saskatoon, SK and BPW Montreal, PQ

Access to EI benefits for business-owning and self-employed women

BPW Canada strongly urges the Government of Canada to amend the Employment Insurance Act to correct inequities with respect to people who are business owners and/or self-employed, by giving them the option to participate in the Employment Insurance (EI) program, thus allowing them access to benefits such as maternity and parental leave and the Compassionate Leave for Caregivers.

RATIONALE AND REFERENCES

According to Statistics Canada, small business is the fastest growing segment of the business sector in Canada, and within this sector, the growth of women-owned businesses is the fastest growing, with women launching businesses in Canada over the past decade at a rate twice that of men.

The growth in the number of women-owned businesses has been phenomenal. Yet, challenges remain. Women who are self-employed or own 40% or more of a business do not have the option of contributing to the Employment Insurance Fund, and therefore cannot access EI benefits such as maternity and parental leave.

Ironically, many women entrepreneurs DO contribute to the EI Fund on behalf of their employees who then have access to such benefits while they do not.

Women entrepreneurs are a major economic force in this country, creating jobs and contributing to economic growth. The Government of Canada needs to recognize the contribution of women who own their own businesses, and find a way to rectify this inequity.

Sources:

Former MP Karen Redman's speech to BPW members, BPW Annual General Meeting, Hamilton, Ontario, 2005.

O'Brien, Stacy. Business, babies and breaking barriers. *CapitalNewsonline*. Vol. 13. No 4, November 14, 2003. Accessed March 15, 2006 at <http://temagami.carleton.ca/jmc/cnews/14112003/n5.shtml..>

Prime Minister's Task Force on Women Entrepreneurs: Report and Recommendations, 2003. www.liberal.parl.gc.ca/entrepreneur/about.asp?lang=en

Sunter, Deborah. *Women Entrepreneurs*; Presentation to the Task Force on Women Entrepreneurs, May 6, 2003. Accessed March 15, 2006 at http://www.liberal.parl.gc.ca/entrepreneur/documents/030612_federal_007_en.pps.



RESOLUTION #2006/06

By BPW Montreal, PQ

Review of formula for private pensions and annuities

BPW Canada urges the Government of Canada to carry out a review of all legislation and regulations governing private pension plans and annuities, to ensure that such plans and annuities use gender-neutral formulas in calculating monthly benefits.

RATIONALE AND REFERENCES

Women constitute a large segment of the senior population in Canada, making up 57% of all Canadians over 65 and 51% of those between 55 and 64.

The poverty rate for senior women in Canada is almost double that of men – 19.1% in 2003 compared to 10.2% for senior men, and the largest group of poor seniors is single, widowed or divorced (“unattached”) women over 65 living alone – almost half (41% in 2003) live below the poverty line. In 2003, some 258,000 seniors in Canada were living under Statistics Canada’s Low Income Cut-offs (LICOs), of whom 154,000 were women.

The average earnings of employed women are substantially lower than average earnings of men, so therefore women are less able to pay into pension or RRSP funds.

Older women tend to have lower retirement incomes because their wages while employed were inferior to men’s. Women live longer than men, although that gap is narrowing.

The formula for determining private pension and annuity amounts has not been reviewed and revised for a long time, and tends to be gender-based, resulting in monthly amounts that are lower for women compared to men. The Government of Canada pension plans increasingly use gender-neutral calculations.

Sources:

BPW Canada Position Statement. *Incomes for Senior Women in Canada*, 2006.

Women Elders in Action (WE*ACT). *Pensions in Canada: Policy Reform because Women Matter* Vancouver, BC, 2005. Accessed March 15, 2006 at http://www.411seniors.bc.ca/Contentpages/we_act.htm..

National Advisory Council on Aging. *Seniors on the margins: Aging in Poverty in Canada*. Government of Canada, 2005. Accessed March 15, 2006 at http://www.411seniors.bc.ca/Contentpages/we_act.htm..

Statistics Canada

- Population by sex and age group. <http://www40.statcan.ca/l01/cst01/demo31c.htm>.
- Persons in low income before tax, by prevalence in percent. www.statscan.ca/english/Pgdb/famil41a.htm.
- Life expectancy at birth. <http://www40.statcan.ca/l01/cst01/health26.htm>.



EMERGENCY RESOLUTION #2006/01

By BPW Moncton, NB

National Childcare Program

BPW Canada calls on the Prime Minister of Canada and his government to listen to the views of Canadians, and to implement a national childcare program that meets the early childhood development needs of children, families and communities in this country.

RATIONALE AND REFERENCES

A June 2006 survey carried out by Environics Research showed that 76% of Canadians support a national affordable childcare strategy such as the 2004 federal-provincial agreement that was cancelled by the current Conservative government.

The 76% support for the previous program was consistent, regardless of whether respondents lived in urban or rural areas; whether their household included a stay-at-home parent; and in all geographic areas of the country. A strong majority of Canadians (77%) consider the lack of affordable childcare to be a serious problem.

Some 25% of those surveyed said that their views were strong enough to influence the way they vote in the next federal election.

There is a childcare crisis in Canada, with a very small percentage of children having access to quality, affordable and accessible childcare. The new program of taxable individual payments of \$1,200 to families with children under six will do nothing to further develop the infrastructure needed for a national childcare program in this country.

Sources:

BPW Position Statement on Child Care: *An initiative whose time has come*. 2005. Available at www.bpwcanada.com/childcare.html

Canadians' Attitudes Toward National Child Care Policy. Prepared for the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada by Environics Research Group, Ottawa, June 2006. Available at www.childcareadvocacy.ca/index.shtml



RESOLUTION #2006/07

by BPW Bracebridge, ON

Water Protection

BPW Canada urges the Government of Canada to officially recognize the Great Lakes as an exhaustible natural resource and thus negotiate that they be exempt from the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA – Article 2101:1 [b]) or the earlier General Agreement of Tariffs and Trade (GATT – Article XX [g] the conservation exception), and hence not classified as a ‘good’, available for trade.

BPW Canada also urges the Government of Canada to create common standards with the United States, clearly defining water use and removals policies that are focused on the environmental aspects while coming within GATT/NAFTA general exceptions, utilizing the International Joint Commission to moderate any conflict resolution.

BPW Canada also urges the Government of Canada to restore the 50% budget funding for Great Lakes monitoring, that was recently cut from Environment Canada.

RATIONALE AND REFERENCES

The world is experiencing climate change, which is having an impact on water availability. This may lead to the Prairies and Great Lakes regions experiencing declines of up to 40% in the future. In the July 2000 US report [Climate Change Impacts on Great Lakes Basin Water Resources](#), it was concluded that the lakes will experience dramatic flow reductions by 2030 and by 2090 lake levels may experience a 4.5 feet drop in levels whilst Lake Erie will be 90% ice-free in winter 96% of the time. Additionally, if the peat, frozen for centuries beneath the northern muskeg, begins to thaw and decompose, it will release billions of tonnes of greenhouse gases, taking global warming to a catastrophic level.

There is a belief that if Canada was to sell any portion of its water, the USA could demand unlimited access to it. Several US counties have already petitioned for access to ground water to compensate for their reduced groundwater supplies. One example is the water shortage facing the Las Vegas area. Dr. Dale Devitt, Professor of Soil and Water at the University of Nevada Las Vegas, has stated, “I hope that marketing of water will happen at some point because it’s only going to get tougher. If we think we are tight now, wait 10 or 20 years. It’s going to get downright nasty.”

Neither the International Joint Commission, the Government of Canada nor the Government of Ontario classify water taken in bottles or used for making into products (including industry or agriculture) as bulk use of water, even though it results in a loss of the water volume in the system.

It is noted that Bill C-6 amended the International Boundary Waters Treaty, protecting the Great Lakes Basin from bulk diversion projects, and additionally, partner states within NAFTA have clearly stated that surface water is exempt from trade by its very nature. [CFUW 2002 Brief]



In conclusion, the Council of Canadians stated that, "Canada's piecemeal approach to water management has left shared waters increasingly vulnerable to bulk water exports and diversions and are demanding a clear commitment to the establishment of a national water policy ... by the newly elected 2006 Canadian Government."

Sources:

BPW Netherlands Why Women for Water. BPW Netherlands Project Water Web site. Accessed March 15, 2006 at <http://www.bpwnl.nl/water/>

Council of Canadians. <http://www.canadians.org/>

Elwell, Christine. *NAFTA Effects on Water: Testing for NAFTA Effects on the Great Lakes Basin*. Washington, Sierra Club, 2001. Sierra Club of Canada Web site.

Environment Canada Publications. <http://www.ec.gc.ca/envhome.html>

Globe and Mail. <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/>

Great Lakes Annex Agreement. October 2005. Environment Canada. Great Lakes. <http://www.on.ec.gc.ca/greatlakes/default.asp?lang=En&n=FD65DFE5-1>.

Foreign Trade Information System. NAFTA Web page. <http://www.sice.oas.org/trade/nafta/chap-21.asp>.

Macleans Magazine. December 28, 2005.

Munk Centre for International Studies.

Natural Resources Canada Website: <http://www.nrcan-mcan.gc.ca/inter/index.html>

Nature Canada Magazine. Spring 2003. <http://www.nature.com/nature/index.html>

Wood, Chris. Melting point. *Walrus Magazine*. October, 2005.

World Trade Organization. *GATT Article XX*. WTO Web site. http://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/envir_e/issu4_e.htm#gatt20



RESOLUTION #2006/08

By BPW London, ON

Human Trafficking

BPW Canada urges the Government of Canada to further address the issue of human trafficking by:

(a) Increasing the resources to strengthen the system with more immigration and customs agents, enabling them to process and charge the offenders quickly and without delay.

(b) Curbing the market for the victims of trafficking, providing tough penalties for the users of the sex trade and forced labour through further amendments to the *Criminal Code* making it illegal to have sex with someone forced into the sex trade and illegal to employ victims of forced labour of any kind; and

(c) Working with the United Nations to convict Canadians participating in the forced sex trade in other countries (i.e. tourist sex).

RATIONALE AND REFERENCES

A CTV.ca article entitled *Justice Minister Irwin Cotler tables bill to fight world 'slave trade'*, (Canadian Press, Friday, May 13, 2005) states that the government "introduced long promised legislation to combat human trafficking" that would "create a new criminal offense to specifically outlaw trafficking in persons and provide a penalty of up to 14 years in prison." The prison term "would be boosted to life if the trafficking involves other offences such as kidnapping, aggravated assault or sexual assault, or if it results in death of a victim." Having these new offences "included in the Criminal Code will give police a wider legal arsenal to combat trafficking rings that are often linked to organized crime."

This article states that "the United Nations has estimated that over 700,000 people, many of them women and children, fall victim to human trafficking around the world each year. The annual revenue to professional traffickers is thought to be roughly \$10 billion US ... Many victims are forced into the sex trade, while others have been compelled to work as drug couriers or for near-slave wages in sweatshops or as domestic servants. The RCMP say an estimated 600 foreign women and girls a year are coerced into the sex trade in Canada." Further, "The Mounties say about 2,000 people a year are trafficked from Canada to the United States."

Sources:

CTV News, Friday, May 13, 2005, *Canadian Press* "Cotler tables bill to fight world 'slave trade'." Accessed March 15, 2006 at

http://www.ctv.ca/servlet/ArticleNews/story/CTVNews/1115980843289_49/

Hundreds of Foreigners Lured in Sex Trade: RCMP. CP, December 7, 2004. CTV Web site. Accessed March 15, 2006 at

http://www.ctv.ca/servlet/ArticleNews/story/CTVNews/1102374833143_11/?hub=Canada.



RESOLUTION #2006/09

By BPW Montreal, PQ

Immigrant Live-in Caregivers

BPW Canada strongly urges the Government of Canada to review and overhaul the current Live-In Caregiver Program on a yearly basis to protect immigrant women from racial, sexual, physical, emotional, verbal and financial abuse, and to increase their rights.

RATIONALE AND REFERENCES

The Live-In Caregiver Program (LCP) is a 10-year-old program that allows professional caregivers to work in Canada. Caregivers are individuals who are qualified to work without supervision in a private household providing care for children, elderly persons or people with disabilities.

The program exists in Canada to meet a market demand for live-in workers. Currently, as stated in the LCP, the Government of Canada is not a party to the contract between the employer and the employee. The Government of Canada has no authority to intervene in the employer-employee relationship nor to enforce the conditions of employment.

An estimated 93% of those who entered Canada under the LCP between 1998 and 2003 were Filipino. Almost 100,000 Filipinos have come to Canada since the 1980s to work as domestic caregivers.

Unfortunately, the conditions that immigrant women face include widespread abuse such as stretching the 40-hour work week to a greater number of hours, and increasing the chores required of them.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada held a roundtable discussion in Ottawa in January of 2005 to review the LCP, and then-Minister Joe Volpe later told the media to expect an "overhaul" of the program. The Philippine House of Representatives is also debating a resolution calling for an investigation of abuses under the LCP. The National Alliance of Philippine Women in Canada has called for the scrapping of the LCP and other temporary worker programs. It advocates for the removal of the LCP's mandatory live-in requirement and granting of permanent residency status upon entry to prevent abuse and exploitation.

Sources:

The Live-in Caregiver Program for Employers and caregivers abroad. Citizenship and Immigration Canada Web site. Accessed March 15, 2006 at <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/pub/caregiver/>

Advocacy group call for the end to criminalization and deportation of domestic workers (April 22, 2005). Accessed March 15, 2006 at <http://www.december18.net/web/papers/view.php?paperID=2667&menuID=41&lang=EN>

Montgomery, Sue. Nanny Policy is akin to Slavery.. *The Montreal Gazette*. Sunday November 6, 2005. Accessed March 15, 2006 at http://www.kalayaancentre.net/content/acrosscanada/2005/inmedia/gazettenov6_05.html



EMERGENCY RESOLUTION #2006/02

BY BPW Virtual Club

Special UN Agency for Women

BPW Canada urges the government of Canada to recognize Stephen Lewis' initiative for the creation of a new United Nations Agency that would specifically defend women's rights, health and security and support him in his efforts to advocate for a greater voice for the women of the world.

RATIONALE AND REFERENCES

Stephen Lewis, Special Envoy to the United Nations on HIV/AIDS, is advocating for the creation of a new UN Agency that would specifically defend women's rights, health and security. A recently-established UN high-level panel, composed of 12 men and three women, is currently studying ways to make the world body's programs more effective and cohesive.

Stephen Lewis has already garnered support for his proposal from leaders of European, Latin American and African states.

The proposed new Agency, if adequately funded and staffed, could be a powerful organization that would give a much greater voice to the concerns of women around the world.

The International Federation of Business & Professional Women's Clubs has Category I Consultative Status at the United Nations, and BPW Canada attends sessions of the UN Commission on the Status of Women each year.

Sources:

Toronto Star. *World's women have an advocate: More than half the globe's people need their own UN agency: Stephen Lewis*, July 1, 2006.

Toronto Star editorial. *Give women's issues stronger UN profile*, July 9, 2006.



Position Statement

Incomes for Senior Women in Canada

Pension reform over two decades ago in Canada made life easier for many seniors. The poverty rate among elderly households dropped by 7.2 percentage points between 1981 and 1989, and another 1.8 percentage points between 1989 and 1997.¹

While BPW Canada applauds this improvement, we also recognize that too many seniors continue to live in poverty – *and the vast majority are women.*

The poverty rate for senior women in Canada is almost double that of men – 19.1% in 2003 compared to 10.2% for senior men.²

The largest group of poor seniors is single, widowed or divorced (“unattached”) women over 65 living alone – almost half (41% in 2003) live below the poverty line.³

The situation is particularly bleak for Aboriginal and immigrant senior women in Canada.

Women live longer than men so are much more likely to spend extended years living in poverty. Research shows a strong link between income and health – people living in poverty are much more likely to have medical problems, and to make use of the country’s already over-burdened health system.

It is clear to BPW Canada that policy reform on pensions in Canada is long overdue. As an organization, we have passed many resolutions and lobbied on an annual basis, and are dismayed with the lack of movement on this issue.

We believe that the government of Canada must begin to address the concerns of older persons and more specifically, the issue of older women and poverty.

As an organization, we join with the Women Elders in Action (WE*ACT) in British Columbia and the Canadian Association of Social Workers/Association canadienne des travailleuse et travailleurs sociaux in urging the federal government to work with concerned groups to develop a comprehensive strategy to address the issue of women and poverty.

Policies must be designed in consideration of the ageing society, and strategies must be put in place to ensure that women in Canada do not spend their senior years living in poverty.

There are many reasons why senior women are poor. Retirement income is based on lifetime earnings, and women are disadvantaged in several ways:

¹ Canadian Council on Social Development. The Canadian Fact Book on Poverty (Données de base sur la pauvreté au Canada 2000), based on Statistics Canada Low Income Cut-offs (LICOs). Ottawa, 2000. www.ccsd.ca/research.htm

² Statistics Canada Table 202-0802 – Cat. no. 75-202-XIE. “Persons in low income before tax, by prevalence in percent.” Available at: www.statscan.ca/english/Pgdb/famil41a.htm

³ Ibid.

Incomes for Senior Women in Canada

BPW Canada Position Statement

- Women in general are paid less than men – For every dollar a man earns, a woman earns less than 80 cents.
- Women are more likely than men to take frequent breaks from the workforce for unpaid child and elder care;
- Women do more part-time, contract and low paid work;
- Women are less likely to have employer-sponsored pension plans; and
- Women are less able to put money aside in private retirement savings plans.

In the 1990s, the federal government's intense focus on reducing the debt and the deficit meant that many social programs for vulnerable populations (such as seniors) were abandoned, and many of these have never been reinstated. The "sink or swim" mentality is very much alive in today's global economy.

Some suggest that the poverty of senior women is historic because many women in this age group today spent years outside of the workforce, caring for the home and children, and that it won't be a problem in future because most young women these days enter the labour force once their schooling is finished. But as the Position Statement of WE*ACT notes:

"Young women today will suffer hardship later due to factors such as: lack of reliable, cheap, quality daycare that keeps them out of the workforce or only working part-time; their need to care for ageing parents; cuts to good-paying union jobs during their earning years; the development of user-pay programs for seniors; and Joint and Last Survivor Rates set at 60% even though approximately 2/3 of previous pension income is required to maintain household and daily living expenses for a survivor upon the death of a spouse/partner."⁴

Looking at the public pensions available to seniors in Canada when they retire, as of April 1, 2005, the basic Old Age Security (OAS) pension in Canada was \$473.65 per month. (Since 1973, OAS benefits have been adjusted quarterly, based on changes in the average Consumer Price Index.⁵) In addition to the basic OAS pension, low-income seniors may also qualify for the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS). In the February 2005 budget, the government of Canada announced the first non-cost of living increase to the GIS since 1984. Beginning January 1, 2006, the GIS will be increased by 7% over two years. This means that a senior woman living alone could receive \$473.65 OAS and \$562.93 GIS in 2006, for a total of \$1036.58 per month or \$12,438.96 per year.⁶

Despite this increase, many senior women living alone will continue to live much below the poverty line. Statistic Canada Low Income Cut-offs (LICOs) for 2004, for a single person living in a city with a population greater than 500,000 was \$20,337. The LICO for a single person living in smaller urban areas (population less than 30,000) was \$15,928.⁷

⁴ Women Elders in Action (WE*ACT). *Pensions in Canada: Policy Reform because Women Matter*. Vancouver, BC, December 2004.

⁵ www.sdc.gc.ca/en/cs/comm/sd/news/2005/050330.shtml#background

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ www.ccsd.ca/factsheets/fs_lico04_bt.htm

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The Canada Pension Plan is currently designed to replace only 25% of the income of all workers, which means that those who received the least income during their working years continue to receive the least income throughout retirement. This should be increased to 50% for low-income workers. In addition, increasing the contribution ceiling from its current \$40,500 to \$60,000 would mean higher income earners would contribute more to the fund.

Currently, a woman can discount the first seven years of her child's life, when she applies for CPP at age 65. When these years are *not* taken into consideration in the calculation, the impact is usually to *raise* the level of CPP benefits that she will receive. The same "drop-out" provision should apply for elder and other types of caregiving.

In addition, we know that there continue to be many inequities in terms of private pension plans, the rules and regulations of which are often set by government.

BPW Canada recommends the following:

- 1) The federal government should increase the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) so that total Old Age Security/GIS is at a level at least equivalent to the pre-tax Low Income Cut-Offs (LICO).
- 2) The federal government should raise the income ceiling for maximum Canada Pension Plan (CPP) contributions from \$40,500 to at least \$60,000, and should restructure the CPP so that it replaces 50% of the income for low-income workers, a disproportionate number of whom are women.
- 3) The federal government should develop a "drop-out" provision in the CPP, similar to the existing "drop-out" provision for childcare, for people who are caring for individuals with disabilities or the elderly.
- 4) The federal government should eliminate taxes for all individuals in Canada with incomes below the poverty line.
- 5) The federal government should work with concerned groups to develop a comprehensive strategy that addresses the income, social and health support needs of seniors and, in particular, senior women in Canada. Such a strategy should include although not be limited to issues such as quality, available and affordable childcare, pay equity, affordable housing, social and health support programs and other issues affecting women throughout their working lives and in retirement.
- 6) The federal government should review and revise all legislation and regulations governing private pension plans to remove any provisions that impact negatively on senior women.

BPW Canada joins with Women Elders in Action (WE*ACT) in British Columbia in stating that pension reform with women in mind is essential to fostering women's economic equality but that old age will continue to be a time of insecurity and suffering for large numbers of senior women without the key social reforms that promote and support working women's equality and recognition of their disproportionately-large contribution of unpaid work in the family and community. As the WE*ACT report states:

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“Clearly, comprehensive childcare policies, organized support for people with disabilities, and elder care programs that lift the burden from the shoulders of individuals will all eventually improve the quality of life for senior women.”⁸

BPW Canada supports this statement, and urges the federal government to act immediately on these very important issues.

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⁸ WE*ACT, Ibid.



Position Statement

The Emerging Crystal Methamphetamine (Crystal Meth) Epidemic in Canada

Crystal Meth is now the most cost-efficient, deadly, readily available and illegal drug on Canadian streets. Its use creates a sense of sexual power, which leads to an increase in sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies. The use of Crystal Meth (also known as speed or crank) damages the part of the brain that controls judgment and rational thought and this, combined with the sense of sexual power, leads to an increase in sexual crimes, including rape.

The long-term effects of Crystal Meth use can include stroke, seizures, irreversible damage to the brain, respiratory problems, irregular heartbeat, cardiovascular collapse and death.

Emergency and police officials, addictions counsellors, health representatives, some provincial government officials, municipal leaders and service groups increasingly recognize the growing epidemic of this drug across Canada. The province of Saskatchewan, for example, has established a Task Force to deal with the Crystal Meth issue.

BPW Canada shares this sense of urgency, and calls on the Government of Canada to take immediate action to stem this growing epidemic.

We have carried out an in-depth review of the research on this issue, and recommend the following:

- 1) That the Government of Canada enact more stringent regulations under the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (CDSA)* and *Precursor Control Regulations* to limit access to “precursor ingredients” such as ephedrine and pseudo ephedrine, and to ensure that only legitimate manufacturers are able to obtain precursor chemicals.
- 2) That the Government of Canada enforce these regulations, and monitor the end use (e.g. end products) from bulk sales of precursor chemicals such as ephedrine and pseudo ephedrine.

In 2003, the Government of Canada passed *Precursor Control Regulations* under the *CDSA*, to limit access to precursor chemicals used in the manufacture of Crystal Meth (the key ones being ephedrine and pseudo ephedrine) although by all accounts, these regulations (which were implemented in 2004) are not sufficiently stringent. For example, licensing and monitoring of precursors by Health Canada does not require extensive background checks, monitoring of sales, reporting of suspicious transactions or inspections.

At the meeting of Western Ministers of Health, Justice and Public Safety in Regina in June of 2005, the RCMP noted that the vast majority of Crystal Meth in Canada comes from “super labs,” and that limiting supplies of ingredients to these labs requires improved controls. Western Ministers agreed that amendments to federal legislation are needed to improve controls, and that monitoring of end use also needs to be increased. Currently, no one is following up with inspections or audits to determine what these bulk buyers are manufacturing. Too often, they are making Crystal Meth.

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The Federation of Canadian Municipalities, at its annual conference in June of 2005, also called on the Government of Canada to improve legislation to limit access to ingredients that go into the production of Crystal Meth.

BPW Canada recognizes that, in addition to key ingredients such as ephedrine and pseudo ephedrine, which can be extracted from common cold medications, Crystal Meth also includes some combination of the following: alcohol, toluene (brake cleaner), red phosphorous (matches and road flares), ether (engine starter), iodine, lithium (batteries), trichlorthane (gun scrubber), MSM (a cutting agent), sodium medal, methanol alcohol (gasoline additives), muriatic (pool cleaner), anhydrous ammonia (farm fertilizer), lye, acetone and cat litter.

The National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities, a group that effectively decides where prescription and non-prescription drugs can be sold, announced a ban on January 19, 2006 on a wide range of cold and allergy medications because they contain active ingredients that can be used to make Crystal Meth. The provinces of Manitoba and Saskatchewan have both implemented this ban.

We urge the Government of Canada to take leadership in developing an interprovincial/territorial strategy to reduce access to precursors of Crystal Meth, and to control over-the-counter cold remedies and other ingredients that are also core ingredients in the production of Crystal Meth. Such a strategy should involve the private sector including pharmaceutical companies and pharmacies.

Crystal Meth is a highly addictive central nervous system stimulant, which accelerates the heart rate and other processes of the body. It causes a state of extreme euphoria and pleasure by stimulating an excessive release of adrenaline. Users feel powerful, joyful, confident, successful, sexy as well as alert, restless and excited for up to 10 hours. This drug has a longer lasting (up to 10 times) and more pleasurable high than cocaine. As a recent article in the Globe and Mail noted: *“Crystal Meth is one of the easiest drugs for which one can develop a habit, and one of the hardest from which to break free.”*⁹

Crystal Meth is most commonly smoked. It is also ingested by being wrapped in a tissue to dull the harshness of the drug. It can also be injected (also known as ‘banging it’). The favourite injection site is at the base of the skull, which delivers the drug directly to the brain. A hit of Crystal Meth can cost between \$10 and \$25, making it available to most users.

Short-term symptoms of Crystal Meth use include paranoia, weight loss, lack of personal hygiene, violence, petty theft, self induced gouging (due to hallucination), suicide, attempted suicide, psychosis, verbal and visual hallucinations, tremors and convulsions. Long-term effects can include stroke, seizures, irreversible damage to blood vessels in the brain, respiratory problems, irregular heartbeat, cardiovascular collapse, and death. Use of the drug can lead to joblessness and homelessness, and often a life of violence and crime.

⁹ Globe and Mail, January 4, 2006.

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