



BPW Canada

www.bpwcanada.com

November 24, 2014

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper
Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
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Dear Mr. Harper:

The Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women respectfully submits the enclosed Brief for your consideration. The items herein represent the concerns brought forward by our members from Clubs across the country. Resolutions were presented, discussed, debated and accepted at the 44th annual convention held in Saskatoon in July 2014.

As a non-partisan organization, we have worked for over 80 years to urge governments to continue the inclusion of equal rights for women in legislation. It is through this process of voicing the issues outlined in this Brief and engaging in open dialogue with your government that we can together build a strong and thriving Canada.

We respectfully request that you and the appropriate Ministers review our resolutions and be available to meet with a delegation at a time in keeping with your schedules. A member of our delegation will follow this correspondence with a personal contact and confirm the preferred meeting times and dates.

We have forwarded this Brief to the Leaders of the Opposition and the Ministers addressed in our resolutions so that they may be apprised of our positions on the topics herein.

We are very interested in your comments concerning the enclosed Brief.

Yours truly,



Cara Cote,
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**Submission
to
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE STEPHEN HARPER
PRIME MINISTER OF CANADA**

By



**The Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women
*La Fédération canadienne des femmes de carrières commerciales et
professionnelles***

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

“Women working for working women.”

September 2014

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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 100 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 Category I Consultative Status at the United Nations.

The Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women (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 Canada. BPW Canada develops the professional and leadership potential of women through education, awareness, advocacy and mentoring within a supportive network.

For 84 years, we have been advocating for just and equal status of women in all levels of society 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, local BPW Clubs across Canada offer a range of opportunities and activities for 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.

The Annual General Meeting was held July 26-27, 2014. Our Conventions and 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 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.

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Tammy Richmond, Secretary, BPW Canada

Teresa Habs, Resolutions Chair, BPW Canada

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RESOLUTION #1

ELIMINATION OF CHILD MARRIAGE

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that BPW Canada urges the Government of Canada, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Status of Women, and the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration to elevate the issue of child marriage as a foreign policy priority, and to use diplomatic means to eradicate child marriage in countries that perpetuate this human rights violation;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that BPW Canada urges the Government of Canada, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of the Status of Women, and the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration to use their economic power to encourage Non-Governmental International Organizations to work towards eradicating child marriage.

RATIONALE

The practice of child marriage is a violation of human rights. Every day, thousands of young girls are forced to leave their families, marry against their will, endure sexual and physical abuse, and bear children while still in childhood themselves.

Child marriage is driven by poverty, deeply embedded cultural traditions, and pervasive discrimination against girls. Yet in many parts of the world, this ancient practice still flourishes: estimates show that nearly five million girls are married under the age of fifteen every year, and some are as young as eight or nine years old.

Child marriage, however, is not simply a human rights violation. It is also a threat to the prosperity and stability of the countries in which it is prevalent and undermines Canadian foreign policy priorities.

Child marriage perpetuates poverty over generations and is linked to poor health, curtailed education, violence, instability, and disregard for the rule of law. Its effects are harmful not only to girls, but also to families, communities, and economies—and to Canadian interests—around the globe.

SOURCES

<http://www.cfr.org/peace-conflict-and-human-rights/child-marriage/p32096#/#overview-video>

http://www.unicef.org/media/media_68114.html

<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs//2013/ga11475.doc.htm>

RESOLUTION #2

DECLARATION OF A NATIONAL EQUAL PAY DAY IN CANADA

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the BPW Canada urges the Government of Canada to declare (the use of the date) March 18 (or the date calculated yearly based on the annual income of Canadian women and men) as Equal Pay Day (to mark the additional number of working days that women must work longer than men in a given year, by announcing a nationally calculated annual statistic on that date) the end of 420 days that Canadian women must work compared to the 365 days that men work performing the same job to earn the same wage, and

FURTHER IT BE RESOLVED that in addition to declaring Equal Pay Day nationally, BPW Canada urges the Government of Canada to provide employers with support and guidance to create merit based workplace policies and standards and to encourage discussion of equal pay in various forums across the country.

RATIONALE

BPW Canada has been directly addressing Pay Equity since 1990 when it adopted the Resolution -Supporting Pay Equity and reaffirmed it in 1992. In this resolution, it urged the Government of Canada to legislate pro-active pay equity programs throughout the federal public sector and federally regulated employers. BPW recommended using as a starting point the requirements of its own Regulations relating to the implementation of the EQUAL PAY for Equal Work provisions of the Canadian Human Rights Code.

Associated topics and areas of advocacy work by BPW Canada include Employment Equity, Equal Pay and Affirmative Action. Gender wage gap issues have been raised several times by BPW Canada as part of its work on other initiatives. An example of this is BPW Canada's work addressing poverty in retirement including a resolution to review formulas in private pensions and annuities for women in 2006.

According to the World Economic Forum Report of 2013, Canada ranks 20th where the overall gender gap is concerned but falls to rank 35th when it comes to "wage equality for similar work". Despite Equal Pay and Pay Equity legislation, income equity is not a reality in Canada. Women in the workforce still earn only a percentage of what their male counterparts earn – on average, less than 80%. Women's lower pay results in lower pension, insurance and merit payouts as well as lower sick benefits.

We know that single women head today more households and that women live longer than men. The gender wage gap is and will continue to lead women to poverty in their retirement.

Although no country has been able to close the gender wage gap and some organizations like the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives predict that it will take over 200 years to close the gender wage gap, we can work collaboratively to raise awareness, encourage employers to review their hiring, and promotion policies, compensation packages, as well as their employment standards and practices to actively narrow the gender wage gap.

Corporations and communities can take steps today to ensure that they are equal opportunity employers of choice. Such actions can gain them valuable recognition from discerning consumers for their attention to gender equity in their workplace and business practices. After all, in the Deloitte Report of 2011, women tend to make 80% of the buying decisions globally.

It is clear that a coordinated strategy involving collaborative work with provincial human rights commissions and agencies across the country is required to address the industry clustering of working women, under-valuation of traditional women's work, number of women in decision making and leadership roles and the importance of sharing family responsibilities to achieve a work-life balance.

Equal Pay Day is declared in USA, UK, Japan, Italy & Spain (in April), Australia (in September), France & Germany (in March), Argentina, and South Korea (in May). Why not in Canada?

SOURCES

World Economic Forum Report, 2013

<http://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2013>

[Statistics Canada Women's Economic Wellbeing 2011](http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-503-x/2010001/article/11388-eng.pdf)

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-503-x/2010001/article/11388-eng.pdf>

Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives

<https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/closing-canadas-gender-gap>

Deloitte Report 2011

http://www.deloitte.com/assets/DcomGreece/dttl_ps_genderdividend_130111.pdf

RESOLUTION #3

ELIMINATION OF PROSTITUTION

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT BPW Canada urges the Government of Canada and the Minister of Justice to amend the Criminal Code to eliminate the purchase of sexual services, rather than legalize or regulate the industry, by adopting similar laws that incorporate the Nordic(Swedish) model;

FURTHER IT BE RESOLVED that BPW Canada urges the Government of Canada's Minister of Justice to amend the Criminal Code making it illegal to own and operate a bawdy house, and place serious consequences on those who exercise control over these bawdy houses and prostitutes;

FURTHER IT BE RESOLVED that BPW Canada urges the Government of Canada to provide education and assistance to aid sex workers desiring to escape the prostitution environment, recognizing that most prostitutes are victims of sexual exploitation.

RATIONALE

The Nordic (Swedish) model has two main goals: curb the demand for commercial sex that fuels sex trafficking, and promote equality between men and women.

Sex trafficking is a criminal industry that operates on the market principles of supply and demand. The men who pay for commercial sex create demand. Traffickers, pimps and facilitators profit from this demand by supplying the women and girls who are exploited every day in the commercial sex industry. Sex trafficking does not just exist because its victims are vulnerable – it exists because there is a demand for commercial sex that traffickers can exploit and profit from.

Addressing the demand for commercial sex is a key component of any plan to prevent sex trafficking. Men who buy sex provide the demand that fuels trafficking.

In Sweden, prostitution is officially acknowledged as a form of male sexual violence against women and children. It is recognized in Sweden that without men's demand for and use of women and girls for sexual exploitation, the global prostitution industry would not be able to flourish and expand.

In January 1, 1999, Sweden passed Chapter 23 of the Swedish Penal Code, which states "A person who obtains casual sexual relations in exchange for payment shall be sentenced for the purchase of sexual services to a fine or imprisonment for at most six months." It encompasses all forms of sexual services, whether they are purchased on the street, in brothels, in massage parlours, from escort services or in other similar circumstances.

The Swedish approach to trafficking, prostitution and the sex industry (the Nordic model) is widely viewed as the most successful approach to reducing prostitution by passing legislation that criminalizes the buyer of sexual services. (Nordic model).

After the Act was passed in 1999 and between 1999 and 2004 the number of women involved in street prostitution in Sweden has decreased by up to 50%. It is estimated today that there are no more than 500 women involved in street prostitution.

Sweden also recognizes that to succeed in the campaign against sexual exploitation, the political, social, and economic conditions under which women live must be changed. The government pledged money and assistance to women who are victims of male violence, including prostituted women. Thus the state to a certain extent is responsible for assisting women to leave violent situations, including prostitution and for providing women with access to shelters, counseling, education and job training.

The National Government of France, on November 29, 2013, voted in support of a version of the Swedish law on prostitution that criminalizes the purchase of sex with a fine of €1500 (\$2040 US). The fine is doubled for a second offense. The French Parliament also repealed criminalization of people selling sex, and proposed setting aside €20 million for programs helping women to exit prostitution. This vote is part of a global trend that challenges buying sex and understands that buying sex causes harm and that those in prostitution need social and economic support to escape.

SOURCES

10 Myths About Prostitution, Trafficking and the Nordic Model:

<http://prostitutionresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/10-myths-about-prostitution-trafficking-and-the-Nordic-model--Feminist-Current.pdf>

Nordic Model: http://www.wunrn.com/news/2010/07_10/07_26_10/072610_sweden.htm

[http://www.equalitynow.org/sites/default/files/Nordic Model EN.pdf](http://www.equalitynow.org/sites/default/files/Nordic%20Model%20EN.pdf)

Joy Smith, Member of Parliament, Government of Canada: www.joysmith.ca

Violence Against Women <http://vaw.sagepub.com/>

RESOLUTION #4

REMOVAL OF RESTRICTIONS IN ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE BENEFITS

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT BPW Canada urges the Government of Canada and the Minister of Human Resources to repeal Employment Insurance changes that were implemented on January 6, 2013 by the passage of Bill C-38 that requires recipients to accept a “suitable job” as deemed by Employment Insurance that may include up to a one hour commute or a reduction of up to 30% of previous wages after six weeks or lose their Employment Insurance benefits;

FURTHER IT BE RESOLVED that the Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women urges the Government of Canada to raise benefits to 60% of earnings calculated on a worker’s best 12 weeks in the prior 52 week period and based on 360 hours of work;

FURTHER IT BE RESOLVED that the Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women urges the Government of Canada to increase the period which benefits can be collected to a maximum of 52 weeks.

RATIONALE

There has been a generational shift of women working outside the home. Statistics Canada states that in 2009, 64.4% of working mothers had children under three and that 78.5 % of working mothers had children under six. There has also been an increase in lone parent families, with 2011 stats showing that they represent 16.7 % of all census families. Of those lone parent families, women headed 8 out of 10.

Due to childcare responsibilities, 2009 stats show that 35 % of workingwomen between the ages of 25-44 are part time workers. Many of these women are also in low paying and service jobs, with little opportunity for advancement and also at higher risk of being laid off during a down turn in the economy.

The Employment Insurance program must be there in tough times for those who paid into it. Laid-off workers need adequate benefits to support themselves and their families while they search for a new job. Over the past recession, too many of the over 500,000 workers who lost their jobs fell through the cracks of our broken EI system.

In 2006-07, only four in ten unemployed workers, and even fewer women due to their reduced hours of work and less stable jobs, qualified for EI benefits. Those who do qualify are eligible, on average, for just 32 weeks of EI benefits. In 1996, the maximum weekly benefit was \$604. Today’s maximum is only \$435, and the average benefit is just \$335 per week.

As of January 6, 2013, Canadians on EI face even stricter and more complex rules in order to keeping their benefits. A suitable search for a job must now include preparing resumes, registering for job banks, attending job fairs, applying for jobs and undergoing competency evaluations. In addition, Canadians on EI must accept what is defined as a “suitable job” even though it pays up to 30% less and commuting time of up to one hour or lose their benefits.

SOURCES

www.statscan.gc.ca

Statutes of Canada 2012; Chapter 17; Division 6,8 and 43; Part 4

The Canadian Press – Article dated January 6, 2013

<http://money.ca.msn.com/investing/news/business-news/new-employment-insurance-now-in-effect-2>

New Democratic Party of Canada

www.ndp.ca

Bill C-38

<http://www.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?Language=E&Mode=1&DocId=5697420>

The Globe and Mail – Article dated May 18, 2012

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/ei-changes-to-target-repeat-claimants/article4186684/>