

**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

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

"Women working for working women."

September, 2009

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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 90 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'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 Canada. BPW Canada develops the professional and leadership potential of women through education, awareness, advocacy and mentoring within a supportive network.

For 79 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, we have 35 local BPW Clubs across Canada. Our clubs 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.

Our 43rd Biennial Annual General Meeting (AGM) was held in Toronto in June of 2009. 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 AGM 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 #2009/01

National Poverty Reduction Strategy

Submitted by BPW Greater Moncton

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that BPW Canada urges the Government of Canada to develop a National Poverty Reduction Strategy to alleviate poverty, establishing clear targets, timelines, budget commitments and a measurable program evaluation process using the Newfoundland and Labrador: Poverty Reduction Strategy (2006) as a multi-faceted template.

Rationale

Poverty is a significant issue in every province across Canada, as Statistics Canada 2008 has released its 2006 data indicating the national poverty rate to be 11.4% of our population, varying from a low of 7% in Prince Edward Island to a high of 13% in British Columbia.

The Status of Women Canada commissioned Monica Townson to prepare a document entitled "Poverty Issues for Canadian Women" in 2005, which revealed, "Poverty is still very much a women's issue." In fact, the people in Canada most likely to be poor are the female child as one in seven (or 2.4 million) women is living in poverty today. This includes 51.6% of lone female parents living in poverty; 41.5% of single, widowed or divorced senior women; 35% of women under the age of 65 living on their own; women with disabilities; Aboriginal women; visible minority and immigrant women; and low income wage earners or working poor. In fact, women and youth account for 83% of Canada's minimum wage workers.

There is a definite need for a federal approach to poverty reduction in Canada. Only a few provinces are addressing this. Quebec passed Bill 112 - a National Strategy to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion in 2002, focusing on prevention, increased citizen participation and support of local responsibility/community based development, and reconciling economic, social, cultural and environmental development. Newfoundland & Labrador's Poverty Reduction Strategy (2006) emphasized early intervention and support of people transitioning out of poverty to decrease the depth of poverty and improve quality of life.

Sources:

1. Status of Women Canada, *Gender Equality Consultation-Poverty Issues for Canadian Women*, www.swc-cfc.gc.ca
2. Marika Morris, Updated-Tahira Gonsalves, *Fact sheets-Women and Poverty, 3rd Edition*, www.criaw-icref.ca
3. Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, *Reducing Poverty: An Action Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador*, June 2006, povertyreduction@gov.nl.ca
4. National Council of Welfare, *Solving Poverty: Four Cornerstones of a Workable National Strategy for Canada* (2007), www.ncwcnbes.net

RESOLUTION #2009/02

The media

Submitted by BPW Montreal

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that BPW Canada urges Status of Women Canada to work with the Department of Justice to empower by law any person who is offended, whether a member of a designated group (specific cultural or ethnic community) or not, with the right to lodge an official complaint with the Canadian Radio and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC).

Rationale

Women who are critical of how other women are portrayed in the media must be legally empowered to help prevent women from being the victims of prejudice and racism.

The media includes radio and television, regulated by the Canadian Radio and Television Commission (CRTC) and news agencies and newspapers. Journalists, editorialists and commentators are paid by and work for a media outlet. Most media outlets do not have a code of ethics for their journalists and reporters. Editorialist and commentators have no guidelines because they offer their own opinions based on their personal analyses of facts, often accompanied by the disclaimer. Some radio and television stations (e.g. CBC/Radio Canada) have an ombudsman with whom a complaint can be lodged. While newspapers have reader comment pages and letters to the editor, only a few letters are selected for publication.

Complaint Procedure - Print media. Someone who finds an article offensive can send a letter to the editor and/or publisher of the newspaper in response to it or submit a comment for publication. If the newspaper does not have a code of ethics or an ombudsman and does not respond, there is nothing else that can be done, except in Quebec where a person can contact the Conseil de Presse, demand a review and request an official decision.

Complaint Procedure - Radio and Television. A person must lodge a verbal complaint with the station and then send a letter that follows a specific format, contains a verbatim transcription of the offensive comment, clearly requests an explanation and/or retraction and is accompanied by cassette tape of the segment. If there has been no response within two weeks or the response is unsatisfactory, the complainant sends a letter that, again, must follow a specific format, to the CRTC. If, for example, a radio journalist makes offensive statements about women from a designated group, as defined in the Canadian Human Rights Act (R.S., 1985, c. H-6) and someone who is not a member of said designated group writes the CRTC, she will be told she is not the offended party and does not have the right to lodge an official complaint. These voices for just and fair treatment of all people are therefore silenced.

Sources:

1. Canadian Human Rights Act, <http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en>
2. Canadian Radio and Television Commission
http://www.crtc.gc.ca/eng/INFO_SHT/G8.HTM
3. IFEX website <http://www.ifex.org/en/content/view/full/23233/>
4. Conseil de Presse <http://www.conseildepresse.gc.ca/>

RESOLUTION #2009/03

Regulate “Energy drinks” under National Health Products

Submitted by BPW SELKIRK

THEREFORE BE RESOLVED that due to the reported adverse reactions and risk conditions surrounding the safety and consumption of high caffeine content energy drinks, BPW Canada urges Health Canada to continue monitoring and regulating “energy drinks” under the Natural Health Products regulations by listing contents and nutritional facts, to ensure the health and safety of Canadians.

Rationale

As evidenced by the growing concern globally regarding the effect of high-caffeine energy drinks marketed to and consumed by young people ages 12-24, researchers in the United States, Europe, and Australia are lobbying for the accurate labeling of the caffeine content in high-energy drinks. Teachers, nutritionists and concerned parents have evidenced elementary school children consuming high-energy drinks for lunch. Children and adolescents particularly young women and children who are not habitual caffeine users are at risk for “*caffeine intoxication*” due to an absence of pharmacological tolerance.

The main ingredients in energy drinks are caffeine, taurine and glucuronolactone. Some new energy drinks on the market also contain opium poppy seed extract or ephedrine. Taurine, caffeine and glucuronolactone occur naturally in the body, but they are also present in much higher doses in energy drinks.

Although the manufacturers and marketers claim that energy drinks are designed to increase stamina and improve physical performance, unlike sports drinks like Gatorade that replenish minerals and water lost during exercise, energy drinks with caffeine can cause dehydration.

An article published by the John Hopkins School of Medicine in Baltimore stated that “nearly 500 new brands of energy drinks were launched worldwide in 2006 alone.” On September 23, 2008, an article published in the National Post stated that “*Canadian sales increased 54 per cent, to \$277 million in the year ending this past August, after a 71 percent increase the previous 12 months, according to AC Neilson.*”

The European Union requires energy drinks to carry a “*high caffeine content*” label. In Canada, only Red Bull is authorized for sale as a natural health product. Norway restricts the sale of Red Bull to pharmacies; France and Denmark have prohibited its sale altogether.

Sources:

1. Simon, Michelle, Mosher, James (2007) “*Alcohol, Energy Drinks, and Youth – A Dangerous Mix*”, Marin Institute.
2. Harding, Anne - (2008) “*Labels Urged for Caffeinated Energy Drinks*”, Reuters Health Information.
3. Parker-Pope, Tara (2008) “*Energy Drinks Linked to Risk Behaviour Among Adolescents*,” International Health and Science.

RESOLUTION #2009/04

Pay Equity for Women in the Public Sector

Submitted by BPW Canada Virtual Club

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that BPW Canada urges the Government of Canada to revoke Section 394 of the Budget Implementation Act, pertaining to Public Service Equitable Compensation, which was enacted on March 12, 2009.

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that BPW Canada urges the Government of Canada to implement the recommendations of the 2004 Federal Pay Equity Task Force.

Rationale

The right of equal pay for work of equal value was introduced in the federal human rights legislation in 1977, in order to expunge the sex discrimination that is inherent in the “market pay” element from the assessment of the value of work. This is because, historically, the market has devalued work that is done by women. Conservative economists argue that, contrary to extensive evidence, the market, if left unregulated, will resolve wage and other financial inequities.

The proposed *Public Sector Equitable Compensation Act 2009*, by including the recruitment and retention needs of the employer and market forces, would permit the evaluation of male dominated jobs to be valued more highly in the market, requiring the employer to pay more to attract new employees or retain current ones, even if the value of the work when it is assessed based on skill, effort and responsibility is no greater than that of female dominated jobs. It would also restructure the process for obtaining pay equity by making pay equity a benefit or privilege in the bargaining process, versus a human right. The Supreme Court of Canada has ruled, however, in *Dickason v University of Alberta* that employers cannot contract out their human rights obligations.

The complaint system under the *Canadian Human Rights Act* has proven slow and unwieldy, which is why in 2004 a Pay Equity Task Force was appointed, which made recommendation for a new proactive pay equity system with a Pay Equity Commission and Tribunal. If these recommendations had been implemented, there would have been an efficient and effective mechanism for resolving pay equity issues.

Sources:

1. Wherry, Aaron. “Is this the quiet end to pay equity?” *Maclean’s*. March 2, 2009.
2. Public Service Alliance of Canada. <http://www.psac.com/home-e.shtml> (Accessed April 2009).
3. Letter to Prime Minister Harper RE: *Public Sector Equitable Compensation Act*, February 23, 2009. Available at: www.uswa4120.ca/whatsnew/documents/payequityletterfinal2009.doc (Accessed April 2009).
4. Armstrong, Pat, Paul Durber and Rosemary Morgan. “Equal pay is not negotiable”. *Ottawa Citizen*. February 27, 2009.
5. Ad Hoc Coalition for Women’s Equality and Human Rights. <http://www.womensequality.ca/action.html> (Accessed April 2009).
6. Armstrong, Pat. “Pay Equity Lessons from Canada.” Paper prepared for the New Zealand Conference on Pay and Employment Equity for Women, Victoria

- University of Wellington, June 28-29, 2004. Available at:
<http://www.google.ca/search?q=PAY+EQUITY+LESSONS+FROM+CANADA+Pat+Armstrong&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&aq=t&rls=org.mozilla:en-GB:official&client=firefox-a> (Accessed April 2009).
7. Pay Equity and Equal Pay – What is the difference? Fact Sheet. Ontario Pay Equity Commission. Available at:
www.payequity.gov.on.ca/peo/english/pubs/difference.html (Accessed April 2009).
 8. The Canadian Human Rights Act. (R.S., 1985, c. H-6)
<http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/showdoc/cs/H-6///en?page=1> (Accessed April 2009)
 9. *Pay Equity A New Approach to a Fundamental Right*. Final Report Pay Equity Commission. Ottawa: Department of Justice, 2004.
<http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/webarchives/20071115062515/http://www.justice.gc.ca/en/payeqsal/index.html> (Accessed April 2009).

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