

**Submission
to**

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE JUSTIN TRUDEAU

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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Women**

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

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BPW International Resolution #1: Accessible, Affordable, Flexible and High-Quality Childcare

BPW International resolves that all Affiliates urge their governments to:

- a. recognize the ongoing need and impact of accessible and affordable childcare programs on the economic prosperity of women and their families in reducing poverty and aligning with the human rights goals of the United Nations;
- b. invest in childcare programs that are affordable, accessible, flexible and high-quality to improve the social and economic conditions of women, children and their families (quality of life as well as economics); and
- c. invest in a workforce strategy to ensure a sustainable supply of high-quality childcare providers through improved working conditions, wages and innovative collaborative training and certification initiatives with educational institutions, community colleges, newcomer and childcare centres.

BPW Canada

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women recognizes the Government of Canada, specifically the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development and the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth for enactment of the Government of Canada's Canada-wide early learning and child care system. However, the expansion of the childcare sector must go hand-in-hand with expansion of the childcare workforce and a comprehensive federal/provincial/territorial recruitment and retention strategy to address fair wages, pensions and working conditions.

BPW Canada has sponsored many resolutions over the decades on childcare, most recently in 2023 “National Early Learning and Childcare Standards for Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access” as well as a 2021 position paper on national Early Learning and Child Care.

Rationale

The impacts of not having accessible childcare services affect not only how much money a woman can make, but the quality of her children’s life as well. Several European countries note that childcare places are too far from work and home, or hours are not flexible with work hours and vice versa. Even in wealthy countries it is highly unaffordable, with low-income parents needing to spend up to half their yearly salary on childcare. Also, eligibility criteria are often unfavourable for marginalised families, even though they need it most. In addition, there is a high rate of staff turnover and a lack of qualified childcare staff which results in a serious lack of services. The Government of Canada needs to continue its funding for the Early Learning and Child Care Program and ensure it is sufficient to fund a living wage for the childcare workforce to attract and retain workers.

BPW International Resolution #2: Action on Pay Discrimination

BPW International resolves that all Affiliates urge their governments to:

- a. establish legislation to prevent gender pay discrimination with an intersectional lens;
- b. improve reporting on the gender pay gap with an intersectional lens; and
- c. collaborate with private companies to develop meaningful and measurable gender pay gap metrics with an intersectional lens, which are publicly reported.

BPW Canada

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women recognizes the Government of Canada, specifically the Minister for Employment, Workforce Development and Labour; Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth and Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Persons with Disabilities for the enactment of the Pay Equity Act (2018). However, The Act establishes a proactive pay equity regime for [federally regulated workplaces](#) with 10 or more employees but it is not enforced in other private sector or provincial/territorial workplaces nor does it include analysis with an intersectional lens.

BPW Canada has sponsored resolutions on Pay Equity for decades, the most recent in 2016 “Declaration of a National Equal Pay Day” and 2009 “Pay Equity for Women in the Public Sector”.

Rationale

An intersectional lens in policy making recognizes that people should not be defined by one characteristic - we all have our own unique, interconnected set of circumstances. The advantages and disadvantages we each face are different - they are made up by a totality of factors. Five years ago, a Forbes article called out the lack of inclusion in this space, saying “As more corporations are mandated to disclose their gender pay gap, discussions on the topic have become mainstream. But other identities such as race are largely invisible in such discussions.”

Now, in 2024, there is very little reporting on the global gender pay gap with an intersectional lens. Pay parity issues link to poverty and impact strongly on the ability of women to support themselves and their families. For disabled women, the wage gap for those with disabilities is not well reported. A 2023 longitudinal study from Norway found that gender is a defining predictor for income and that disabled women are particularly disadvantaged.

BPW International resolves that all Affiliates urge their governments to:

- a. expand humanitarian pathways to address modern trends in human mobility; and
- b. facilitate safe, orderly, and regular migration pathways and increase awareness of options available.

BPW Canada

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women urge the Government of Canada, specifically the Minister for Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, to simplify the visa procedure and increase understanding of the various pathways to obtain residency in Canada and to provide timely process of applications.

Rationale

Since 1951 international regulations governing refugee admissions have remained unchanged. These were specifically designed to respond to the tragic events of World War II. However, international law has not evolved to address recent pressing threats such as the spread of firearms to non-military actors, escalating drug related and gang violence, devastation and loss of land due to climate change, and life-threatening economic crisis leading to starvation.

The numerous visa types per country are each regulated by complex requirements. Most legal frameworks categorise migrants as either voluntary migrants, those who wish to relocate to advance their career and socioeconomic status, re-unite with family, invest in a business or study; or forced migrants, those faced with persecution and whose lives are in danger.

However, in the modern-day world there are numerous individuals who do not fit into either one of those categories. In fact, there are forced migrants who don't meet the definition of a refugee in the meaning of the 1951 Refugee Convention. Migration policies need to be updated to recognize what is happening in 2025 and ensure they are simplified to accept those most in need.

BPW International Resolution #4: Addressing Modern Slavery

BPW International resolves that all Affiliates urge their governments to:

- a. introduce legislation requiring all businesses take action to prevent, mitigate or remedy any instances of modern slavery or worker exploitation in their domestic or international operations or supply chains;
- b. impose graduated levels of action and reporting requirements commensurate with the size and resources of the business; and
- c. require mandatory contract clauses to prevent Modern Slavery

BPW Canada

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women urge the Government of Canada, specifically the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour and Minister of Justice to enforce current labour standards to protect workers, both domestic and foreign, who may be in forced labour situation; and to have a public awareness campaign with a tip line for potential victims to give account of potential abuses and supports if they need to be removed, particularly in the case of human trafficking and forced marriages of which the majority of victims are women.

BPW Canada has sponsored many resolutions on Human Trafficking over the years, most recently in 2024 “Human Trafficking National Strategy Needs an Extension, Perpetuity, and Unilateral Responses”.

Rationale

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) advises that “forced labour and slavery are not a thing of the past.” Their definition of forced or compulsory labour is: “all work or service which is exacted from any person under the threat of a penalty and for which the person has not offered himself or herself voluntarily.”

A 2022 report from produced by the ILO and others estimated that 50 million people were living in modern slavery in 2021, of which almost half were trapped in forced marriage. The report found that the number of people in modern slavery has risen significantly in the last five years.

Most victim-survivors of human trafficking are women (46%) or children (34%) (UN). Globally it is estimated that one in four victims of modern slavery are children (Unseen UK). More than half (52 per cent) of all forced labour and a quarter of all forced marriages can be found in upper-middle income or high-income countries.

BPW International Resolution #5: Action on Climate Change

BPW International resolves that all Affiliates urge their governments to:

- a. ensure emissions targets and supporting policy will achieve 'net zero' carbon pollution, including by updating Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC's, a state's climate action plan to cut emissions and adapt to climate impacts);
- b. formally recognise women as agents of change in addressing climate change by implementing the principles and provisions of General recommendation No. 37 on gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in a changing climate; and
- c. introduce mandatory, publicly available, climate change risk disclosure by all those publicly listed companies, financial institutions, insurance providers, investment funds and private companies that have total assets of over \$1 billion.

BPW Canada

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women urge the Government of Canada, specifically the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and Minister of Energy and Natural Resources to continue to work towards a "net zero" carbon economy by increasing opportunities for green energy, through both education of the workforce and incentives for companies to decrease their carbon footprint. BPW Canada sponsored a resolution in 2019 "Implementation of a Just Job Transition Strategy for Canada's Economic Development as a Result of Climate Change and Advancements in Technology".

Rationale

To strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change, countries adopted the Paris Agreement. The Agreement aimed to mobilise nations to take action to address rising global temperatures. Over 194 states, totalling over 98% of greenhouse gas emissions, have ratified or acceded to the agreement.

In 2023, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report found that "Human-caused climate change is already affecting many weather and climate extremes in every region across the globe. This has led to widespread adverse impacts and related losses and damages to nature and people. Vulnerable communities who have historically contributed the least to current climate change are disproportionately affected."

A 2023 International Monetary Fund report found that urgent and decisive action is needed - planned action would see emissions cuts of 11 percent below 2019 levels by 2030, whereas cuts needed to be 50 percent. The report called for drastic increases in mitigation investment. A priority concern for women and girls is the full implementation of the 2018 General Recommendation 37 (GR37) which addresses the links between human rights and the gendered impact of climate change.

BPW International Resolutions #6: Health Services and Technology

BPW International resolves that all Affiliates urge their governments to:

- a. advance gender equality by promoting a healthy society and promote health, education, protection, and well-being in all communities;
- b. ensure universal and reliable internet access that does not hinge on income or geographic location as per UN CSW67 Technology and the Digital Gender Divide Agreed Conclusions;
- c. increase investment in health systems and infrastructure for health education and services and advocate for sustainable funding for that implementation;
- d. include governance mechanisms that engage marginalised groups, Indigenous women, childbearing women; women living with disabilities, gender diverse, and elderly women, especially in rural, remote locations, and as stakeholders in a national digital health strategy;
- e. create a national information and communication technology (ICT) framework that facilitates alignment between the health and ICT sectors, and which can build globally;
- f. mandate a reporting process to measure data on services to marginalised groups, Indigenous women, childbearing women, disabled women, gender diverse, and elderly women, especially in rural, remote locations; and
- g. ensure access to education regarding digital and portable electronic device literacy to facilitate the advancement of these goals

BPW Canada

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women urge the Government of Canada, specifically the Minister of Health; Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry to expand the internet infrastructure across Canada, particularly in remote and northern communities, to better expand women's access to health, education and employment opportunities. BPW Canada sponsored a resolution in 2023 "Women's Access to Health Services and Health Education through Technology" to support this issue.

Rationale

Full and equitable participation in the digital society requires universal and reliable internet access that does not hinge on income or geographic location. New and updated health research is continually being published on the internet. Digital equity is a necessity and right for all women and girls to access crucial health and health education services. Increased investment in health systems is needed to overcome these setbacks, address long-standing healthcare shortcomings, support countries in their recovery, and build resilience against future health threats. It is important to acknowledge that different countries could be at different stages of development or implementation when it comes to their own national and local digital health strategies. Addressing disparities is critical to bridging this gap and ensuring equitable healthcare provision. Various determinants of health, including environmental and commercial factors, need attention to achieve our common health objective for all.

BPW International and its Affiliates advocate that governments legislate with urgency:

- a. stronger regulation of online platforms, including introducing global standards for social media reform to ensure effectiveness, connectedness and consistency (e.g. the Center for Countering Digital Hate's STAR Framework);
- b. improved transparency requirements, human rights protections and independent oversight around the algorithms, advertising, and rules enforcement for online platforms;
- c. rigorous government content filtering systems particularly for child abuse sexual material, with independent accountability mechanisms;
- d. requiring internet service providers to filter with rigour illegal content, with independent accountability mechanisms;
- e. strong civil and criminal penalties for people and organisations who commit online harm;
- f. strong civil and criminal penalties for online platforms that fail to create safe spaces and/or respond adequately when harm occurs;
- g. improved national data gathering and reporting online harm with a sociodemographic lens; and
- h. more investment in education around online harm that considers how to communicate effectively with target audiences such as young people, other vulnerable groups and potential perpetrators.

BPW Canada

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women urge the Government of Canada, specifically the Minister of Justice; Minister of Public Safety; and Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry and develop legislation to end online harm through stronger regulation and education. BPW Canada sponsored a resolution in 2022 "Increase Awareness of Supervision for Online Child Protection" to encourage more legislation in this evolving issue.

Rationale

This resolution is asking for targeted and urgent action to prevent and reduce online harm. This asks for state parties to legislate and act in several different ways because this is a complex issue that requires a multi-pronged approach. A 2022 UN report, "Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women" cites a global study and country specific studies that indicate more than 30% of women personally experience online violence. In 2023, the international association of online abuse reporting hotlines, INHOPE, reported that 83% of child sex abuse material (CSAM) depicts children under 13 years of age and 95% of victims were girls. They note that "self-generated CSAM content figures remained consistently high according to hotline analysts", and "the notable rise in CSAM appearing on mainstream online platforms registered by INHOPE member hotlines in 2023 and an increase in cases related to messaging applications such as Discord, Telegram, Signal, and Enigma."

BPW International Resolution #8: Care Workers - Underpaid, Undervalued, Under resourced

BPW International resolves that all Affiliates urge their governments to:

- a. ensure that laws and policies for care workers in both the informal and formal sectors (inclusive of family carers), include social protections, such as workplace safety, benefits (e.g., health care), and pay equity;
- b. develop high quality standards for staffing, staff education and training to drive better outcomes;
- c. recognise the value of care workers by ensuring equal pay for work of equal value;
- d. develop policies based on the 5R approach (recognising, reducing and redistributing unpaid care work and rewarding and representing paid care work); and
- e. establish standards and benchmarks with targets, measures, and national reporting

BPW Canada

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women urge the Government of Canada, specifically the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour to enforce labour standards of care workers, the vast majority who are women; and to establish national long term care standards.

BPW Canada passed a resolution in 2021 “Independent Federal Oversight to Ensure Health and Safety of Essential Workers” and in 2020 “Covid 19 and Long-Term Care Crisis” in response to the failures following the Covid 19 pandemic and caregivers.

Rationale

People across the world are living longer and there is a higher chance of frailty, illness, disability and health needs. For many elders, insufficient care services and support limit their right to independent living and quality care. Women carry most of the unpaid care, which impacts their income and mental health, and places them at risk for a life in poverty. Due to unpaid care responsibilities, they often adapt their work patterns by taking career breaks, working part-time or leaving the workforce prematurely.

Vulnerable groups, such as domestic and migrant care workers, are particularly challenged. As for paid care, the international long-term care community suffers from staffing shortages, wages below a living wage, and an unsupportive work environment. Those in paid employment are not receiving equal pay, with women earning on average 24 percent points less than men who are doing similar work. The 5R approach (recognizing, reducing and redistributing, reward and represent) is central to policy approaches to decent care work.