

POLICIES ADOPTED – 1998

- 98.1 Violence Against Women
- 98.2 Renegotiation of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement
- 98.3 Ensuring Biodiversity/Biosecurity in Canada
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- 98.7 Reinvestment of Federal Budgetary Surplus
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EMERGENCY RESOLUTIONS

- 98.1EM Economic Gender Equality Indicators and Gender Analysis
- 98.2EM To Maintain Competition Between Canadian Banks and Choices for their Clients
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- 98.4EM Child Custody and Access

98.1 VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

- Whereas, everyday in this country women are subjected to violence; and
- Whereas, women will not be free from violence until there is equality; and
- Whereas, the financial cost of abuse of women in Canada, in the health/medical, social services/education, labour/employment and criminal justice systems exceeds \$4.2 billion per year; and
- Whereas, despite the financial cost of abuse of women, the Government of Canada has failed to intervene in support of women's human rights as set forth in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms; and
- Whereas, the Government of Canada has not fully enacted the recommendations of the Zero Tolerance Policy and Equality Action Plan for violence against women as set out in the "FINAL REPORT OF THE CANADIAN PANEL ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, 1993"; and
- Whereas, the Government of Canada should take the necessary steps from denial of abuse to acknowledgement of abuse; from tolerance of violence to commitment against violence; from institutional violence to zero tolerance of violence; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, the National Council of Women of Canada urge the Government of Canada to:

- a) Enact fully the recommendations of Zero Tolerance Policy and Equality Action Plan for violence against women as set out in the "Final Report of the Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women, 1993" which asks the Government of Canada to:
 - § Recognize violence against women as a human rights issue; and
 - § Include violence against women as an issue in all human rights decisions and initiatives, both nationally and internationally; and
 - § Include violence against women as an issue in all international aid and development activities; and
 - § Create guidelines for the establishment of any future inquiries, task forces or commissions; and
 - § Implement a Zero Tolerance Federal Contractors' Programme whereby any organization, national or international, which receives a government contract, grant of funding of \$1000,000 or more, must agree to put in place zero tolerance processes and practices to support women's equality and safety within the recipient organization and through its substantive work; and
- b) Ensure that contract compliance also applies to subcontractors; and
- c) Establish the recommended accountability mechanisms; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the National Council of Women of Canada urge its Provincial Councils, Local Councils and

Study Groups to refer this resolution to their respective Provincial Governments.

98.2 RENEGOTIATION OF THE GREAT LAKES WATER QUALITY AGREEMENT

Whereas, under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (GLWQA) the Governments of Canada and the United States have primary responsibility to restore and protect the environmental quality of the Great Lakes; and

Whereas, the terms of the GLWQA provide that following every third Biennial Report will be released to Governments in 1998; and

Whereas, the GLWQA, data 1972, 1978 and amended by the 1987 Protocol, set specific obligations, many of which have not been fulfilled; and

Whereas, there has been an erosion of Government support for some programs, and both the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement and the domestic laws of both Canada and the United States require strong and enforceable Government regulations; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the National Council of Women of Canada urge the Government of Canada to:

- a) Not open the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement for re-negotiation; and
- b) Ensure that commitments made in 1978 and the 1987 Protocol to fulfill the vision of the Agreement for a clean and healthy Great Lakes ecosystem are met; and
- c) Recognize the commitments in Annex 2 of the Agreement on Remedial Action Plans for Areas of Concern (AOC RAPS) and for Lakewide Management Plans (LAMPS).

98.3 ENSURING BIODIVERSITY/BIOSECURITY IN CANADA

Whereas, the Government of Canada support the principle of ensuring preservation of the local Biota, as called for in Agenda 21, Chapter 15, Conservation of Biological Diversity, thus ensuring bio-security; and

Whereas, development and exploitation of natural resources in Canada, on land, in or under her waters, by developers/exploiters (i.e. agricultural lands, forests, fisheries, minerals, ores, oil) have often been carried out in ways that destroy for or fragment the necessary habitat for a species to survive, particularly those on the endangered list, and

Whereas, in Canada, much of the exploitation of natural resources takes place in areas remote from population centres, in territory where the Biota exists in spite of naturally-occurring adverse conditions; and

Whereas, the mandate of Environment Canada to monitor various ecosystems and species has been severely restricted in the last decade due to cutbacks in operating funds, forcing the cancellation of useful surveillance programs such as the Herring Gull Contaminants Monitoring Programme and the Porcupine Caribou Study, as well as the reduction of staff required to implement the constant review necessary to ensure compliance with regulations designed to protect local bio-systems; and

Whereas, it is estimated that up to 100 species world-wide become extinct every day due to habitat destruction and pollution; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the National Council of Women of Canada urge the Government of Canada to:

- a) Enact strong and enforceable Federal Endangered Species Legislation, which will provide a national safety net for endangered species making it applicable to everyone regardless of race or country of origin; and
- b) Provide the necessary funding to enable Environment Canada to inspect and enforce an Endangered Species Act; and
- c) Develop and actively pursue a programme of constant surveillance of bio-systems in areas of natural resource exploitation to ensure preservation of the local biota as called for in Agenda 21, Chapter 15, Conservation of Biological Diversity, thus ensuring bio-security.

98.4 MANDATORY LABELLING AND LONG-TERM TESTING OF GENETICALLY ENGINEERED FOODS

Whereas, unlabelled, genetically engineered foods, not tested for long-term effects on human health are being sold in Canadian stores; and

- Whereas, these products are created when foreign genes such as animal, viral or bacterial genes are combined with plant genes; and
- Whereas, foods altered through genetic engineering and consumed unknowingly often contain proteins and components that have never been part of the human diet; and
- Whereas, the development and sale of genetically engineered organisms, whether used in animal feed, food or food processing can release genetically engineered organisms into the environment; and
- Whereas, through these inadequately tested genetically engineered foods, the health of consumers may be endangered and genetic mistakes may be passed on the future generations of consumers; and
- Whereas, national food trade associations from Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Sweden and the United Kingdom, as well as leading European food retailers, are demanding that genetically modified crops be separated from conventional varieties due to potential risk to consumers; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the National Council of Women of Canada urge the Government of Canada to:

- a) Impose immediate mandatory labeling of all foods containing genetically engineered ingredients; and
- b) Impose a moratorium on the distribution and sale of genetically engineered foods until they have been adequately tested in Canada by a Federal Government Bureau and proven safe; and
- c) Alert and educate the public as to the presence and possible effects of genetically engineered foods (by T.V, radio and written media).

98.5 SENIORS' BENEFIT AND EROSION OF SAVING

- Whereas, the National Council of Women of Canada in 1996 urged the Government of Canada to continue to make Old Age Security payments based on individual incomes; and
- Whereas, the Government of Canada has proposed to restructure the Old Age Security/Guaranteed Income Supplement System, which has been in place since 1952, and replace it with a Senior's Benefit; and
- Whereas, the proposed Seniors' Benefit will provide (tax free) \$11,420 to single seniors and \$18,440 to senior couples, who have no other source of income, providing \$120 more than the present OAS/GIS system; and
- Whereas, the proposed "clawback" rate of 50% starts on the first dollar of personal income, a rate which operates until \$5,160 of the Benefit remains for single seniors and \$10,320 for couples and the \$5,160/\$10,320 is then clawed back starting at \$25,921 of combined income at 20% rate which is exhausted for singles at approximately \$51,000 and couples at \$78,000; and
- Whereas, concern has been expressed that the Senior's Benefit, as proposed, discourages younger people from saving for their retirement years because of the high rate of "clawback" of their benefit; and

RESOLVED, that the National Council of Women of Canada urge the Government of Canada to:

- a) Reconsider its decision to use family income to determine the Senior's Benefit clawback; and
- b) Set the threshold of the initial "clawback" of the Senior's Benefit base on total personal income not lower than the most recent Statistics Canada poverty line; and
- c) Ensure that the base rate of the Senior's Benefit be raised by at least \$500 and that it be indexed to the rate of inflation based on the current indexed amount; and
- d) Undertake a gender analysis of the Seniors' Benefit before implementing the programme and release the findings allowing time for public input before implementation; and
- e) Redesign the Seniors' Benefit to ensure the incentive to save for one's retirement years remains part of the system.

98.6 GLOBALIZATION: NEGOTIATING MULTILATERAL TRADE AGREEMENTS (with particular reference to MAI)

- Whereas, it should be the democratic right of Canadians to be informed of foreign trade policies, which are being negotiated on their behalf and to be assured that:
- a) The interests of those least able to speak for themselves will be safeguarded; and
 - b) The particular interests of one sector, such as investors, will not be allowed to take precedence over the interests of the majority; and

- c) All Canadians will have access to affordable essential services and resources, such as water; and
- Whereas, openness, transparency and public accountability should be the hallmarks of a sound, sustainable economy; and
- Whereas, the terms of any multilateral trade treaty or agreement could override Canadian federal, provincial or municipal laws or regulations; and
- Whereas, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), where the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) is being developed, is committed to balancing economic growth with social well-being and must, therefore, respect any signatory's restrictions/exclusions made in the public interest; and
- Whereas, Canadian experience under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) demonstrates that exclusions to a trade agreement are a temporary safeguard at best and require constant vigilance by successive governments; and
- Whereas, agreements being developed by trade organizations (i.e. the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) would restrict the ability of the government to fulfill its commitments made under the agreements, such as the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies and the Beijing Platform for Action; and
- Whereas, in Canada, during the time period since recent trade agreements (FTA and NAFTA) have been adopted, the income of approximately 60% of wage earners has dropped, cuts have been made to social programs and environmental protection standards have been lowered; and
- Whereas, the social and environmental impact of trade policies are outside the mandate of APEC and WTO; and
- Whereas, APEC, WTO and OECD pay close attention to the interests of transnational corporations and do not have a good record of preventing vulnerable people from being hurt by such agreements; and
- Whereas, the time tables for trade liberalization by APEC and OECD are not well understood by the general public; and
- Whereas, trade agreements to date have included an open, appealable disputes-resolution process rather than the binding, non-appealable decisions as has been suggested under MAI; therefore be it
- RESOLVED, that the National Council of Women of Canada strongly urge the Government of Canada to release the full text of all proposed trade agreements (for example, the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI), in sufficient time to ensure widespread public consultation; and be it further
- RESOLVED that the National Women of Canada urge the Government of Canada to sign only those agreements which:
- a. Respect the economic, political and constitutional sovereignty of Canada including the ability of all levels of government to direct investment to community based projects and underdeveloped regions of the country, to influence job creation and to protect culture, health care, social programs, the environment and to maintain labour standards; and
 - b. Include gender analysis and analysis of environmental concerns, particularly as they relate to the ability of Canada to fulfill its obligations made in UN conferences in Nairobi, Vienna, Rio de Janeiro, Cairo, Copenhagen and Beijing; and
 - c. Guarantee Canadian ownership and control over the delivery of vital natural resources, such as water, electricity and natural gas; and
 - d. Guarantee compliance with Canadian environmental standards; and
 - e. Ensure enforcement of this compliance; and be it further
- RESOLVED, that the National Council of Women of Canada urge the Government of Canada to ensure that trade negotiations within such transnational organizations as WTO, APEC and OECD represent the interests of all citizens by:
- a. Working for the equal representation of women on trade delegations from all countries, particularly by setting the example in delegations from Canada; and
 - b. Ensuring that gender analysis, as well as social and environmental assessments are an integral part of the process of trade negotiations; and
 - c. Ensuring that the public is fully informed of proposed time tables for trade liberalization taking place within trade organizations; and

- d. Ensuring an open appealable disputes-resolution process.

98.7 REINVESTMENT OF FEDERAL BUDGETARY SURPLUS

- Whereas, in the Speech from the Throne, September 1997, the Government of Canada promised to devote one half of the surplus in this mandate to addressing the social and economic needs of Canadians, and the other half to reducing taxes and paying down the debt; and, in his October 15, 1997. Financial Statement to the Standing Committee on Finance, the Hon. Paul Martin predicted that the federal deficit will be eliminated no later than the fiscal year 1998-1999, and
- Whereas, the proportion of the National Debt owed outside Canada is falling sharply; and
- Whereas, social programs benefit mainly low and modest income earners, are an investment in families and individuals, and strengthen the social fabric; and
- Whereas, recent reports indicate that women's income has fallen in recent years, partly because of cuts to social programs; and
- Whereas, the income tax system has become increasingly less progressive over time and across the board tax cuts benefit chiefly high income earners; and
- Whereas, directing tax cuts at lower income earners, who spend a greater proportion of their income on consumption, is a more efficient way of stimulating consumer spending and reflects a more equitable approach; and
- Whereas, failure to index the levels of tax brackets to inflation means that lower income earners find themselves in higher tax brackets over time; and
- Whereas, a number of benefits to Canadians as well as the ceiling at which they are delivered are not fully indexed to inflation, the value of benefits erodes over time and fewer people are covered; and
- Whereas, cuts to payroll taxes, such as Employment Insurance, benefit chiefly upper income earners; therefore be it
- RESOLVED, that the national Council of Women of Canada urge the Government of Canada to keep its promise to restore and to invest further in social and health programme funding; and be it further

- a. Maintain a program of gradual debt reduction; and
- b. Provide the greatest benefit to low and modest income earners by:
- a. Setting a basic threshold below which low income people pay no tax
 - b. Reinstating indexing to inflation for tax brackets and social benefits
 - c. Abolishing the surtax on low income earners and progressively reducing the surtax on middle income earners
 - d. Progressively reducing tax rates
 - e. Introducing additional tax brackets, especially for very income earners; and be it further

- RESOLVED, that the National Council of Women of Canada urge the Government of Canada to reinvest the Employment Insurance Fund surplus in programs to help the unemployed secure employment, rather than to cut premiums.

98.8 BANKING SERVICES AND RULES FOR DISCLOSURE

- Whereas, the ability to access financial services such as, bank accounts and cheque cashing services, is essential for operating in modern society; and
- Whereas, low income people are not always able to access financial services and may pay proportionately high service costs when they do; and
- Whereas, credit, which is necessary to most successful business enterprises, does not appear to be available on an equitable basis; and
- Whereas, there are different and sometimes innovative types of credit suited to different enterprises; and
- Whereas, banking services are so important to the Canadian economy that they fill the role of public utility, yet are only accountable to shareholders; and
- Whereas, the lack of responsiveness of financial institutions to consumer concerns, coupled with the inability of advocacy groups to raise funds to support themselves means that consumers have little effect in changing the ways the financial institutions operate; and
- Whereas, the proportion on the National Debt owed outside Canada is sharply falling; and

- Whereas, there are significant flaws in the current Canadian banking ombudsman system, which is presently staffed by bank employees; and
- Whereas, the financial institutions enjoy substantial privileges and protections under Canadian law, but have not been accountable to consumers; therefore be it
- RESOLVED, that National Council of Women of Canada urge the Government of Canada to:
- a) Require that financial institutions ensure that all Canadians, have access to affordable banking services; and
 - b) Ensure that credit for projects designed on sound business practice be available to Canadians on an equitable basis (i.e. low income Canadians, projects designed to benefit local communities and for people wishing to start innovative technological enterprise) from:
 - Banks and near banks (i.e. credit unions);
 - Venture capital programs
 - Peer-lending enterprises (such as the "Calmeadow Foundation"); and
- Require that financial lending institutions disclose:
- The costs of doing business, especially related to bank charges;
 - Statistics related to loans granted analyzed by appropriate demographic data, related where possible to disadvantaged groups; and
- d) Require, in its up-coming legislation, that financial institutions have consumer representation on their boards and that their business decisions related to human resources policies and lending practices be subject to analysis; and
 - e) Require that peer-lending enterprises be subject to a Federal "watch-dog" committee; and
 - f) Assist in the creation of a Financial Consumer Organization; and
 - g) Establish an independent office of the Bank Ombudsman to investigate complaints from bank customers, and that this ombudsman have the power to make binding rulings; and
 - h) Institute an evaluation system of financial institutions to encourage them to:
 - Determine the credit needs of the communities their financial organizations serve;
 - Determine how well their depositors are being served;
 - Improve relationships vis-a-vis customer requirements

98.9 ESTABLISHMENT OF A NATIONAL UNIVERSAL DRUG INSURANCE PLAN

- Whereas, since 1984, drug costs have escalated more than any other factor in health care costs and drug costs are a substantial proportion of the health care costs borne by Medicare and individuals; and
- Whereas, approximately 15% of the Canadian population lacks any type of drug coverage and there is a strong body of evidence that individuals with lower income have greater health care needs and spend a higher proportion of their incomes on prescription drugs; and
- Whereas, there is a patchwork of public and private plans in the provinces that provide partial coverage for about 43% of the population of Canada; and
- Whereas, a National Drug Plan could ensure a more equitable, cost-effective delivery of needed medication and generate substantial savings in drugs and overhead costs; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the National Council of Women of Canada urge the Government of Canada to take a lead role with the Provinces in establishing a National Drug Insurance Plan for prescription drugs for all Canadians and to commit the necessary resources to establish such a plan; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the National Council of Women of Canada reiterate its 1985 Policy on Drug Patent Protection:

- a. Support and encourage the Canadian-owned drug, generic drug, and biological drug manufacturing industry; and
- b. Retain and strengthen the provision of section 41(4) of the Patent Act 1969, re: licensing of generic drugs; and
- c. Encourage competition and reduce cost, particularly of essential drugs; and
- d. Limit any changes to those recommended by the Eastman Commission.

98.10 TO ESTABLISH AN EFFECTIVE AND JUST INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

- Whereas, the International Law Commission (ILC) was mandated shortly after the founding of the United Nations to codify the Nuremberg (War Crimes) Principles; and
- Whereas, the ILC was subsequently mandated in 1989, by the General Assembly (GA) of the United Nations, to prepare a draft statute for an International Criminal Court which was presented and considered at the 49th session in 1994, with the intention of establishing an effective International Criminal Court (ICC); and
- Whereas, to be effective, such a court must be financed on a permanent basis and function clear of interference from the United Nations, its bodies and agencies, and/or any individual nation or group of nations; and
- Whereas, the Beijing Conference 1995 Platform for Action (PFA) Women and Armed Conflict Strategic Objectives, E.1 Articles 131, 132, 133, and E.3. Articles 144, 145 recognizes the particular abuses suffered by women and children in situations of armed conflict, reaffirming that rape in these circumstances constitutes a war crime; and
- Whereas, the Beijing PFA Strategic Objectives E.3 specifically calls for the prosecution of all criminals responsible for war crimes against women with full redress to the victims; therefore, be it
- RESOLVED, that the National Council of Women of Canada urge the Government of Canada to work most diligently:

- a. For the establishment of an effective, independent, permanent International Criminal Court with powers to expedite the prosecution of all those accused of war crimes, particularly those against women and children, as called for in the Beijing Conference 1995 Platform for Action and Armed Conflict Strategic Objectives; and
- b. To support the International Law Commission draft proposal for the creation of a permanent International Court by multinational treaty, financed through levies on the signatory States, thus removing the court to arm's length from the United Nations.

98.1EM ECONOMIC GENDER EQUALITY INDICATORS AND GENDER ANALYSIS

- Whereas, The advancement of women includes understanding their reality and the unique constraints they face, particularly with respect to the amount of unpaid work they perform, and the varying needs of women across the country; and
- Whereas, bureaucrats and politicians are often unaware of the different realities of women; and
- Whereas, statistics are not always disaggregated by gender, which leads to blindness on the part of policy makers to contributions and needs of women; and
- Whereas, data from Statistics Canada and other departments are not often available to women's and community groups because of the cost and complexity of presentations; and
- Whereas, data on women are usually presented in a comparison with data for men which not only hides the different constraints women face but also tends to emphasize an adversarial rather than a cooperative framework; and
- Whereas, although the Government of Canada has committed to doing gender analysis of all new federal programs, this commitment is qualified by the statement "where appropriate" and the results of such gender analysis are not always readily available; therefore be it
- RESOLVED, that the National Council of Women of Canada urge the Government of Canada to ensure that:
- a) Statistics Canada and other government departments consult widely with diverse women's groups about the types of data collected; and
 - b) Gender sensitivity training be conducted for bureaucrats and politicians, and resources be allocated by the federal government for such training; and
 - c) Data be disaggregated by gender wherever possible; and
 - d) Data be made accessible without charge to women's and other community groups; and
 - e) Funding be provided for capacity building of organizations to ensure a strong voice for women, and that the government partner with such organizations to provide public information, which emphasizes women's distinct contribution and needs rather than the inequities between men

and women; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the National Council of Women urge the Government of Canada to pass enabling legislation to ensure that gender analysis is applied throughout the government in relation to all laws, policies and programs, and that the reports on such gender analysis be made widely available to the general public.

98.2EM TO MAINTAIN COMPETITION BETWEEN CANADIAN BANKS AND CHOICES FOR THEIR CLIENTS

Whereas, the announced mergers for four of Canada's "big five" banks would reduce the options and service locations available for their clients as further cutbacks to staff and closing of branches took place; and

Whereas, the banks have stated that these mergers are necessary to permit economies of a scale that would enable them to compete with mega-banks in the global market; and

Whereas, Canadian banks have enjoyed years of government-regulated protection, (paid for in part by their clients), Canadian citizens, which has enabled them to grow to their present size where mergers to achieve "world-size" can be contemplated; and

Whereas, the banks are taking over other financial institutions, such as insurance and the sale of securities, at an alarming rate; and

Whereas, the Financial Institutions Task Force, set up by the Minister of Finance has not yet reported, nor has the government had the opportunity to implement consumer protection measures; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the National Council of Women of Canada urge the Government of Canada to protect the interests of Canadians by prohibiting the planned bank mergers, requiring the banks to maintain the present level of traditional banking services and of neighborhood branches with services at competitive rates; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the National Council of Women of Canada urge the Government of Canada to place a moratorium on all bank mergers and on further expansion into areas not understood as traditional banking services until adequate consumer protection measures and regulations are in place.

98.3EM TO REQUIRE THE NATIONAL ENERGY BOARD (NEB) TO INVESTIGATE EFFECTS OF CHANGES IN ENERGY DEMAND

Whereas, the Government of Canada has made a commitment to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases to 1990 levels by 2012; and

Whereas, achieving this will entail a sizeable reduction in the use of, or demand for, energy sources that produces these emissions; and

Whereas, the mandate of the National Energy Board (NEB) clearly states that the NEB must advise the government on developments in both the supply and demand for energy sources; and

Whereas, during Round 1 of Consultations (1998), (covering the next 27 years) representatives of the NEB stated that they had not been directed to make projections on possible reductions in demand if Canadians were to change to use of less polluting energy sources; and

Whereas, such projections will be necessary if governments, industry and Canadian consumers are to work together in an informed way to achieve these reductions; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the National Council of Women of Canada urge the Government of Canada to instruct the National Energy Board to formulate projections incorporating possible changes/reductions in consumption of and demand for energy sources producing greenhouse gases, which will be necessary for Canada to achieve the projected reductions of these harmful emissions by the year 2012.

98.4EM CHILD CUSTODY AND ACCESS

Whereas, experiencing separation or divorce in the family can have a prolonged negative impact on children, which studies showing a high incidence of depression where there is disrupted or diminished parenting by one or both parents; and

Whereas, contact with abusive parents or parents with serious mental illness may not be in the best interests of the

child and may indeed, put the child/children at risk, or may require supervised access; and

Whereas, abuse is not always obvious and may not be easily recognized; and

Whereas, female-led single families have a tremendously high rate and depth of poverty, compared with families where there are two parents; and

Whereas, mediation and other alternatives to court litigation have a high rate of success in helping parents to recognize their on-going roles and responsibilities for providing a nurturing environment for children; and

Whereas, the court system is often costly and may result in an escalation of hostilities between parents which in turn may increase the psychological and sometimes even physical risk to the children; and

Whereas, there is a small number of cases where mediation is neither practical nor recommended, especially where there is abuse or severe mental illness; and

Whereas, the effects of depression are lessened where children feel they have some control over their own lives, particularly with respect to custody and access decisions; and

Whereas, father's' rights groups are increasing their demand that access be tied to support payments, giving, as their rationale, the fact that they have been denied access; and

Whereas, hostile parents have been known to use custody and access as a pawn in the conflict with ex-spouses, to the detriment of the child/children's well-being; and

Whereas, judges are predominantly male and often unaware of the dynamics of abuse and control, and guidelines for the training of mediators are not fully developed; and

Whereas, without counseling, the effects of separation and divorce on the mental health of children and their parents can be prolonged and adverse; and

Whereas, contact with grandparents can add an important dimension to children's lives, but contact can also result in escalated hostilities in the family; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the National Council of Women of Canada urge the Government of Canada to ensure that legislation relating to custody and access of children in cases of separation or divorce of parents:

- a. Be base on the best interests of children which, in most cases, includes regular and on-going contact with both parents; and
- b. Consider shared parenting as a serious alternative where appropriate; and
- c. Develop a careful procedure for investigating the possibility of abuse and/or sever mental illness in a cases where custody and access is an issue; and
- d. Make the safety of children the priority in cases where there has been, or there is, the possibility of abuse and assume that, as a matter of course, it is not in the child's best interests for custody to be granted to abusive parents or those who are severely mentally ill; and
- e. Ensure that provisions are made for supervised access and exchange, where indicated; and
- f. Continue to ensure that the payment of adequate support payments by non-custodial parents is a priority; and
- g. Promote the use of mediation and other alternatives to court litigation for setting family disputes; and
- h. Develop guidelines where mediation is contra-indicated; and
- i. Ensure that children of 12 and over have an important voice in determining outcomes on matters of custody and access; and
- j. Seek effective way of ensuring access for a non-custodial parent, where the custodial parent is in contravention of an access order; and
- k. Ensure that custody and access are kept entirely separate from support payments; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the National Council of Women of Canada urge the Government of Canada to urge the Provincial and Territorial Governments to mandate:

- a. That all family court judges, prior to their sitting on the bench, be given extensive training on the dynamics of family abuse, particularly abuse against women and children; and

b. That upgrading courses dealing with family dynamics be offered at regular intervals in order that judges be kept up to date with costs shared by both levels of government; and

c. That training for mediators be standardized to include training on the dynamics of family abuse, particularly abuse against women and children; and be further

RESOLVED, that the National Council of Women of Canada urge the Government of Canada to urge the Provincial and Territorial Governments to provide resources for counseling, where appropriate and particularly in cases where there is suspicion of abuse or severe mental illness, to be offered without charge to parents on a separate basis; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the National Council of Women of Canada urge the Government of Canada to undertake a study to determine the suitable ways of facilitating contact between grandparents and their grandchildren, while protecting the well-being of the grandchildren.