

29 March 2006

The Hon. Vic Toews
Minister of Justice
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Mr. Minister,

The National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC) wishes to support your announcement that the Federal Government will seek to raise the age of consent to sexual activity to sixteen years from the current fourteen.

For a number of years, we have been concerned about the growing numbers of incidents in which young teens have been exploited by older adults. The Criminal Code currently allows for older adults to use the consent of the teen as a defense for their actions in sexually exploiting young teens who are not yet mature enough to recognize exploitation when it is happening to them. These teens require the protection of our laws.

Policies of the NCWC are established through a process of research, debate and approval by the general membership. For this reason, each policy has the strength of the voices of the thousands of our members in our eighteen local councils from Victoria to Halifax, our five provincial councils and our twenty-five nationally organized affiliates. Our policy on this topic "urge(s) the Government of Canada to:

- a. amend the Criminal Code of Canada (section 150.1) to reflect the age of 16 as the age of consent, rather than the current age of 14;
- b. amend all sections in the Criminal Code dealing with Pornography and Prostitution to reflect the above change to the age of consent and
- c. include an explicit exemption to prohibitions of sexual activity based on the age of consent to sexual activity for 14 to 16 year olds exploring their sexuality, provided their ages are within a peer relationship." (Policy 02.6)

Concerned parents and non-governmental organizations in Canada have asked for such a change, and we are pleased that the Government is listening to us. Thank you for announcing your intention to introduce such legislation.

We send our respectful best wishes for a successful sitting of Parliament in the coming weeks which will result in laws and regulations that improve the lives of Canadians.

Sincerely,

Carla Kozak, President