

**The National Council of Women of Canada  
Le Conseil National des Femmes du Canada**

FOUNDED 1893  
(INCORPORATED BY ACT OF PARLIAMENT)

IN FEDERATION WITH THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN

**Annual Brief to the Government of Canada  
October 2011**

Presented by  
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September 2011

## *Preamble*

The National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC) is pleased to present its new and updated policies in the form of this Brief to the Prime Minister and the Government of Canada.

Founded in 1893, the National Council of Women is a non-profit and non-partisan organization of women, representing a large number of Canadians of diverse occupations, languages, origins and customs and reflecting a cross-section of public opinion. NCWC comprises 15 Local Councils, 6 Provincial Councils and 21 Nationally Organized Societies.

NCWC is a federate of the International Council of Women (ICW), an international non-governmental organization holding Consultative Status (Category 1) with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations. Founded in 1888, the ICW is composed of National Councils in 74 countries.

NCWC holds Consultative Status (General) with ECOSOC, enabling NCWC to bring a Canadian perspective to the work of the United Nations Commission for the Status of Women. NCWC also participates as an Observer Non-governmental Organization with the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States.

NCWC is an organization of local, provincial and national organizations which are closely connected with issues at those levels, and which also has a firm grasp of international issues and Canada's commitment to them. For this reason, NCWC is uniquely qualified to approach our Government with suggestions and recommendations which are based on carefully researched and democratically approved policies for improving the quality of life of Canadians.

For the past 118 years, the National Council of Women has worked to improve the quality of life in Canada through education and advocacy. All policy for NCWC is generated through resolutions originating with either Local Councils or NCWC Committees. These are circulated to, and then voted on, by the general membership, at our Annual General Meeting. When contacting the Government, the media and the public, Council representatives speak only on existing policy. This Brief is therefore the united voice of the federated membership of the National Council of Women of Canada.

## **INDEX OF NEW POLICIES**

1. BANNING ALL OFFSHORE DRILLING IN THE ARCTIC
2. NATIONAL FOOD SECURITY POLICY  
*Please Note: The Salvation Army wishes it noted that it abstained from voting on this resolution.*
3. ENSURING THE SAFETY OF THE CANADIAN FOOD SUPPLY  
*Please Note: The Salvation Army wishes it noted that it abstained from voting on this resolution.*
4. ESTABLISHMENT OF NANOTECHNOLOGY REGULATIONS  
*Please Note: The Salvation Army wishes it noted that it abstained from voting on this resolution.*
5. REFORM OF THE CANADA PENSION PLAN RETIREMENT INCOME SYSTEM FOR CANADIANS WITH AN EMPLOYMENT HISTORY  
*Please Note: The Salvation Army wishes it noted that it abstained from voting on this resolution.*
6. INCREASING EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS IN CANADA  
*Please Note: The Salvation Army wishes it noted that it abstained from voting on this resolution.*

## **UPDATES TO EXISTING POLICY**

PU #1 NEED FOR REALISTIC INSURANCE FOR NUCLEAR INCIDENTS

PU #2 INTERNATIONAL TRADE AGREEMENT NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE EUROPEAN UNION

*Please Note: The Salvation Army wishes it noted that it abstained from voting on this resolution.*

PU #3 REFORM OF CANADIAN CORRECTIONAL SYSTEM

*Please Note: The Salvation Army wishes it noted that it abstained from voting on this resolution.*

EM #1 THE NEED FOR ALL CANADIANS TO HAVE ACCESS TO SUFFICIENT RESOURCES TO COVER THE NECESSITIES OF LIFE

## **1. BANNING ALL OFFSHORE DRILLING IN THE ARCTIC**

There has been widespread thawing in the Arctic due to climate modification, resulting in exposure of a very delicate ecosystem that, if damaged, cannot be repaired, and more exposed areas that can be exploited or used for research. It is known that there are vast, rich deposits of great variety in the seabed, thought to hold one quarter of the world's undiscovered oil. The effect of an oil spill on the delicate nature of the ecosystem is irreversible because oil cannot be cleaned up adequately in the cold Arctic waters, the drilling of emergency side-pipes is not likely to be feasible when the spill occurs under the ice and the occurrence is not identified in time, and these areas are only available for remedial action two months of the year.

A spill in Arctic waters could destroy the last rich reserves of fish and significant wildlife habitat, and with the expected surge in drilling and transportation of oil, accidents are expected to increase, accidents which are dangerous and impossible to control and have serious implications for the preservation of the now healthy ecosystem.

***Therefore, the National Council of Women of Canada urges the Government of Canada to:***

- a. proceed urgently to ban all offshore drilling in the Canadian Arctic waters;
- b. improve Canada's capacity to monitor effectively the banning of all offshore drilling activity in the Canadian Arctic waters and enforce existing legislation;
- c. ensure that the results of monitoring practices are verifiable and made public;
- d. continue to work with the Arctic Council to promote the banning of all offshore drilling in the Arctic;
- e. work with other countries with off-shore waters to ban off-shore drilling in Arctic waters; and
- f. encourage the use of the connection with NORAD for oil-drilling monitoring. T

***We also urge the Government of Canada to work with the United Nations to achieve a ban on offshore drilling in the Arctic.***

## 2. NATIONAL FOOD SECURITY POLICY

An increasingly small group of companies has gained control of the food supply and is generating huge profits. Farm income for a number of agricultural commodities has declined while prices to consumers have increased, often making nutritious food unaffordable for many low-income families. Canadian farmers cannot compete globally against lower agriculture and labour standards in other countries, and Canada is losing good farmland largely due to urban sprawl and the farm population is in a continued decline. Worldwide food shortages are likely to result from global warming and continued population growth.

***Therefore, the National Council of Women of Canada urges the Government of Canada to formulate a national food security policy that will:***

- a. monitor urban expansion with a view to preserving good farmland and expanding Canada's capacity for food production;
- b. ensure sustainable production, processing and distribution which could build long-term sustainable farm incomes for both small and large enterprises;
- c. ensure that international agreements affecting food are based on the best Canadian standards;
- d. recognize that supply managed systems help to stabilize the supply of high quality food for consumption in Canada at affordable prices and help to stabilize farm incomes within the marketplace; and
- e. ensure safe and nutritious food for all Canadians including those on low income and those who are geographically isolated.

### 3. ENSURING THE SAFETY OF THE CANADIAN FOOD SUPPLY

The safety of Canada's food supply is a basic expectation for Canadians. However, the risk of foodborne illnesses have increased significantly with the development of large scale farming and food processing as well as the globalization of the food supply. In a national foodborne emergency under the current system, there is a possibility of confusion of roles between federal and provincial governments and between departments of the federal government; as well as a lack of communication between government agencies and laboratories responsible for testing.

The Auditor General of Canada pointed out in a 2009 report that federal inspection of imported plants and produce coming into Canadian ports was not adequate. Many shipments of unprocessed meat products enter Canada without inspection at border crossing points and the risks associated with processes along the manufacturing chain of prepared foods may occur:

- a. directly with the addition of toxic substances, e.g., melanin added to powdered milk to increase its measured protein content, or
- b. indirectly, e.g., from livestock feed contaminated resulting in meat contamination or egg products containing high levels of dioxin.

***Therefore, the National Council of Women of Canada urges the Government of Canada in the event of a national foodborne emergency to ensure:***

- a. recognition of the central role of the Canadian Public Health Agency in coordinating all levels of government and agency responses, and in communicating with the public; and
- b. effective systems of networking are in place between the government and the laboratories involved in testing.

***The National Council of Women of Canada urges the Government of Canada to give additional attention, via the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, to the safety of imported food through:***

- a. improving and strengthening regulations over imported food and implementation and evaluation of existing regulations; and
- b. ensuring the equivalence at least to Canadian standards of the exporting country's food inspection system; and
- c. improving regulations of imported food to and from Canada including the principles of Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points.

***The National Council of Women of Canada urges the Government of Canada to work with the provinces and territories to increase co-operation in the area of food safety, improved inspection and harmonization standards, as well as on such topics as disease notification, including the possible re-introduction of listeriosis on the national notifiable disease list.***

#### 4. ESTABLISHMENT OF NANOTECHNOLOGY REGULATIONS

Microscopic nanoparticles are being used in more than 800 products sold to consumers such as titanium dioxide in sunscreen, anti-bacterial ceiling paint and tooth whiteners. Little is known about the effects of nanoparticles on humans and animals, in the air, or in food, or on the way they break down in nature over time. Except for legislation obliging companies that have made or imported more than 10 kg of certain identifiable nanoparticles to submit information on these products, there are no nanomaterial-specific regulations in effect in Canada.

***Therefore, the National Council of Women of Canada urges the Government of Canada to:***

- a. establish a public inventory of nanotechnology and nanomaterials in Canada;
- b. establish regulations covering risk assessment procedures prior to a nanomaterial release into the marketplace or environment and a system tracking and assessing after-market issues and problems; and,
- c. respond to the July 2010 recommendations of the Council of Canadian Academies concerning worker safety, namely:
  - i. the development of an interim classification of nanomaterials;
  - ii. a revision of the criteria determining if a new material or product needs to be examined from the standpoint of its health and environmental effects; and
  - iii. the perfecting of standardized methods for handling nanomaterials.

## **5. REFORM OF THE CANADA PENSION PLAN RETIREMENT INCOME SYSTEM FOR CANADIANS WITH AN EMPLOYMENT HISTORY**

The economic wellbeing of Canada's retired population is being threatened by:

- a. a significant increase in the number of retirees as the baby boom generation retires;
- b. on-going low levels of activity in the economy, high unemployment and the underfunding and/or the failure of increasing numbers of employer pension plans, leaving affected retirees without this income; and
- c. the significantly reduced level of personal savings of the working age employed population.

While it is generally assumed that retirees need about 70% of their pre-retirement income to preserve their standard of living in retirement, the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) alone is designed to replace 25% of average adjusted annual earnings up to a maximum (this amount changes yearly and is \$48,300 for 2011).

The CPP is the favoured vehicle of delivery to increase retirement income because it is considered secure, reliable, cost-effective and well managed. An expanded Canada Pension Plan (CPP) could provide an increased defined benefit pension related to earnings and years of contributions, and would remain a public pension plan where risks are pooled to provide adequate benefits to all contributors. These plan reforms are still in the design phase where no clear design has been chosen, except that the CPP seems the preferred vehicle of delivery.

***Therefore, the National Council of Women of Canada urges the Government of Canada to strengthen the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) by increasing benefits for all contributors to ensure them a livable retirement with a defined, indexed and secure pension.***

## 6. INCREASING EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS IN CANADA

There are many well-established benefits associated with widespread use of public transportation, such as:

- a. reduced use of fossil fuels, leading to less vehicle emissions, less environmental pollution, improved air quality and reduced noise levels;
- b. reduced costs of municipal infrastructure;
- c. fewer traffic accidents, with reduced injuries and vehicle repair costs;
- d. increased land values and business opportunities close to the transit path; and
- e. decreased production of greenhouse gases.

There are both equity and efficiency benefits associated with the use of public transportation both of which are crucial considerations in designing a well-functioning system.

Evaluating the operation of a transportation service is extremely complicated, involving its effectiveness in serving both efficiency needs and delivering benefits. Although the Government of Canada does not provide direct transportation services in the municipalities, provinces or territories, it has an important role to play in developing a national strategy that promotes as a priority the provision of public transportation systems in the municipalities, provinces and territories, through public education and funding support.

***Therefore, the National Council of Women of Canada urges the Government of Canada to promote systems of public transportation in the municipalities, provinces, and territories through financial contributions and public education campaigns.***

***The National Council of Women of Canada also urges the Government of Canada to ensure that there are comprehensive evaluation procedures for evaluating proposed new and existing transportation systems with regard to coverage based on needs, increasing ridership, and efficient and effective operation.***

## **PU #1 NEED FOR REALISTIC INSURANCE FOR NUCLEAR INCIDENTS**

In 2004, the National Council of Women of Canada adopted as policy the rejection of Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd.'s concept for burial of nuclear waste; the need for a broad-based public debate on the energy future of Canada, with a specific focus on the need for alternative sources of energy, energy efficiency and energy conservation; the need for significant expenditures on the search for safe technology to treat nuclear waste; upgrading of nuclear site storage and safety; development of alternative sources of energy, energy efficiencies and energy conservation; improvements for international radiation standards, to reflect gender, age, health, long-term low level radiation exposure by workers and the public and environmental impacts, e.g., air, water and soil; the need for a Federal/Territorial/Provincial Environmental Assessment of the Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO) recommendations; opposition to the expansion of the nuclear industry in Canada; the need for a phase-out of nuclear plants at the end of their life cycle, and the need for a ban on the importation of high-level radioactive waste for any purpose.

In 2008 the National Council of Women of Canada adopted as policy that the mining of high grade uranium be phased out, in tandem with the phase-out of nuclear plants at the end of their life cycle; the mining of low grade uranium not be allowed as a replacement for high grade uranium, and in the interim, active mines and mills be made safe and abandoned mines be cleaned up and secured.

Rather than phase out nuclear power, Quebec, New Brunswick and Ontario are in the process of refurbishing older plants, and Ontario has plans for a second generation of nuclear plants, with all the risks that this entails. There would be substantive physical, social, health and environmental costs if a major nuclear incident were to happen at any of these reactor locations. The Government's proposed Bill C-15, an Act Respecting Civil Liability and Compensation for Damage in Case of a Nuclear Accident (NCLA), fails to require Canada's nuclear industry and government to publish a full spectrum of information relevant to nuclear risk and insurance, with the current information often being incomplete, inaccurate or misleading; fails to take into account the precautionary principle; requires insurance coverage for the nuclear reactor operators that falls well short of independently-assessed projected costs; and transfers the balance of insurance costs to the public.

### ***Therefore, the National Council of Women of Canada urges the Government of Canada to:***

- a. require nuclear reactor operators to carry commercial insurance that covers the total costs of a full range of nuclear incidents, as determined by an independent detailed, life-cycle analysis of the full environmental, social, health and economic costs of such an incident, on or offsite, and
- b. regularly publish a full spectrum of information relevant to nuclear risk on and offsite of nuclear installations and nuclear insurance costs.

## **PU #2 International Trade Agreement Negotiations with the European Union**

In 1998 The National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC) adopted as policy, resolution 98.6, which urged 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;
- b. influence job creation and protect culture, health care, social programs, the environment and maintain labour standards;
- c. include gender analysis and analysis of environmental concerns, particularly as they relate to the ability of Canada to fulfil its obligations made in UN conferences in Nairobi, Vienna, Rio de Janeiro, Cairo, Copenhagen and Beijing;
- d. guarantee Canadian ownership and control over the delivery of vital natural resources, such as water, electricity and natural gas;
- e. guarantee compliance with Canadian environmental standards; and
- f. ensure enforcement of this compliance; and
- g. ensure that trade negotiations within such transnational organizations as WTO, APEC and OECD represent the interests of all citizens by:
  - i. working for the equal representation of women on trade delegations from all countries, particularly by setting the example in delegations from Canada;
  - ii. ensuring that gender analysis, as well as social and environmental assessments are an integral part of the process of trade negotiations; and
  - iii. ensuring that the public is fully informed in a timely way of proposed timetables for trade liberalization taking place within trade negotiations and organizations.

The Canadian government is currently in negotiations with the government of the European Union for a Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (C.E.T.A.); without public disclosure and adequate consultation with the Canadian people; and a proposed trade deal with the European Union could also bind provincial, territorial and municipal governments.

This approach could drain needed stimulus from the Canadian economy, worsen the current crisis in manufacturing and interfere with provincial, territorial and municipal governments' authority to provide and regulate local services. Municipal, territorial and provincial governments have the right to support Canadian suppliers; set minimum specifications for materials and services on major projects; adopt ethical and environmental purchasing policies; and enforce commitments to hire workers locally or require companies winning public contracts to invest a portion of revenues or profits in Canadian communities.

***Therefore, the National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC) reiterate as policy:***

- a. the need for adequate public consultation, transparency and public disclosure in negotiation of international trade agreements (including Comprehensive Economic Trade Agreement (C.E.T.A), and
- b. opposition to Canadian government negotiation of international trade agreements that bind and restrict provincial, territorial and municipal governments.

***NCWC also urges the Government of Canada to:***

- a. provide full disclosure to Parliament about trade negotiations with foreign governments;
- b. engage in adequate public consultation in a transparent manner,
- c. work with the provinces, territories and municipalities to ensure adoption of public procurement policies that:
  - i set specifications for materials and services that require a minimum Canadian content on major projects;
  - ii adopt ethical and environmentally sustainable purchasing policies; and,
  - iii enforce commitments to hire workers locally or require companies winning public contracts to invest a portion of revenues or profits in Canadian communities.

### **PU #3 Reform of Canadian Correctional System**

Previous NCWC policy dealing with the correctional system called for the Government of Canada to:

- 70.3 appoint a senior officer responsible for the treatment of women
- 81.8 improve education, rehabilitation and recreation; improve facilities; and construct regional prisons
- 86.11 EM allocate more resources for women in conflict with the law
- 88.18 EM study eight listed sentencing reform policies
- 89.8 protect society from dangerous offenders by denying them parole, confining those on parole to local correctional institutions with appropriate programmes and supervision
- 89.9 appoint a representative Task Force and engage in broad consultation to plan and implement better accommodations and programmes for women and call on NCWC to undertake study of eight sentencing policies, reporting back to subsequent AGM, but none of these policies dealt with the penal system as a whole.

The Government of Canada has recently made clear its intention to expand the Canadian prison system at significant cost to meet the expected increase from its recent “get tough on crime” legislation, at a time of fiscal restraint, and when crime rates in Canada have been trending downwards for the last two decades.

It is estimated that 13 percent of male offenders and 29 percent of female offenders suffer some form of mental illness, but most treatment of the mentally ill in prison is sub-standard or, especially for women offenders, non-existent. Most criminologists agree that longer sentences neither improve public safety nor lead to positive outcomes and successful re-integration into the community for offenders.

The money which the government is proposing to spend on expanding the prisons could more usefully and effectively be spent on better facilities and treatment for mentally ill offenders; measures to reduce the poverty which is the background of so many of the marginalized people who become offenders; and community programs to support at-risk families and youths.

***Therefore the National Council of Women of Canada urges the Government of Canada to:***

- a. postpone plans for further prison expansion until there has been thorough study of the need for expansion and the associated costs and effectiveness;
- b. provide separate facilities for appropriate treatment of mentally ill offenders, both male and female;
- c. explore alternative approaches to sentencing and treatment which will not only protect the community but also work towards rehabilitation and more positive outcomes for offenders; and
- d. work with other levels of government to ensure that poverty reduction strategies as well as community programs for the support of at-risk families and youth are in place.

## **EM #1 The Need for All Canadians to Have Access to Sufficient Resources to Cover the Necessities of Life**

The UN Declaration of Human Rights declares that “everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of oneself and one’s family, including food, clothing, housing, necessary social services, and to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his/her control” with “motherhood and childhood entitled to special care and assistance.”

The National Council of Welfare publication, *Welfare Incomes 2009*, found that despite the fact that all welfare incomes increased in 2008, this increase had very little effect as welfare incomes had already lost so much ground due to inflation of 45% between 1990 and 2009, welfare incomes are still far away from providing the necessities of life, as are the incomes of people working at minimum and other low wages and the Canadian Community Health Survey shows that 9.2% of the population of Canada or more than 1.1 million people live with food insecurity.

Research by the Canadian Centre for Public Policy Alternatives shows that there is a growing gap between upper income Canadians whose incomes have grown very quickly, and both middle income families, whose incomes have stagnated, and lower income Canadians whose incomes have lost ground over recent years, this putting low income earners and social assistance recipients at risk of food and shelter insecurity.

The World Health Organization, responding to increasing concern about the persisting and widening inequities, established the Commission on the Social Determinants of Health, and is holding a conference, the aim of which is “to catalyze political support for national policies to address social determinants of health to reduce health inequities.”

Canada is the only major industrialized country to be without a national housing strategy, although the pockets of extreme poverty, homelessness, near homelessness and unsafe and/or overcrowded dwellings that exist in Canada (and which are particularly prevalent among Aboriginals, who include First Nations, Inuit and Metis) have high costs in terms of poor health, poor school achievement, increased involvement with the police and courts, as well as high levels of incarceration and unemployment through life.

### ***The National Council of Women of Canada urges the Government of Canada to develop an anti-poverty strategy that:***

- a. works to improve daily living conditions of people, with special attention being given to single mothers, older women, refugee women, women with disability, and Aboriginal women living off reserve, at risk of food and shelter insecurity by increasing the Federal Social Transfer to the Provincial and Territorial Governments;

- b. holds the provinces and territories accountable for using additional benefits to social or income assistance recipients so that they have the resources to buy sufficient nutritional food and to live in stable, safe housing;
- c. implements a National Housing strategy without delay;
- d. increases funding to on-reserve Aboriginals, given the exclusive federal responsibility for housing on reserves, in order to alleviate their food and shelter insecurity, paying particular attention to the unsafe, overcrowded and often mold-infected condition of much Aboriginal housing, and lack of access to safe drinking water; and
- e. develops an integrated national policy to reduce health inequities among Canadians by addressing the social determinants of health.

***The National Council of Women of Canada further urges the Government of Canada to work with provincial and territorial governments to ensure that their minimum wage policies support a living wage.***