

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN OF CANADA

2009

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Ottawa Council of Women

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Ottawa Council of Women

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Ottawa Council of Women

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2009- 1 ENSURING POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY THROUGH EFFECTIVE CIVILIAN OVERSIGHT

Whereas #1 the majority of Canadians strongly support and trust their police in the difficult task of maintaining law and order; and

Whereas #2 according to the *Canadian Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement*, some form of civilian oversight of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the First Nations Police and the Military Police is practiced in most provinces and territories with varying degrees of success; and

Whereas #3 civilian oversight to is based on:

- a) the stated goal of building a positive relationship between the public and the police;
- b) an accessible and transparent complaints process, conscientiously monitored by independent and impartial civilian agencies;
- c) commissions and provincial agencies responsible for civilian oversight of investigations into alleged police misconduct that are mandated to ensure complaint investigations are thorough, fair and balanced to the complainant and the respondent; and

Whereas #4 there have been reports which indicate on-going serious incidents of:

- a) police action that threatens the lives of the public, especially Aboriginals and homeless people, and has, in a number of cases resulted in death, and
- b) apparent police inaction in response to the deaths of women, a large proportion of whom were drug addicts, prostitutes or Aboriginal, even though all persons are considered equal before the law; and

Whereas #5 there are a number of cases where there have been reports of the serious failure of the civilian oversight function; therefore be it

Resolved #1 that the National Council of Women of Canada adopt as policy: that federal civilian oversight organizations ensure that all people, irrespective of cultural background, race and sexual orientation receive equal treatment from the police; and be it further

Resolved #2 that the National Council of Women of Canada urge the Government of Canada to:

- a) establish a dedicated, fully independent, civilian complaints oversight authority to investigate serious civilian injury or death resulting from police action or inaction;

- b) establish effective civilian oversight provisions that ensure that the law is fully followed in police treatment of all people, irrespective of cultural background, race and sexual orientation;
- c) ensure that in cases of serious injury or death to civilians, police actions are fully investigated by a dedicated, fully independent, civilian complaints oversight authority.

Resolved #3 that the National Council of Women of Canada request the Provincial Councils of Women and Local Councils of Women to urge their respective Provincial and Municipal Governments to set up similar civilian oversight organizations.

2009-2 ENSURING RCMP ACCOUNTABILITY IN CASES OF NATIONAL SECURITY COMPLAINTS

Whereas #1 after the terrorist attacks of 2001 in the United States, the Parliament of Canada defined terrorism and support of terrorism as criminal acts under the Criminal Code, thus reinstating some responsibility for national security to the RCMP; and

Whereas #2 at least as early as 2005, there were concerns that the RCMP might be abusing its new powers in the national security area and these concerns were reinforced by the findings of Justice O'Connor's federally commissioned report on the Maher Arar case; and

Whereas #3 there have been serious allegations made that, in addition to Maher Arar, there have been other men detained illegally overseas; and

Whereas #4 it has been suggested that the civilian oversight of the RCMP's national security functions might be examined to determine whether to:

- a) strengthen the role of the Commission for Public Complaints Against the RCMP by restructuring it and renaming it the Independent Complaints and National Security Review Agency for the RCMP (ICRA) or
- b) establish a new review mechanism for the RCMP or
- c) leave the existing review mechanism for the RCMP unchanged; therefore be it

Resolved #1 that the National Council of Women of Canada adopt as policy that there be independent oversight for the national security role of the RCMP; and be it further

Resolved #2 that the National Council of Women of Canada urge the Government of Canada to review the recommendations of the second O'Connor Report and alternative proposals, such as those formulated by the Political and Social Affairs Division of the Library of Parliament, Information and Research Services, and implement without delay an independent and effective complaints and national security review function of the actions of the RCMP.

2009-3 NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH STRATEGY

- Whereas #1** approximately three million Canadians suffer from some form of mental illness at some period of their life and as a result often face stigmatization and discrimination in the workplace and the community; and
- Whereas #2** appropriate treatment for those suffering from mental illness is available in only a patchwork fashion across Canada, and in many areas is inadequate especially for young people; and wait times in emergency rooms and to see specialists often far exceed medical guidelines for those with mental illness; and
- Whereas #3** access to supportive housing, and the stability this affords, is of vital importance for the homeless suffering from mental illness if they are to take advantage of community treatment programs and have some hope of recovery; and
- Whereas #4** behavioural problems resulting from mental illness often result in the individual coming into conflict with the law, with the result that about one in five of the inhabitants of Canadian correctional institutions has a diagnosable mental illness; and
- Whereas #5** the Mental Health Commission of Canada, set up in 2005, has a mandate to develop a national mental health strategy for coordinating services and setting priorities, but as of now Canada has failed to meet this mandate and is still the only one of the G8 countries without a mental health strategy; therefore be it
- Resolved #1** that the National Council of Women of Canada establish as policy support for a national mental health strategy; and be it further
- Resolved #2** that the National Council of Women of Canada urge the Government of Canada to work with the provinces and territories to:
- a) develop a national mental health system which is comprehensive, integrated, and accessible to all, and sensitive to linguistic and communication issues including language and culture that will be accessible to residents of Canada;
 - b) address as part of the national plan, priority issues including:
 - i. public education about mental illness,
 - ii. early intervention programs with infants, pre-school children and school age children,
 - iii. community treatment programs for all children, including age-appropriate facilities for adolescents
 - iv. support for families with children with a mental health illness,

- v. access to supportive housing for the homeless with mental health problems,
- vi. treatment for mental illness as an alternative to incarceration or as a component of incarceration for offenders with mental illness, and
- vii. reduction of wait times for assessment and treatment

c) ensure adequate funding for mental health services

2009EI-1

THE NEED TO PROTECT CANADA'S NAVIGABLE WATERS

Whereas #1 Parliament and the Senate have recently rushed their approval of the Budget Implementation Act, Bill C-10 which included a very much weakened Navigable Waters Protection Act (NCWP); and

Whereas #2 the new NCWP eliminates environmental assessments (EAs) for development projects on Canadian waterways with few exceptions; and

Whereas #3 the new NCWP divides Canada's rivers into those worth protecting and those not worth protecting, and, allows "class" lists to be drafted by Cabinet in secrecy, with no public consultation, scientific basis, or opportunity to appeal; and

Whereas #4 navigation is a public right, stemming from both Aboriginal Treaty rights and European Common Law; therefore be it

Resolved #1 that the National Council of Women of Canada adopt as policy, that there be strong legislation to ensure environmental protection for all Canadian navigable waters, and to protect the historic rights of Canadians to navigate these waters; and be it further

Resolved #2 that the National Council of Women of Canada urge the Government of Canada to strengthen legislation to protect our navigable waters through

- a) the requirement that all projects eg. bridge, boom, dam, causeway or dredging on all Canadian waterways be subject to environmental assessment;
- b) government review of recommendations from a Senate Committee, set up specifically for the purpose of gaining broad public input and scientific analysis and recommendations;
- c) maintenance of the existing common law and traditional use of navigable waters.

2009EI-2

THE NEED TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT THROUGH COMPREHENSIVE FEDERAL OR JOINT FEDERAL/PROVINCIAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS

Whereas #1 the 1992 Canadian Environmental Assessment Act (CEAA) and other environmental legislation, and legislative implementation processes, are intended to best protect the environment and ensure environmental sustainability, through standards, informed scientific input, public scrutiny and input and opportunities for public appeal, but these need to be strengthened further, not diluted or avoided; and

Whereas #2 the Government has announced intended changes to the Environmental Assessment Act in order to cut red tape, and speed up infrastructure spending, and, to suspend environmental assessments for 2 years for certain projects; and

Whereas #3 Environmental Assessments are often a shared federal and provincial responsibility, with sometimes divergent legislative requirements; and

Whereas #4 some provinces do not assess certain projects that to date have been subject to a Federal EA; and

Whereas #5 the Federal Government appears poised to limit its assessments to projects that have significant impacts on areas of Federal jurisdiction; and

Whereas #6 if the Federal Government removes CEAA protections, provincial governments lack the jurisdiction to directly pass laws to re-institute these protections; therefore be it

Resolved #1 that the National Council of Women of Canada establish as policy that all projects within the Provincial or Federal jurisdiction, that have the potential to harm the environment, be subjected to an appropriate Federal or joint Federal/Provincial Environmental Assessment that is transparent, ensures rigorous scientific input and scrutiny, allows meaningful public access to the process, and provides enhanced project scrutiny before proceeding to the regulatory approval stage; and be it further

Resolved #2 that the National Council of Women of Canada urge the Government of Canada to ensure that all projects within the Provincial or Federal jurisdiction, having the potential to harm the environment, be subject to an appropriate Federal or joint Federal/Provincial Environmental Assessment that is transparent, ensures rigorous scientific input and scrutiny, allows meaningful public access to the process, and provides enhanced project scrutiny before proceeding to the regulatory stage.

CESSATION OF IRRESPONSIBLE PRODUCTION OF OIL FROM TAR SANDS IN CANADA

Whereas #1 producing a barrel of oil from tar sands leads to at least three times the greenhouse gas emissions of producing a barrel of conventional oil; and

Whereas #2 tar sands oil production is the fastest growing source of greenhouse gas pollution in Canada; and

Whereas #3 tar sands oil production causes widespread landscape destruction; and

Whereas #4 tar sands oil production leads to massive, toxic tailings lakes which leak and are likely to contaminate groundwater; and

Whereas #5 since each barrel of tar sands oil produced by strip mining requires an average of three barrels of water, great stress is being placed on aquatic resources and water resources in the Athabasca Valley, posing risks to the McKenzie River basin; and

Whereas #6 aboriginal communities in the tar sands region are experiencing the destruction of traditional hunting and fishing areas; therefore be it

Resolved #1 that the National Council of Women of Canada adopt as policy the cessation of irresponsible production of oil from tar sands in Canada; and be it further

Resolved #2 that the National Council of Women of Canada urge the Government of Canada to cease supporting the irresponsible production of oil from tar sands in Canada by:

- a) placing a moratorium on new tar sands projects until the environmental concerns are resolved
- b) stopping federal incentives to develop the tar sands
- c) increasing the monitoring and reporting of the environmental and social impacts of producing oil from tar sands.

2009EI-4 STIMULATING SOCIALLY EQUITABLE ECONOMIC ACTIVITY AT TIMES OF ECONOMIC DOWNTURN

- Whereas #1** the National Council of Women passed a resolution in 1989, *Reduction of Federal Government Debt*, citing “wide support among Canadians for maintaining the debt of the Government of Canada at a low level in order to reduce high interest payments”; and
- Whereas #2** Canada has moved to lower the federal debt since that time, so that, at the end of 2008 – 9, the size of the federal debt as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is projected to remain the lowest of the G7 countries; and
- Whereas #3** at this time of severe world wide economic downturn which has led to sharply decreased economic activity, many official and important voices have spoken out, recommending that governments across the world engage in economic stimulus, as a matter of urgency, in order to avoid a long term “depression”; and
- Whereas #4** other voices have refined the concept of stimulus spending by pointing out that investing in different areas of the economy increases economic activity at very different rates; and
- Whereas #5** government deficits resulting from a slowdown in economic activity are deemed to be part of a business cycle or to be “cyclical” deficits, with economic stimulus seen as the best way to address the lack of demand in the economy; and
- Whereas #6** although the regulation of the banking sector in Canada has been lauded internationally as maintaining economic health, credit has been tight throughout 2008 and early 2009, so that loans have been hard to access; therefore be it
- Resolved #1** that the National Council of Women of Canada adopt as policy, during a period of significant and/or prolonged economic downturn, the principles of:
- a) stimulus spending
 - b) continued availability of credit to ensure the economic activities of the nation
 - c) investment in programs that maintain and build health and skills for unemployed and low income people, particularly women; and be it further

Resolved #2 that the National Council of Women of Canada urge the Government of Canada, during a period of significant and/or prolonged economic downturn, to:

- a) work to increase demand in the economy by running cyclical deficits at times of low economic activity, the extent of the deficit depending on the severity of the downturn
- b) engage in the most effective and efficient stimulus measures, particularly by directing more resources to the unemployed and those on low income
- c) work with the financial institutions to assist them in continuing to advance credit at times of low economic recession
- d) explore other ways of ensuring the availability of credit and implementing needed alternative avenues
- e) pay special attention to the needs of women
- f) ensure adequate funding for appropriate retraining for those who have lost their employment.