

THE PROVINCIAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN OF ONTARIO
LE CONSEIL DES FEMMES DE LA PROVINCE D'ONTARIO

ANNUAL BRIEF

FOR PRESENTATION TO
THE GOVERNMENT OF ONTARIO
THE HONOURABLE DALTON MCGUINITY, PREMIER

Honourary Patron
The Honourable David Onley, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario

Thelma McGillivray, President
Luba Podolsky, Vice-President, Resolutions

NOVEMBER 2009

BRIEF TO THE GOVERNMENT OF ONTARIO 2009

PROFILE OF COUNCIL

The Provincial Council of Women of Ontario (PCWO) was founded in 1923 as an affiliate of the National Council of Women of Canada, which was founded in 1893 and the International Council of Women established in 1888.

PCWO'S AFFILIATED MEMBERS

LOCAL COUNCILS

Hamilton, London, Ottawa, Toronto, St. Catharines and Windsor

PROVINCIALY ORGANIZED SOCIETIES

Association of Early Childhood Educators of Ontario

Business and Professional Women's Clubs of Ontario

Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario

Older Women's Network of Ontario Inc.

Ontario Dental Hygienists' Association

Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association

Ontario Home Economics Association

Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation

Ontario Women's Liberal Commission

Polish Alliance Ladies Circle

Polish Canadian Women's Federation

Salvation Army

Soroptimists

Ukrainian Women's Association of Canada

PREAMBLE

The Provincial Council of Women of Ontario (PCWO) is pleased to present its 2009 Annual Brief to the Government of Ontario and looks forward to hearing of the actions, planned by the Premier and the appropriate Government Ministries to address our concerns.

This is the 86th Brief presented to the Government of Ontario. Over the past decades the PCWO has been a leader in bringing to the Government's attention, matters of concern to many Ontarians.

Established in 1923, as an affiliate of the National Council of Women of Canada (1893) the aim of the Council is to work for the betterment of conditions pertaining to family, community and society. PCWO is composed of 6 Local Councils and 14 Provincially Organized Societies.

This year, PCWO will be available on Monday, November 16, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and Tuesday, November 17, from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., as we attend Question Period in the morning. Please join us in Room 2, main floor, of the Legislative Building when we present our Brief to the Government and our members. We look forward to both the responses and a dialogue with Ministers and critics or their representatives, on the PCWO's resolutions, which are presented in this 2009 Brief.

THE RESOLUTION PROCESS

PCWO speaks only on policies approved by the membership through the resolution process. Each year the Local Councils and the Provincially Organized Societies research areas of concern to them, such as economics, education, environment, health and safety, housing and land use, justice, mass media and culture, seniors and status of women. Based on their research findings they prepare resolutions which are then circulated to all PCWO affiliates for study and input

Each resolution must include appropriate background material to substantiate the merits of what is proposed. For brevity, the background material is not included in this Brief. The resolutions are then presented to the delegates from each affiliate present at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) possibly amended and voted on. Some resolutions are Updates of policies adopted in previous years, and are noted as such. There may also be Emergency resolutions dealing with issues that require urgent attention. These are brought forward directly to the AGM by an expedited procedure. This grass roots process, following basic democratic principles, produces policies that PCWO can act upon.

The Resolutions in this Brief were approved at the 2009 AGM which was held in Windsor, Ontario in April, for presentation to the Government of Ontario.

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Whereas #1 68,000 people a year in Ontario visit hospital emergency rooms for treatment of conditions caused by air pollution; and

Whereas #2 in 2005 over 5,800 people in Ontario died prematurely as a result of air pollution; and

Whereas #3 air pollution leads to health conditions such as cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease, lung cancer, negative effects on pregnancy and birth defects; and

Whereas #4 airborne particles smaller than 10 microns penetrate deep into the lungs and, along with acid particles or acid aerosols, reduce lung function; and

Whereas #5 the cost of air pollution to the economy of Ontario is over \$7.8 billion per year; therefore be it

RESOLVED #1 that the Provincial Council of Women of Ontario adopt as policy that air pollution, especially from particles below 10 microns, be reduced to improve health and reduce the cost of health care; and

RESOLVED #2 that the Provincial Council of Women of Ontario urge the Government of Ontario to take measures to decrease the amount of air pollution produced in Ontario, in order to improve health and reduce cost by means such as:

- a) encouraging the use of public transit and building bicycle lanes
- b) encouraging fuel efficient vehicles which use the least polluting fuel source
- c) reducing speed limits
- d) reducing the amount of pollution from industries and power plants
- e) encouraging the transportation of goods by rail
- f) constructing highways that will deliver the least amount of pollution to adjacent communities

2009-2 NON-MARKET ECOLOGICAL GOODS AND SERVICES

Whereas #1 Canada has a wealth of natural capital which provides a stream of non-market ecological goods and services; and

Whereas #2 non-market ecological goods and services include wildlife habitat, erosion control, and air and water purification, which are critical to the functioning economy and life-support system; and

Whereas #3 non-market ecological goods and services are rarely accounted for in our determination of wealth; and

Whereas #4 compensating landowners for providing positive ecological services that benefit society as a whole will promote the maintenance of enhancement of our natural environment; therefore be it

RESOLVED #1

that the Provincial Council of Women of Ontario adopt as policy that landowners be remunerated directly for providing non-market ecological goods and services such as wild life habitat and erosion control; and further be it

RESOLVED #2

that the Provincial Council of Women of Ontario urge the Government of Ontario to:

- a) provide data on natural capital and changes to it over time, to facilitate land-use decisions;
- b) offer remuneration directly for those who protect natural areas; and
- c) develop non-market ecological goods and services and policies and legislation to protect our natural areas.

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**STRENGTHENING ONTARIO'S ENVIRONMENTAL
ASSESSMENT PROCESS**

Whereas #1 Ontario's Environmental Assessment (EA) process serves to protect the public and the environment from harm and, therefore, requires government and municipal agencies to consider the environmental implications of proposed projects before they are allowed to proceed; and

Whereas #2 some of Ontario's most environmentally important decisions have been exempted from the EA process; and

Whereas #3 weakened provincial rules have meant:

- a) that many projects have reduced EA requirements;
- b) the EA process lacks transparency;
- c) Environmental Assessments are often pre-empted in the process by other approvals, which make it difficult to prevent a project from going ahead;
- d) the project proponents may keep technical details from the public's 'as-of-right' scrutiny; and
- e) little monitoring of compliance with EA conditions of approval; therefore be it

RESOLVED #1 that the Provincial Council of Women of Ontario adopt as policy that

- public health and the environment be protected by requiring
- a) a full Environment Assessment (EA) of all projects without exemption
- b) an initial evaluation of whether a project is needed and automatic consideration of alternatives to the project
- c) an EA approval in advance of other approvals
- d) transparency and broad public consultation throughout the process
- e) thorough peer-reviewed studies and as-of-right release of all technical information
- f) on-going monitoring and enforcement of any regulations with all EA-approved projects; and be it further

RESOLVED #2 that the Provincial Council of Women of Ontario urge the Government of Ontario to amend the Environmental Assessment Act, so that its EA process protects public health and the environment through measures that require:

- a) a full Environmental Assessment of all projects without exception
- b) an initial evaluation of whether a project is needed and automatic consideration of alternatives to the project
- c) an EA approval in advance of other approvals
- d) transparency and broad public consultation throughout

the process

- e) thorough peer-reviewed studies and as-of-right release of all technical information
- f) on-going monitoring and enforcement of any regulations with all EA-approved projects

Whereas #1 the Provincial Council of Women of Ontario (PCWO) has policy supporting energy conservation and alternate sources of energy in Ontario; 1997:10 and 1999:08; and

Whereas #2 technology is improving, expanding, and making more affordable, the possibility for energy conservation and energy conservation and energy generation on a small scale; and

Whereas #3 the manufacture of products for energy conservation and small scale energy generation within Ontario could help to revitalize Ontario's economy; and

Whereas #4 increased research and development for energy related products that could be used in apartment and office buildings as well as in individual homes would benefit both the economy and the environment; and

Whereas #5 amendments to building codes to favour efficiency in energy use are needed; therefore be it

RESOLVED #1 that the Provincial Council of Women of Ontario (PCWO) adopt as policy support for

- a) small scale energy conserving and generating systems suitable for family homes and individual buildings, and
- b) research and development of the manufacture of such systems; and

RESOLVED #2 that the Provincial Council of Women of Ontario urge the Government of Ontario to

- a) increase Research and Development funding for small scale energy generating systems suitable for apartment buildings, office buildings, and family homes
- b) amend building codes to favour energy conservation and local energy generation
- c) stimulate the manufacture of products for energy conservation and small scale energy generations within Ontario.

2009:5 AN ADEQUATE INCOME FOR A NUTRITIOUS DIET

Whereas #1 a nutritious diet is a basic requirement for health and well-being, and the most significant barrier to a nutritious diet is inadequate income; and

Whereas #2 there are hundreds of thousands of Ontarians receiving social assistance, 40% of whom are children, who go to school hungry, failing to reach their full potential in school or society;

Whereas #3 poor nutrition leads to an increased risk of chronic and infectious diseases which cost more to treat and manage than to prevent; therefore be it

RESOLVED #1 that the Provincial Council of Women of Ontario adopt as policy
that Ontario's social assistance rates and minimum wage reflect the real cost of living, including a nutritious diet, and be indexed to the rate of inflation; and be it further

RESOLVED #2 that the Provincial Council of Women of Ontario urge the Government of Ontario to:

- a) implement immediately, social assistance rates that reflect the real cost of living, including the findings of yearly Nutritious Food Basket surveys conducted by local Boards of Health, and index rates annually to reflect inflation
- b) implement immediately, a living minimum wage and index this wage to the rate of inflation.

**COMMUNITY USE OF PUBLICLY FUNDED SCHOOL
BUILDINGS AND FACILITIES**

Whereas #1 many publicly funded school are experiencing declining enrolment and are in danger of being closed; and

Whereas #2 schools are usually located in residential areas, within walking distance and easy access to the surrounding community, and

Whereas #3 gymnasias, libraries, playing fields and classrooms are underused in many schools with declining enrolment, and

Whereas #4 locating public library branches, day care centres, health centres, adult education classes, various clubs and community events would help to cover the cost of maintenance of schools with declining enrolment, and

Whereas #5 school boards and municipal planning committees working together could make publicly funded school buildings the hub of their community, therefore be it

RESOLVED #1 that the Provincial Council of Women of Ontario adopt as policy that publicly funded school buildings be used for community activities on a year-round basis, and

RESOLVED #2 that the Provincial Council of Women of Ontario urge the Government of Ontario to encourage

- a) the use of school buildings by the community on a year-round basis, and
- b) urban and rural municipalities to involve school boards when planning the location of public facilities and community events.

Whereas #1 dental work is not covered by medicare and many low income people are not covered by company or group insurance plans, and therefore go without dental care; and

Whereas #2 lack of access to preventive and remedial dental health care, causes further deterioration of oral health, pain and suffering and long term health problems, as well as making it difficult to get and hold a job, and interact socially; and

Whereas #3 with the exception of children of elementary school age, who receive some preventive care through school programs, access to dental care varies throughout the province for low income persons, therefore be it

RESOLVED #1 that the Provincial Council of Women of Ontario adopt as policy, that preventive and remedial dental costs for low income persons and those receiving social assistance be paid through a provincial health program; and be it further

RESOLVED #2 that the Provincial Council of Women of Ontario urge the Government of Ontario to initiate a dental program so that all low income persons may receive preventive and remedial dental care.

RESOLUTION 2009:E1

STIMULATING ECONOMIC ACTIVITY AT TIMES OF ECONOMIC DOWNTURN AND ENSURING THE AVAILABILITY OF CREDIT FOR BUSINESS

- Whereas #1** the National Council of Women of Canada passed a resolution in 1989 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** Ontario, by the fiscal year 2007-2008, no longer ran a deficit but was beginning to pay down its debt; and
- Whereas #3** at this time of severe world-wide economic downturn which has led to sharply decreased economic activity, many voices have spoken out, recommending that governments across the world engage in economic stimulus in order to avoid a long term "depression" which would result in years of hardship for a large proportion of the population due to high unemployment levels, and
- Whereas #4** government deficits linked to a slowdown in economic activity are deemed to be part of a business cycle or "cyclical", with economic stimulus seen as the best way to address the lack of demand in the economy, different categories of spending resulting in different stimulus effects on the economy; and
- Whereas #5** 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; and
- Whereas #6** recently unemployed people require adequate financial support and retraining so that they can rejoin the work force with the minimum of delay; therefore be it

RESOLVED #1 that the Provincial Council of Women of Ontario support as policy that, during a period of significant and/or prolonged economic downturn, the Government of Ontario should take all measures to revive economic activity, including but not necessarily limited to the following:

- a) stimulus spending
- b) support for the availability of credit to ensure continued economic activity in the province
- c) programs that provide support which is adequate to maintain and build health and skills for unemployed and low income people, particularly low income women, who are suffering disproportionately during the current economic crisis; and be it further

RESOLVED #2 that the Provincial Council of Women of Ontario urge the Government of Ontario, 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 measures that provide the most effective stimulus to the economy, particularly by directing more resources to the unemployed and those on low income
- c) work with financial institutions to assist them to continue advancing credit at times of recession
- d) explore other ways of ensuring the availability of credit and implementing needed alternative avenues
- e) pay special attention to the needs of low income women, who are suffering disproportionately during the current economic crisis.

2009 RESOLUTIONS HIGHLIGHTS

ENVIRONMENT

PCWO have many policies on Environment. In 2009 PCWO have added three more; **Air Pollution; Strengthening Ontario's Environmental Assessment Process and Small Scale Energy Solutions.**

Bill 121 The Green Energy Act

PCWO commends the government for its forward-thinking, and enacting The Green Energy Act (GEA). For many years PCWO has spoken to government of the need to focus its investments on energy efficiency, conservation and renewable energy, rather than the limited non-renewables such as coal, oil, gas (as a sole use versus combined heat and power) and particularly, expensive and extremely dangerous nuclear power.

Council has also pointed to the economic potential for "green energy" and energy conservation initiatives, and the need to "give information and incentives for owners and builders to encourage the use of energy efficient materials and appliances in retrofits and new building constructions; and, enhance demand reduction measures e.g. Ontario's Smart Meters, slated to be in effect throughout Ontario by 2010. Consumers already in receipt of Smart Meters are noticing reductions in home hydro costs showing up on their hydro bills-even more so when time-of-use (TOU) is taken into consideration.

In supporting such measures PCWO has suggested to successive governments that they would not only save energy, but create thousands of manufacturing, installation and sales jobs-a prediction the GEA promises to fulfill.

PCWO is also pleased that GEA will help the Government "make energy efficiency a key purpose of the Building Code", something PCWO has advocated for several years. And, we continue to ask for the establishment of aggressive schedule for updating the Energy Efficiency Standards and the Provincial Building Code."

We also note once more, that in creating a culture of conservation, "there needs to be far more emphasis on long term environmental sustainability and protections." And, as outlined in our new policy as of 2009, "all projects that may negatively impact the environment (should) be subject to an Environmental Assessment".

On a local scale, these would include projects such as in Oakville, Ontario, where a proposed 900 megawatt gas-fired power plant may well negatively impact air quality and human health.

On a much larger scale PCWO has been alarmed for many years about the potential dangers of nuclear plants, whose operations have the potential to

cause untold harm to the public, the environment and the economy in south western Ontario, should there be an untoward event. (In the recent reports from the trial of the young Toronto terrorists, nuclear plants were on their target list) all of this clearly tell us that the Ontario Power Authority Integrated Power Supply Plan (IPSP), should have been subject to a joint Federal/Provincial Environmental Assessment.

Further to this, given the extreme risk that existing and planned nuclear plants pose to Ontarians, we reiterate our request that nuclear plants be phased out at the end of their life-cycle and no new ones be built. We urge the Government to take advantage of the down-turn in energy demand and the GEA's intent to move quickly and strongly towards renewables and energy conservation and efficiencies to move towards a far more sustainable, environmentally sound energy future.

PESTICIDES

PCWO is delighted with the Government's 'Cosmetic Pesticide Ban Act 2008.' Having worked for over 20 years to have the use of cosmetic pesticides banned- with some of our federated Local Councils of Women taking a lead role in having municipal bylaws passed, educating the public of the dangers of pesticides and the benefits of such progressive bylaws, as well as alternatives to their use. PCWO commends the Government who has clearly taken a much needed and appreciated visionary leadership role which will surely make Ontario a cleaner, greener, healthier province.

ZERO WASTE

PCWO has supported the optimum use of programs for several years, and we commend the Government for its public and stakeholder consultations around improvements to the 2002 Waste Diversion Act, which had "zero waste" as the main focus. Your work to develop a waste management plan that will move Ontario away from over consumption and inappropriate, environmentally damaging waste disposal methods, such as incineration and land fill is appreciated. We commend the Government for preparing a "zero waste" vision, and working towards a plan that will "reduce waste, increase diversion, and build a greener economy and more sustainable society."

NON-MARKET ECOLOGICAL GOODS AND SERVICES

PCWO has researched this issue and want to recognize that agricultural producers own and manage the majority of Canada's natural capital in southern Canada. In addition to the goods and services we're all familiar with (for example, wheat, canola and beef) this capital is used to produce ecological goods and services (EGS). EGS are the benefits that society receives from healthy landscapes and the conservation of natural lands, including wetlands. These benefits include biodiversity, carbon sequestration, groundwater recharge, flood and erosion control and the purification of air and water. Agricultural producers have the ability to manage their lands to provide an increased abundance and diversity of EGSs. (C.Edwards, 2008).

PCWO encourages the Government to provide data on natural capital, to offer remuneration directly for those who protect natural areas, and to adopt non-market ecological goods and services, policies and legislation.

AN ADEQUATE INCOME FOR A NUTRITIOUS DIET

PCWO is very aware that a nutritious diet is a basic requirement for health and well-being, and the most significant barrier to a nutritious diet is inadequate income. Thus PCWO urges the Government to implement immediately, social assistance rates that reflect the real cost of living, including the findings of yearly Nutritious Food Basket surveys conducted by local Boards of Health and index rates annually to reflect inflation.

There are hundreds of thousands of Ontarians receiving social assistance of whom 40% are children. These children go to school hungry. One must ask what price hunger? A society is only as progressive as it cares and provides fairness to all its citizens. A further question is, do policy makers have any inkling of what a gnawing in the belly caused by hunger means to a child? As humans we strive to obtain our basic needs for food, and shelter and will act upon achieving it regardless of the consequences. Some studies have shown that behaviours, such as stealing food, grabbing their siblings share, or food from school chums, is often what children may do when that gnawing becomes painful. One of the many impacts of this? Neuroscientists state that learning is a biological process in which the connections-or synapses- among the brain's nerve cells become stronger. The more often connection is reactivated, the stronger it becomes, making us smarter. What is the number one issue that stops these connections? Hunger.

COMMUNITY USE OF PUBLICLY FUNDED SCHOOL BUILDINGS AND FACILITIES

PCWO commends the Government for their announcement that in September 2009, 150 Ontario schools will give not-for-profit groups free access to schools after hours for such activities as sports, art and recreation programs for youth.

Our Resolution goes further than this. We point out that many schools are

experiencing declining enrolment and are in real danger of being closed and since the schools are within walking distance and easy access to the surrounding community, and that gymnasias, libraries, playing fields and classrooms are underused, we strongly urge the following.

That the Government of Ontario encourage the use of school buildings by the community on a year-round basis and that urban and rural municipalities involve school boards when planning the location of public facilities. During these tight economic times, the suggestion of locating public library branches, day care centres, health centres, adult education classes, various clubs and community events would help to cover the cost of maintenance of schools with declining enrolment.

EDUCATION

PCWO has often commended the Government of Ontario for its many initiatives in education. Once again, we are especially heartened that in spite of the ongoing economic recession, their promise and investment to expand kindergarten programs to a full day has been reconfirmed for September 2010.

PCWO also commends the Government of Ontario that Ontario students will start 'learning money smarts' as early as Grade 4 to Grade 12 in the Minister of Education's financial literacy curriculum in September 2011. PCWO and NCWC introduced their own program "Securing the Future" ten years ago across Canada, thus we fully support this essential concept, for money and debt are important life skills. It is a sobering statistic that few people are saving money for their future, and reduced pension investment by workers, even as the future looks bleak for full-time employment, pension and social benefits. A recent study by the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada shows that 6 out of 10 Canadians between the ages of 18 and 29 are carrying some debt; more than a third of those owe \$10,000 or more. Learning about handling money at an early age is a basic learning skill whose time is long overdue.

While PCWO does not support single-gender classes we do wish to remind the Government of our 2007:5 Resolution The Inclusion of Women's Studies in the Ontario Curriculum. The need for this is due to the ongoing evidence of gender stereotyping throughout students' lives. It is this attitude we believe leads to many negative outcomes, that result in a barrier for young people to achieve their full human potential. For example, young girls are subjected to sexual harassment and stalking on campus, a place where they are entitled to feel safe and secure, in an environment that parents encourage them to attend. Instead, feelings of fear and insecurity and low self-esteem and problems with learning are becoming the norm. PCWO believes that the introduction of Women's Studies within the Ontario curriculum is the best approach to change negative attitudes and address gender issues that affect both girls and boys and will, in time, impact on society as a whole.

EMERGING AND ONGOING ISSUES

Poverty Reduction

PCWO commends the Government for its stated commitment to poverty reduction, specifically through Bill 152, which received unanimous support in the Legislature, May 2008. It is important that the Government will be required to set a new poverty reduction target and a plan of action every five years, and to consult regularly on progress with low income people and other stakeholders.

Nevertheless, it has been many years since welfare rates were adequate and allowed parents to pay the rent and feed the children, or a single employable person to have a phone, get around on public transport; live in anything more than sub-standard housing, or eat properly. In fact, today, thirteen years after the drastic 21.6% cuts welfare rates are still not up to 1992 levels and fall short of people's needs for even the basic necessities of life.

This difficult reality of people just subsisting in "good times" will be exacerbated by the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression, as jobs become harder to find, many thousands of people are laid off, and may well lose their homes, run out of Employment Insurance and end up seeking social assistance. For which to qualify they must, with the exception in most cases of their houses, to dispose of all but a pittance of their current assets. A great indignity to those who have worked for most of their working lives to put aside financial security for their aging future.

Unless very substantive government investments are made to ensure social assistance adequacy the long term social deficit will be enormous as people struggle to maintain their health (both mental and physical) their homes, jobs and participation in their community. The result will be a lesser quality of life for everyone in Ontario as more and more people live on the margins, as many small businesses lose customers and under-funded community support services struggle to keep up with the demand-not to mention the loss of tax dollars going to the government from a further sharp down-turn in tax revenues.

PCWO urges the Government to make **adequacy the key action word** in Bill 152's poverty reduction plan immediately. Many municipalities, Community Services and District Health Departments, Medical Officers of Health, nurses, academics, advocacy groups such as PCWO, and even financial institutions, have given their support for such wise investments. The time for action is now!

HEALTH

The health of Ontarians has never been more urgent than it is now in 2009 with the impending crisis of the H1N1 virus and its consequent strain on health resources. Of no less urgency is the fear of citizens who are confused and feeling anxious for their children, themselves and their aging parents because of unclear messages through the media. Citizens who rely on their physicians who know them and serve them well during such times have been denied that comfort by the deliberate withholding of the special vaccine from their doctors' offices. In the meantime, information that this is the worse pandemic in years has caused such panic that those most at risk are pushed out of the way by others who cannot control their anxiety. When we view this issue at a later time we hope that the Ministry of Health will have found a timely solution.

PCWO must once again bring to the Government's attention many policies on health care that remain unsettled. Such as Home Care Workers's travel time which is one of the biggest concerns for them. The for-profit agency employers do not consider travelling to be part of the job. In 2006, past-minister and consultant Elinor Caplan recommended that the Government properly compensate workers for time spent travelling to provide care. Three years later, the issue has not been resolved.

PCWO has objected to The Request for Proposals (RFP) Competitive Bidding in Home Care Services. Clients and health care providers are adversely affected by the competitive bidding process. With its onset, health care workers had to begin again as new employees with a different agency losing their seniority and benefits and often paid lower wages. These are mainly women who are in some cases, sole-supporters of themselves or their families.

Further issues are the long-fought-for increased staffing ratios in long term care facilities have not as yet been codified under Bill 140; the cost of the P3 model of financing health care facilities; and the care for the increasing numbers of frail elderly who need in-home supports while hospitals demand that more Long Term Care facilities be built to take the strain off of the shortage of hospital beds. It is still the family caregiver who bears the burden of care when the paid care providers are not there. PCWO will continue to monitor these ongoing issues.

PCWO does commend the Government for Bill 210 which will lead the way to protect live-in caregivers from routine exploitation. Many of the 20,000 plus nannies in Ontario arrive deep in debt after paying thousands of dollars in fees to recruiters who often lure them with phantom job offers. This legislation will ban recruiters from charging nannies any fees, with stiff penalties of up to \$50,000 for violators. This is real progress. If passed, these new employment standards put into law would ban reprisals and specifically outlaw employers or recruiters taking a nanny's passport, work permit or other property. These nannies who leave their own children in their home country to work in Canada to provide a

better life for their families by working for families in Ontario who do not have child care, or elder care themselves, deserve no less than the highest protection.

HOUSING

PCWO's theme for this 86th Semi-Annual Meeting is

Housing/Homelessness/Health, issues that have long been of great concern to Ontarians. It is very sad to comment that the affordable housing situation in Ontario is abysmal. For several years now, many thousands of Ontarians have been on ever-growing waiting lists for affordable, suitable and accessible housing. As a result, those of limited means have had to pay over 50 percent of their meager incomes for housing and often have had to use much needed food money to pay the rent; rely on food banks; leave hydro and heat bills unpaid; move often to avoid the landlord looking for rent arrears; live in run-down unsuitable housing; or indeed sleep on the streets; and, suffer from deteriorating health for both adults, children and youth.

Far from a new situation, this began to develop with the devolution of housing responsibilities from the Federal to Provincial government in the mid 1980s, and as early as 1991, PCWO urged the Government of Ontario to develop and implement a comprehensive long term Ontario Housing Strategy. Therefore, the Provincial Council of Women of Ontario commends the Government for its recent decision to develop the first-ever long term housing plan for Ontario.

PCWO has numerous policies on housing and considers affordable, accessible and adequate housing to be a cornerstone of any successful poverty reduction plan, and has often urged the Government of Ontario make investments in such important housing areas as, non profit initiatives, the maintenance and enforcement of housing standards, effective and equitable delivery of housing, supportive housing and hostels, and cooperative housing. Community consultations around the province have brought hundreds of housing advocates, providers and those in need of housing, together to spell out how such investments, and others, in housing will make a huge difference to Ontarians and what are the best ways to go about making a housing policy that works well, now and over the very long term future.

CONCLUSION

The Provincial Council of Women of Ontario would like to thank the Government of Ontario for the opportunity to present its view and to discuss them with members and staff. As a non-partisan group with a long history of working to improve the life of Ontarians, we are fortunate to have access to decision-makers. We urge the Government to consider our views carefully. They are developed through a long, consultation process that results in policies that are both timely and relevant.

PROVINCIAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN OF ONTARIO

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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