

**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 KATHLEEN WYNNE, PREMIER**



Edeltraud Neal, President

Maide Yazar, Vice-President Resolutions

**The Hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell
Lieutenant Governor of Ontario
Honorary President, Provincial Council of Women of Ontario**

November 2017

BRIEF TO THE GOVERNMENT OF ONTARIO

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 FEDERATED MEMBERS

LOCAL COUNCILS

London and Area Council of Women

Ottawa Council of Women

Niagara District Council of Women

Toronto & Area Council of Women

STUDY GROUP

Oakville and Area

PROVINCIALY ORGANIZED SOCIETIES

Association of Early Childhood Educators - Ontario

Business and Professional Women's Clubs of Ontario

Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario

Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario

Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association

Ontario Dental Hygienists' Association

Ontario Home Economics Association

Polish Canadian Women's Federation

Ukrainian Women's Association of Canada – Eastern Executive

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PREAMBLE

The Provincial Council of Women of Ontario (PCWO) is pleased to present its 2017 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 94th Brief presented to the Government of Ontario. Over the past decades the PCWO has been a leader in bringing the Government's attention to matters of concern to many Ontarians.

Established in 1923, as an affiliate of the National Council of Women (1893) the aim of the Council is to work for the betterment of conditions pertaining to women, family, community and society. PCWO is composed of 4 Local Councils, 9 Provincially Organized Societies and 1 Study Group.

This year, PCWO will be available on **Tuesday, November 14 from 9:15 to 10:15 a.m. and from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. in Room 228, second floor of the Legislative Building** to present our Brief to the Government and our members. We look forward to a dialogue with the appropriate Ministers or their representatives, and the responses of other political parties, on the content of the resolutions and on-going issues, which are presented in this Brief.

THE RESOLUTIONS PROCESS

PCWO speaks only on policies approved by the membership through the resolutions process. Each year our Federates, i.e. 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 federated organizations 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 discussed by the delegates from each federate 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. The grassroots process, following basic democratic principles, produces policies that PCWO can act upon.

The resolutions in this Brief were approved at the 2017 AGM, which was held in Oakville in April, for presentation to the Government of Ontario.

The Honorable Kathleen Wynne
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building
Queen's Park, Toronto

October 24, 2017

Dear Ms. Wynne,

It is a great honour to present to you the 94th Annual Brief on behalf of the Provincial Council of Women of Ontario (PCWO). During 94 years, PCWO has accumulated an important body of policies to improve the lives of women, their families and communities, and we have been able to communicate these policies at our Semi-Annual Meeting at Queen's Park to the Ontario Government of the day. We are a non-partisan, non- sectarian member funded organization. Our advocacy has borne fruit in most instances. We take the long view. But the simple "equal pay for equal work" has escaped us during all these years. An index and the text of our policies for the last 45 years can be found on our website www.pcwocanada.org

This brief will again deal with concerns of women, families and community. It will contain points of ongoing issues, and the new PCWO policy resolutions passed in 2017 which are added to our mandate to speak out on common concerns of our member organizations. For your convenience we are providing a summary of our recommendations below. The full text of the resolutions and expanded descriptions of ongoing issues follow .

We hope that you and your Government will be able to give some consideration to our policy recommendations for women and families in a better Ontario.

Sincerely,

Edeltraud Neal

Edeltraud Neal, President
Provincial Council of Women of Ontario
edeltraud.neal@gmail.com

Summary of Recommendations of the 94th PCWO Brief to the Ontario Government

RESOLUTIONS

Safety and Security on Campus

- That the Government of Ontario closely track and enforce Bill 132 and ensure the yearly outcomes of the reported sexual harassment incidents and complaints are available to families, students and the general public;
- That the Government of Ontario require college and university presidents/CEOs to be proactive and take action to protect the safety and security of students and employees through preventive measures.

Ontario Plan for Sustainable Development

- That the Government of Ontario develop plans for the implementation of all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with some urgency;
- That the Government of Ontario include women at all stages of planning, decision-making, implementation, monitoring and semi-annual evaluation of progress of Ontario's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; and
- That the Government of Ontario set a timeline for Ontario's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Ontario Minister of Labour's Gender Wage Gap Steering Committee Final Report

- PCWO urges the Government of Ontario to adopt as policy all 20 Recommendations put forward by the Steering Committee appointed by the Minister of Labour to close the gender wage gap in Ontario, and requires the Government of Ontario to give annual updates on their progress to the Ontario public.

Use and Health Coverage for HIV Prevention Pill

- The Provincial Council of Women of Ontario urges the Government of Ontario to cover the cost of PrEP and ensure there are specialized clinics to make it available free of charge to persons at risk of contracting the HIV virus.

Coordination of Social Services

- PCWO urges the Government of Ontario to have the provincial ministries funding social services, develop with community organizations, a voluntary one client, one file, one client service worker approach, having addressed any resulting privacy issues.

Humane Holding Conditions for Asylum Seekers

- PCWO urges the Government of Ontario to uphold the purposes of the Canada Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, 2001 to respect human rights by:
 - a) immediately halting the practice of holding asylum seekers in jails while they await government approval to enter Canada legally, and
 - b) immediately planning to work with the Federal government to provide suitable asylum seeker and family centres in all its medium to large cities
 - c) ensuring that humane conditions in these facilities be required and monitored regularly, and that monthly reports be made public.
- PCWO also urges the Government of Ontario to adhere to the UN Conventions on the Rights of the Child by having the detained children attend classes.

Adequate Supply of Long - Term - Care Places in Ontario

- PCWO urges the Government of Ontario to increase the number of licensed LTC places in Ontario to meet the national standard of 1 bed per 1000 of population over the age of 75;
- to develop a system of time limited licenses for LTC beds which can be revoked in 2-3 decades when the population needs have changed;
- to give priority to applications for more licensed LTC beds to not-for-profit and municipal LTC homes.

ON-GOING ISSUES

Ontario Basic Income

- PCWO commends the Government of Ontario for its Ontario Basic Income Pilot (OBIP)". The Provincial Council of Women of Ontario strongly supports a guaranteed basic income program for Ontarians.

- PCWO also appreciates the Government’s acceptance of the recommendation that participants in OBIP continue to receive dental and drug benefits, and that they will also retain Ontario and Canada Child Benefits.
- PCWO urges the Government to continue rolling out the program quickly, so that as many Ontarians as possible who are living in poverty may benefit from having an income that covers their basic needs and provides the above noted benefits. In the meantime
- PCWO urges the Government not to wait 3 years until OBIP is put in place, but rather immediately increase social assistance rates, so that they are adequate for all who struggle to make ends meet, but with a particular urgency for singles and couples without children.

Housing

- PCWO commends the Government for its latest efforts to alleviate the lack of affordable housing, through their 2016 Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy update, and substantive investments in the new” Home for Good Supportive Housing Program”.
- Affordable, appropriate and accessible housing is considered a basic need in Canada. Despite commendable Federal and Provincial studies, new programs, reinvestments and partnerships, many thousands of Ontarians remain on waiting lists for years.
- PCWO urges the Provincial Government to work with the Federal Government to immediately begin investing substantively in new affordable housing construction.

Universal Child Care for All Ontarians

- We commend the Ontario Government on the steady progress made in providing access to high-quality, inclusive and affordable early years and child care programs, most recently with *Ontario’s Renewed Early Years and Child Care Policy Framework (2017)*. The 2014 Macdonald/Friendly report ‘The Parent Trap’, recognized that child care fees can play a major role in labour force participation rates, particularly for women.
- PCWO agrees that it is time for the Ontario Government to meet the needs of families and provide universal child care at an affordable rate geared to income as they have done in Quebec. We urge the government to fund the immediate development of a universal child care program.

Gender Analysis in all Ministries

Since its inception, PCWO has advocated for gender equality. PCWO agrees that a gender lens is a key process in establishing gender equality in Ontario Government policy and programs.

- PCWO urges the government to provide the Ministry of the Status of Women with adequate funding to perform their work in developing a gender based analysis, and funding for all ministries to utilize the analysis tool.

Environment

The Provincial Council of Women of Ontario once more commends the Provincial Government for

- its closure of coal-fired plants and
- long-term investments in renewable energy,
- the recently- initiated Climate Change Action Plan program that aims to reduce carbon emissions through investments in energy conservation programs, such as home retrofits.

PCWO is greatly concerned, however, about the nuclear costs to Ontario that include the life-time extensions and operation of aging nuclear plants, about the safe management of nuclear waste, and the potential astronomical costs of a nuclear disaster . Nuclear risks to Ontario residents currently derive particularly from the storage and transport of nuclear waste, such as:

- the AECL/private sector plan for a huge mound of low and medium extremely long lasting radioactive waste at the Chalk River site, which is located in a severely earth-quake prone zone close to the Ottawa River and up-stream from thousands of Ottawa and Quebec residents.
- an increased risk of major disaster during the transport of extremely dangerous fissionable liquid nuclear waste containing HEU, from Chalk River, through farmlands, communities, and over waterways such as Lake Ontario and the Niagara River, 1,800kms to Savannah River South Carolina .

Ontario Nuclear Emergency Response Plan (PNERP)

In light of these nuclear risks PCWO is not impressed by the April 2017 Provincial **Nuclear Emergency Response Plan (PNERP) recommendations**. We have recently responded to this proposal on Environmental Bill of Rights Registry (EBR) and have requested among other measures:

- the fulfillment of a Provincial Minister of Community Safety 2012 promise to study the impact of a severe nuclear accident and release of radionuclides on the Great Lakes drinking water
- the development of a Nuclear Emergency Response Plan that uses the most stringent application of the “*precautionary*” principle to ensure that international best practices are met, or even exceeded

- PCWO does not feel that the relatively minor reductions in carbon emissions from Ontario's reliance on nuclear power justify its continued use, and would once more refer to our long standing policy, that nuclear reactors should be shut down and dismantled at the end of their life span and nuclear power should be phased out as soon as possible.

Waste Management:

- We commend the Government for its new 'Strategy for a Waste-Free Ontario', particularly its goal of a "zero-waste" Ontario, with the added benefits of creating jobs and helping fight climate change.

The Greenbelt, Farmland Preservation and Climate Change

- PCWO commends the Government of Ontario for holding fast in its determination to protect farmlands and natural areas in the Greenbelt communities and even extending them in Hamilton and Niagara with indications that further extensions will be forthcoming
- PCWO supports the Ministry of Agriculture's creation of a new soil map that will identify those areas of Ontario that must be kept for agricultural products.

The Great Lakes

- In 2015 PCWO commended the Government for its enactment of the *Great Lakes Protection Act*, which noted the many threats to the Great Lakes, such as invasive species, pollution and climate change.
- We are also appreciative of the recent Ontario–Quebec Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Region Clean Water Initiative.
- PCWO is, however, greatly concerned that to date the Government has failed to recognize the ever-growing public and expert concerns around the looming nuclear threats to the Great Lakes, and the extensive 1997 IJC Nuclear Task Force report which warned of the lack of data available on radionuclide releases, the potential impact of radionuclides on the ecosystem, and that radionuclides are not listed as "*a chemical of mutual concern.*"

Health

- PCWO congratulates this government for the work being done to improve conditions of overcrowding and lack of rehabilitation programming in prisons.
- We are also heartened by the funding being given to mental health programs in this province
- as well as the funding for training of Nurse Practitioners which has ensured that more Ontario residents have access to primary care in the community.

- We have previously urged the government to increase the scope of practice for midwives in Ontario to provide *Well Women Care* for women up to the time of menopause. This would further enhance access to primary care, especially for women in remote parts of Ontario.
- We continue to urge this government to consider the ultimate cost savings for Ontario Citizens by providing a universal pharmacare program and dental program for children in Ontario.

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN RESOLUTION

Addressing Suicide of Aboriginal Peoples

PCWO as a member of the National Council of Women

- urges the National, Provincial, Local and Aboriginal Governments, with overlapping jurisdictions, to work together to:
 - a) determine the specific causes of suicide within individual aboriginal communities,
 - b) provide aboriginal communities with the dedicated resources necessary to deal with these issues,
 - c) help all aboriginal communities to thrive socially, culturally and economically.

RESOLUTIONS

SAFETY AND SECURITY ON CAMPUS

- Whereas #1** the National Council of Women of Canada adopted policy 98.01 calling for zero tolerance of violence against women and for action towards gender equality, and Canada has signed the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1995; and
- Whereas #2** these problems still exist, and every year students and staff are exposed to unaccustomed situations of physical and emotional danger, in Ontario's post secondary educational institutions; and
- Whereas #3** Ontario's 2011 Sexual violence Action Plan features a resource guide for colleges and universities to help them work with students and staff to develop policies and protocols, and its 2016 Bill 132 requires post secondary institutions to report their progress regarding sexual violence incidents and complaints, the support services offered, and the implementation and effectiveness of their policies yearly to the Minister of Colleges and Universities and their Board of Governors, but at present there is no obligation for this information to be made public; and
- Whereas #4** Bill 132 also amended the Health and Safety Act to require colleges and universities to have updated workplace and sexual harassment policies and training in place by September 2016; therefore be it
- Resolved#1** that the Provincial Council of Women of Ontario (PCWO) adopt as policy that the safety and security of students and employees on post secondary educational institutions' campuses in Ontario be protected through proactive policies, protocols and yearly available reporting; and be it further
- Resolved #2** that PCWO urge the Government of Ontario to closely track and enforce Bill 132 and ensure the yearly outcomes of the reported sexual harassment incidents and complaints are available to families, students and the general public; and be it further
- Resolved #3** that PCWO urge the Government of Ontario to require college and university presidents/CEOs to be proactive and take action to protect the safety and security of students and employees through preventive measures.

ONTARIO PLAN FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- Whereas #1** The Government of Ontario is developing plans to meet the goals of the United Nations Sustainability Development Agenda 2030 regarding ending poverty, fighting inequality and injustice, and protecting the planet; and
- Whereas #2** it was appreciated by Millennium Goal experts that future improvements need to be sustainable, and that involving more women in the consultation, planning and decision-making stages, as well as implementation and monitoring, would lead to greater success; therefore be it
- Resolved #1** that the Provincial Council of Women of Ontario (PCWO) adopt as policy support for the implementation of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Goals, and that women be involved at all stages; and be it further
- Resolved #2** that PCWO urge the Government of Ontario to develop plans for the implementation of all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with some urgency; and be it further
- Resolved #3** that PCWO urge the Government of Ontario to include women at all stages of planning, decision-making, implementation, monitoring and semi-annual evaluation of progress of Ontario's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; and be it further
- Resolved #4** that PCWO urge the Government of Ontario to set a timeline for Ontario's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

ONTARIO MINISTER OF LABOUR'S GENDER WAGE GAP STEERING COMMITTEE'S FINAL REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

Whereas #1 the Premier gave a mandate to the Minister of Labour to Close the Gender Wage Gap in Ontario in the Context of the 21st Century Economy; and

Whereas #2 the Minister of Labour appointed by Order in Council a Steering Committee to review, consult and make recommendations to Close the Gender Wage Gap in Ontario in the Context of the 21st Century Economy; and

Whereas #3 the Steering Committee conducted research and consultations from April 2015, to February 2016, and submitted 20 Recommendations in their Final Report to the Minister of Labour in May 2016; and

Whereas #4 the Recommendations address Families, Employers, Governments and Workplaces that, if adopted, will create an environment to Close the Gender Wage Gap in Ontario; therefore be it

Resolved #1 that the Provincial Council of Women of Ontario (PCWO) adopt as policy all 20 Recommendations put forward by the Steering Committee appointed by the Minister of Labour to close the gender wage gap in Ontario; and be it further

Resolved #2 that PCWO urge the Government of Ontario to adopt as policy all 20 Recommendations put forward by the Steering Committee appointed by the Minister of Labour to close the gender wage gap in Ontario, and require the Government of Ontario to give annual updates on their progress to the Ontario public.

USE AND HEALTH COVERAGE FOR HIV PREVENTION PILL

Whereas #1 the pre-exposure prophylaxis pill (PrEP) has been used in the treatment of HIV for over a decade and recent clinical trials show that it can reduce the risk of contracting HIV by over 90%; and

Whereas #2 PrEP is extremely expensive for individuals and although its use has been recently approved by Health Canada, Quebec is the only province to fund PrEP, which it delivers at specialized clinics; and

Whereas #3 the cost of HIV treatment far exceeds the cost of the use of PrEP and health professionals are promoting the need for a full range of tools to more dramatically reduce the numbers of person contracting it; therefore be it

Resolved #1 that Provincial Council of Women of Ontario adopt as policy that the cost of pre-exposure prophylaxis pill (PrEP) be covered by the Province of Ontario and that specialized clinics make it available for those at risk of acquiring the HIV virus; and be it further

Resolved #2 that the Provincial Council of Women of Ontario urge the Government of Ontario to cover the cost of PrEP and ensure there are specialized clinics to make it available free of charge to persons at risk of contracting the HIV virus.

COORDINATION OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Whereas #1 several provincial ministries fund services that impact families including social services, education, children's services and health care; and

Whereas #2 trying to navigate all the services one may need, is time consuming, involves a lot of paperwork and is frustrating; and

Whereas #3 by sharing information among agencies and ministries by setting up a single electronic file, families will be cared for more holistically and successfully; therefore be it

Resolved #1 that the Provincial Council of Women of Ontario (PCWO) adopt as policy that the provincial ministries funding social services, develop with community organizations, a voluntary one client, one file, one client service worker approach having addressed any resulting privacy issues; and be it further

Resolved #2 that PCWO urge the Government of Ontario to have the provincial ministries funding social services, develop with community organizations, a voluntary one client, one file, one client service worker approach, having addressed any resulting privacy issues.

HUMANE HOLDING CONDITIONS FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS

Whereas #1 Ontario has abrogated the purposes of Canada's Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, 2001 and international human rights law by detaining asylum seekers (also called migrant detainees), including families and children, in jails and inadequate detention centres where sometimes children are separated from their parents; and

Whereas #2 many of the detainees have no criminal record and are held mainly for administrative purposes; and

Whereas #3 conditions in jails and detention facilities are often inhumane (e.g. arbitrary, indefinite detention without meeting generally acceptable living conditions) and can lead to irreparable psychological harm to children and worsen the mental health of others; therefore be it

Resolved #1 that Provincial Council of Women of Ontario adopt as policy that asylum seekers detained in Ontario awaiting either approval to enter Canada or before being sent back to their country of origin, be held under humane conditions, and that children not be separated from families; and be it further

Resolved #2 that the Provincial Council of Women of Ontario urge the Government of Ontario to uphold the purposes of the Canada Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, 2001 to respect human rights by:

- d) immediately halting the practice of holding asylum seekers in jails while they wait government approval to enter Canada legally, and
- e) immediately planning to work with the Federal government to provide suitable asylum seeker and family centres in all its medium to large cities
- f) ensuring that humane conditions in these facilities be required and monitored regularly, and that monthly reports be made public.

Resolved #3 that the Provincial Council of Women of Ontario urge the Government of Ontario to adhere to the UN Conventions on the Rights of the Child by having the detained children attend classes.

ADEQUATE SUPPLY OF LONG TERM CARE PLACES IN ONTARIO

- Whereas #1** the Provincial Council of Women of Ontario (PCWO) has, since 1976 had policy concerning Long Term Care Homes (LTC), including: 76.10 - Inspection of Nursing Homes; 83.6 - Homes For the Aged; 93.4 - Beds For Long Term Care (LTC); 03.03 - Staffing Levels for LTC Homes; 01.04U - Regulation of LTC Homes; 08.2U - Standards of Care in LTC Homes; and
- Whereas#2** the need for LTC licensed places in Ontario far exceeds the supply, such that there is no incentive for privately owned LTC homes to invest in capital improvements to update facilities and tear down buildings that barely meet the minimum standard for quality of life; and
- Whereas #3** The Government of Ontario is exacerbating this situation by limiting the numbers of licenses to the existing stock so that not-for-profit groups cannot obtain licenses for LTC beds to increase the availability and choice for those who need this level of care; and
- Whereas #4** The Government of Ontario has rationalized that by 2034 there will be a decreased need for LTC beds due to changes in demographics and are reluctant to add more licenses in the system at this time despite the overwhelming need for more LTC beds; therefore be it
- Resolved #1** that the Provincial Council of Women of Ontario (PCWO) adopt as policy that the number of licensed long term care (LTC) places available in Ontario meet the national standard; and be it further
- Resolved #2** that PCWO urge the Government of Ontario to increase the number of licensed LTC places in Ontario to meet the national standard of 1 bed per 1000 of population over the age of 75; and be it further
- Resolved #3** that PCWO urge the Government of Ontario to develop a system of time limited licenses for LTC beds which can be revoked in 2-3 decades when the population needs have changed; and be it further
- Resolved #4** that PCWO urge the Government of Ontario to give priority to applications for more licensed LTC beds to not-for-profit and municipal LTC homes.

ONGOING ISSUES

Economics

Universal Child Care for All Ontarians

The 2014 Macdonald/Friendly report 'The Parent Trap', recognized that child care fees can play a major role in labour force participation rates, particularly for women. Quebec has the lowest rates in Canada at \$8.00 per day, as of April 22, 2015.

- More than three-quarters of mothers with children under the age of six are part of the labour force.
- Families rely on child care in order to be able to work. Women's labour force participation rates correlate to the availability and affordability of child care.
- In Quebec, women spend a month's earnings to pay for yearly child care expenses. This has led to more women participating in the labour force which is good for families and good for the economy.

PCWO agrees that it is time for the Ontario Government to meet the needs of families and provide universal child care at an affordable rate geared to income as they have done in Quebec. We urge the government to fund the immediate development of a universal child care program.

Gender Analysis in all Ministries

Since its inception, PCWO has advocated for gender equality. In September, 2016 Premier Wynne instructed the Women's Directorate, now the Ministry on the Status of Women, to lead the development of gender-based analysis to be applied to support and inform the development of policies and programs across government.

PCWO agrees that a gender lens is a key process in establishing gender equality in Ontario. We urge the government to provide the Women's Directorate with adequate funding to perform their work in developing a gender based analysis, and funding for all ministries to utilize the analysis tool. Otherwise gender equality will unacceptably remain a low priority and not be realized.

Basic Income Pilot

The pilot, launched in 2017, will test whether a basic income can better support vulnerable workers, improve health and education outcomes for people on low incomes, and help ensure that everyone shares in Ontario's economic growth. It will measure outcomes in:

- Food security
- Stress and anxiety
- Mental health
- Health and health care usage
- Housing stability
- Education and training
- Employment and labour market participation

The three-year pilot will take place in the following locations:

- Hamilton, Brantford, Brant County - launched late spring 2017
- Thunder Bay and the surrounding area - launched late spring 2017
- Lindsay - launching by fall 2017

PCWO agrees that a basic income program is a requirement to reduce and eliminate poverty. Therefore we encourage the government to invest in this project and report regular updates on the pilot's progress.

Proposed Changes to Employment and Labour Laws

PCWO agrees that the employment and labour laws of Ontario need updating. We encourage the government to continue with these changes and in particular the minimum wage increases, equal pay for part-time, temporary, seasonal, casual and temp-agency employees, scheduling, paid and unpaid leaves and union certification processes.

Conclusion

PCWO encourages the Government to fund and support sustainable solutions to ongoing issues and maintain funding as needed. Women comprise the highest number of poverty and low income earners. Women suffer to a greater degree when health care budgets are cut, when home care and child care are not affordable or accessible, when social assistance rates are inadequate and when housing is not affordable or accessible. These conditions put women in vulnerable situations where they can more easily become victims of domestic and sexual violence requiring shelter, protection and medical assistance.

PCWO believes that this Government must invest in the people of Ontario. The cost of poverty is unsustainable when considering health, social, educational and institutional services. Every dollar invested in Ontarians to reduce poverty through adequate social assistance, liveable wages, health services for all, affordable housing and support services, brings a high rate of return, not only for families, but for communities and businesses alike.

Environment

Nuclear

The Provincial Council of Women of Ontario once more commends the Provincial Government for its closure of coal-fired plants and its long-term investments in renewable energy, which together provide jobs, protect the environment, and make Ontario a safer, healthier place to live. We also heartily support the recently- initiated Climate Change Action Plan program that aims to reduce carbon emissions through investments in energy conservation programs, such as home retrofits.

However, these investments pale in comparison to the enormous expenditures on all phases of nuclear power, which through its life cycle produces carbon emissions and creates fewer potential jobs than alternative energy, energy efficiencies and conservation. The ever-ballooning nuclear costs to Ontario include the life-time extensions and operation of aging, very dangerous, nuclear plants, safe management of nuclear waste, and the potential astronomical costs of a nuclear disaster .

PCWO is also acutely aware of a growing number of nuclear risks to Ontario residents, such as:

- 38 nuclear plants, some of them very old, sited around the Great Lakes.
- OPG's planned deep geological dump near the shores of Lake Huron.
- the AECL/private sector plan for a huge mound of low and medium extremely long lasting radioactive waste at the Chalk River site, which is located in a severely earth-quake prone zone close to the Ottawa River and up-stream from thousands of Ottawa and Quebec residents.
- the Pickering reactors, that are well past their planned life span, and similarly lie on an active fault line.
- an increased risk of major disaster during the transport of extremely dangerous fissionable liquid nuclear waste containing HEU, from Chalk River, through farmlands, communities, and over waterways such as Lake Ontario and the Niagara River, 1,800kms to Savannah River South Carolina .

In light of these dangerous situations, PCWO is shocked by the terribly weak April 2017 Provincial Nuclear Emergency Response Plan (PNERP) recommendations. We have recently responded to this proposal on Environmental Bill of Rights Registry (EBR) and have requested :

- fulfillment of a Provincial Minister of Community Safety 2012 promise to study the impact of a severe nuclear accident and release of radionuclides on the Great Lakes drinking water

- the development of a Nuclear Emergency Response Plan that uses the most stringent application of the “*precautionary*” principle to ensure that international best practices are met, or even exceeded
- a Ministerial “*review*” of the public and other comments
- an independent review by arms-length experts, practitioners from a variety of disciplines e.g. the medical, social service, environmental science, other ‘first responders’ e.g. nurses, fire departments ambulance personnel, and municipal planners.

Nuclear proponents disregard or play down these warnings and advice from many environmentalists and scientists, citing its climate change reduction benefits. However, PCWO does not feel that the relatively minor reductions in carbon emissions from Ontario’s reliance on nuclear power justify its continued use, and would once more refer to our long standing policy, that nuclear reactors should shut down and dismantled at the end of their life span and nuclear power should be phased out as soon as possible.

Waste Management:

As early as 1995, PCWO has advocated for waste management reforms, and Local Councils of Women were involved in the initiation of municipal Blue Box programs in the 1980s, and later, particularly in Niagara, promoting the concept of Zero Waste rather than incineration. Therefore, we commend Government for its new ‘Strategy for a Waste-Free Ontario’, particularly its goal of a “*zero-waste*” Ontario, with the added benefits of creating jobs and helping fight climate change.

The Greenbelt, Farmland Preservation and Climate Change

PCWO commends the Government for holding fast against pro-development interests, including many municipalities, in its determination to protect farmlands and natural areas in the Greenbelt communities and even extending them in Hamilton and Niagara with indications that further extensions will be forthcoming. Niagara tender fruit lands are particularly important, as their potential land base of 36,000 acres in 1974 has been reduced to about 9,000 acres with only 7,600 acres in production, and they are still under threat from a demand for rural estates, and a boost in farm land prices due to competing agricultural investments e.g. sale to conglomerates for uses such as wineries and Marijuana.

Therefore, PCWO supports the Ministry of Agriculture’s creation of a new soil map that will identify those areas of Ontario that must be kept for agricultural products, the most unique of these being the “*specialty crop*” tender fruit lands of Niagara. Since 1976 PCWO has advocated for their protection and more recently for permanence through the use of payments to fruit farmers for restrictive covenants/easements on their lands in perpetuity as part of the Provincial Climate Action Plan. Such a program will definitely, as it does in California, go a long way in promoting soil retention and

avoidance of carbon emissions through permanent urban boundaries rather than emissions from future sprawl.

The Great Lakes

PCWO's interventions and recommendations to the provincial Government regarding the Great Lakes date back to 2005 with presentations in Niagara Falls and Windsor to the IJC regarding the Draft Great Lakes Charter Annex Agreements, and a subsequent letter to the Province of Ontario, urging, among other things that the Government "*fund and support with legislation, the development of comprehensive long term plans to fulfill the vision of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement for a clean and healthy Great Lakes ecosystem.*"

Therefore, in 2015 PCWO commended the Government for its enactment of the *Great Lakes Protection Act*, which noted the many threats to the Great Lakes, such as invasive species, pollution and climate change. We are also appreciative of the recent Ontario–Quebec Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Region Clean Water Initiative.

Nevertheless, to date the Government has failed to recognize the ever-growing public and expert concerns around the looming nuclear threats to the Great Lakes, and the extensive 1997 IJC Nuclear Task Force report which warned of the lack of data available on radionuclide releases, the potential impact of radionuclides on the ecosystem, and that radionuclides are not listed as "*a chemical of mutual concern.*"

PCWO is extremely concerned about this latter Great Lakes Issue, and in our March 3rd, 2017 brief to the International Joint Commission on its Draft First Triennial Assessment of Progress Meeting, we warned that the lack of the 'parties' i.e. US and Canadian governments', attention to nuclear and other "*chemicals of mutual concern, should be of grave concern to those millions of people living, working and relying on the Great Lakes for multiple reasons, the most significant being clean potable water and public health.*"

Health

The most ground-breaking discussion by this government is the proposal of a guaranteed annual income in Ontario. Research coming from some pilot programs show that a guaranteed income program actually reduces health care costs (as well as reducing policing costs and improving education outcomes). We congratulate this government in this innovative and dignified approach to supporting social programs in Ontario.

The Provincial Council of Women has previously advocated for improved standards of staffing to ensure that the complex-care residents in these long-term care facilities are

receiving adequate care and that staff have the time allotment in their workload to provide optimum care and not just minimally acceptable care. This government must ensure that quality Long Term Care is available for the frail elderly who can no longer be supported in their own homes.

PCWO has been promoting discussion of our 2016 policy: *CO-PAYMENT A BARRIER TO RECEIVING HOME SUPPORT SERVICES*. The burden of co-payments for clients introduces inequity in health care system. We have met with the Honourable Marie France Lalonde, MPP Ottawa-Orleans who has a strong background in health and social services. We also meet with the Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Health and Long Term Care and Ottawa area MPP, Jack Fraser and the Honorable Yasir Naqvi to discuss obstacles in the present co-payment system. The Minister of Health, in the "*Patient First*" document, outlines proposed restructuring of Homecare in the province but recommendations still rely on the private-for-profit sector. We urge the government to revisit the CCAC delivery model of home care in Ontario to come up with a strategy to reduce the excessive administration costs of CCAC and RFP costs which burden our homecare system.

PCWO congratulates this government for the work being done to improve conditions of overcrowding and lack of rehabilitation programming in prisons. We are also heartened by the funding being given to mental health programs in this province as well as the funding for training of Nurse Practitioners which has ensured that more Ontario residents have access to primary care in the community. We have previously urged the government to increase the scope of practice for midwives in Ontario to provide *Well Women Care* for women up to the time of menopause. This would further enhance access to primary care, especially for women in remote parts of Ontario.

We continue to urge this government to consider the ultimate cost savings for Ontario Citizens by providing a universal pharmacare program and dental program for children in Ontario.

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Housing

Affordable, appropriate and accessible housing is considered a basic need in Canada. Yet, in large part due to the considerable reduction of Federal and Provincial funding for affordable housing in the late 1990s early 2000's, today, despite commendable Federal and Provincial studies, new programs, reinvestments and partnerships, many thousands of Ontarians remain on waiting lists, some for over 4 years or longer. Others live in poorly maintained buildings, with friends and relatives, in shelters or on the street. The very low rent allowance for those receiving social assistance, the maximum allowable ranging between \$384 for singles and \$831 for a couple with six children, when the average rent for a one bedroom apartment in 2016 was \$994, greatly exacerbates the housing crisis for those receiving social assistance.

PCWO commends the Government for its latest efforts to alleviate this terrible situation, through their 2016 Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy update, and substantive investments in the new Home for Good Supportive Housing Program. This program, builds on the success of the Federal/Municipal 'pilot' Homes First program, where providing housing first and then building in supports to help renters with mental and physical problems, worked well - the homelessness having caused, or exacerbated the problem, and stable housing often making a very big difference.

This will not be a quick fix, however, to a housing crisis that has built up over many years. Therefore PCWO urges the Provincial Government to work with the Federal Government to immediately begin investing substantively in new affordable housing construction, as was done up until the 1990s, when thousands of affordable homes were built each year, people housed, jobs created, and the economy benefited.

Social Development

Basic Income Guarantee

Provincial Council of Women of Ontario strongly supports a guaranteed basic income program for Ontarians. First and foremost, such a program will help alleviate poverty and improve the quality of life and sense of personal dignity for individuals, families and children. It will also help women leave abusive relationships, retain suitable housing, and provide children with more stability. It will also assist people in their efforts to participate in the economy in our rapidly evolving technological world, where jobs are not secure and many will not exist as automation increases in scope. Overall, PCWO looks to the Manitoba Minicom experiment of 1974-79 for evidence that through such a program, Ontario will experience savings in social and health costs, improvements in educational and health outcomes, and generally, improvements in the economy.

Therefore, PCWO commends the Government for taking a leading role in Canada with its long-planned "4,000 participant, three year Ontario Basic Income Pilot (OBIP)" program. PCWO also appreciates the Government's acceptance of the recommendation of many advocacy groups including PCWO, that participants continue to receive dental and drug benefits, and that they will also retain Ontario and Canada Child Benefits.

PCWO urges the Government to continue rolling out the program quickly, so that as many Ontarians as possible who are living in poverty may benefit from having an income that covers their basic needs and provides the above noted benefits. We also appreciate the appointments of experienced and knowledgeable individuals, advocates and educational experts to help deliver, advise and evaluate the program. It is our hope that their input and advice will be a key determinant of a final decision to expand the Ontario Basic Income Program (OBIP) province-wide, and then hopefully merge it with a Federal program. We are convinced that such a visionary program would be just as

successful as Canada's long-standing OAS, which is universal and has reliably lifted countless seniors out of extreme poverty, and given them a better quality of life.

Adequacy of Social Assistance

As we wait the three years or more for OBIP to become a reality, or not, many thousands of Ontarians will continue to live in dire straits. We note, that while families with children are for the first time in 24 years, somewhat better off, particularly due to the recent Canada Child Benefit payments, it is shocking that so many families and individuals still have to go hungry, decide whether to pay the rent or feed children, go without nutritious food, live in squalid circumstances, visit food banks, and are not able to afford the simple things for their children that most of us can, without asking others for help.

The most clear proof that social assistance rates play a key role in the large numbers of Ontarians living in poverty, can be seen in the \$1,416 per month i.e. \$16,992 per year, income deemed necessary to cover for a single employable person receiving Ontario Works assistance, who enrolls in the Ontario Basic Income Pilot program. Although this amount is still 25% below Ontario's Low Income Measure (LIM) it is almost double his/her current meagre \$730 per month i.e. \$8,670 per year, which abysmally fails to cover rent and basic needs. A couple with no children also lives in desperate financial circumstances, receiving \$13,416 per year, when the OBIP considers at least \$26,000 is necessary. Therefore PCWO urges the Government not to wait until a OBIP is put in place, but rather immediately increase social assistance rates, so that they are adequate for all who struggle to make ends meet, but with a particular urgency for singles and couples without children. We would add that Ontarians receiving Ontario Disability Support payments are a bit further ahead, but their overall needs are often greater.

**NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN OF CANADA
2017 RESOLUTION WITH PROVINCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

1. Addressing Suicide of Aboriginal Peoples

Suicide and self-inflicted injuries are among the leading causes of death among First Nations, Metis and Inuit people, especially among youth, which are six to 11 times the Canadian average and one of the highest suicide rates in the world. Suicide is a symptom of many factors including crowded housing, intergenerational trauma, family violence, a family history of suicide, witnessing or experiencing physical or sexual abuse, depression, alcohol and drug dependency, mental health disorders, hopelessness, isolation, low self-esteem, parental loss, homelessness and lack of access to treatment. Community suicide prevention is best undertaken by community members, friends and family who understand the social context of the community. It requires co-ordination among education, justice, employment and social welfare sectors to ensure the aboriginal communities have a community-based approach that is rooted in indigenous culture and values to protect against suicide.

- Resolved** that the National Council of Women of Canada urge the National, Provincial, Local and Aboriginal Governments, with overlapping jurisdictions, to work together to:
- d) determine the specific causes of suicide within individual aboriginal communities,
 - e) provide aboriginal communities with the dedicated resources necessary to deal with these issues,
 - f) help all aboriginal communities to thrive socially, culturally and economically.

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