



RESOLUTIONS

PASSED AT MIDTERM MEETING 2024



NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN OF CANADA

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1. Call to Ratify the Optional Protocol on a Communication Procedure for Children

Whereas #1 the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), ratified by Canada in 1991, recognizes that children have the right to express their views freely in all matters affecting them, and emphasizes the importance of listening to children's voices; and

Whereas #2 the Optional Protocol on a Communication Procedure for Children which came into force in April 2014, establishes a mechanism for bringing complaints regarding the violation of the rights of children directly to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, empowering them to seek justice and accountability; and

Whereas #3 currently, many vulnerable children including but not limited to Indigenous children in Canada face barriers to accessing justice and may lack the means to address grievances regarding violations of their rights, thereby limiting their ability to influence decisions that impact them; and

Whereas #4 signing, to ratify the Optional Protocol which sets out extra provisions after the treaty was adopted, would align Canada with international best practices and demonstrate leadership in prioritizing children's voices, ensuring their perspectives are included in policy-making processes thereby empowering children and fostering a culture of respect for their rights, encouraging their active participation in society, and promoting their overall well-being; therefore be it

Resolved #1 that the National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC) adopt as policy that the Optional Protocol on a Communication Procedure for Children be ratified without delay; and be it further

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

- a) ratify the Optional Protocol on a Communication Procedure for Children without delay
- b) implement and promote awareness and understanding of the Optional Protocol among children, families, and communities to ensure that children know their rights and how to exercise them;
- c) work collaboratively with provincial, territorial, and Indigenous governments to create an inclusive framework that supports children's participation in decision-making processes;
- d) establish mechanisms that ensure children's voices are consistently integrated into policies and programs affecting their lives.

2. Prioritizing Proactive Legislation to Address Online Harm

Whereas #1 the rapid advancement of digital technology presents new and evolving risks to the safety and well-being of Canadian citizens online; and

Whereas #2 online harms, including online hate speech, misinformation, the sexual exploitation of children, youth and non consenting adults, cyber-harassment and bullying and incitement to violence all pose significant threats to individuals and society as a whole; and

Whereas #3 the Government of Canada has not legislated that social media platforms ensure user safety and transparency in handling harmful content; and

Whereas #4 the Government of Canada has not integrated protection measures nor addressed the possible harm posed by AI technology into the framework of any proposed legislation to protect Canadians from encountering harm online; therefore be it

Resolved #1 that the National Council of Women adopt as policy that the Government of Canada prioritize and expedite the development and implementation of proactive legislation and regulations to address current, new, and developing online platforms and technologies; and be it further

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

- a) prioritize the development and implementation of proactive legislation and regulations to address current, new, and developing online platforms and technologies;
- b) ensure that any legislation include clear definitions of harmful content, establish accountability measures for online platforms, and provide resources for enforcement and oversight;
- c) ensure comprehensive and inclusive policy development;
- d) adopt protection directives as outlined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- e) establish ongoing monitoring mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of online harm legislation;
- f) extend the monitoring to include alerting the government to emerging online threats not addressed by existing legislation; and be it further
- g) ensure that the Bill does not devolve into censorship

Resolved #3 that the National Council of Women of Canada urge its membership to engage and amplify these calls with their respective local and regional jurisdictions as well as civil society.

3. Enhancing Canada's Compliance with International Treaty Obligations

Whereas #1 Canada has ratified and acceded to a broad range of international treaties, conventions and protocols herewith referenced as contracts; and

Whereas #2 adherences to the obligations inherent in each international contract is essential not only for their fulfillment but also for fostering international cooperation, respect, and trust, thereby ensuring Canada's recognition as a responsible global actor; and

Whereas #3 by acceding to the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties (VCLT) on October 14, 1970, Canada committed to upholding international law and recognized that invoking internal law as a justification for non-compliance is inadmissible, as outlined in Articles 26 and 27 of the VCLT; and

Whereas #4 as of 2024, Canada has yet to fulfill all its obligations under various conventions, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was signed in 1991; therefore be it

Resolved #1 that the National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC) adopt as policy that all ratified and acceded to international contracts be fulfilled by Canada; and be it further

Resolved #2 that the National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC) urge the Government of Canada to address these shortcomings and ensure full compliance with all ratified international contracts by taking immediate measures to fulfill these obligations; and be it further

Resolved #3 that the National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC) urge the Government of Canada to:

- a) Task a non-partisan committee with the comprehensive and transparent analysis of Canada's obligations under all ratified international contracts; and
- b) Require the committee to provide regular reports to the government as evidence of non-compliance is identified; and
- c) Publicly share progress made in fulfilling international commitments, including challenges faced and strategies to overcome them; and
- d) Engage with relevant interested parties to ensure comprehensive implementation of international agreements moving forward; and
- e) Ensure the ongoing alignment of domestic legislation with its international commitments, ensuring consistent application of treaty obligations across all levels of government.

4. Federal Prisoner Access to Contemporary Internet Educational Supports

Whereas #1 Correctional Services of Canada must ensure the delivery of programs, including correctional, educational, vocational training, social and volunteer programs, with a view to promoting rehabilitation and reintegration of prisoners in federal prisons; and

Whereas #2 Correctional Services Canada (CSC) research shows that effective practical training and academic education in prison is associated with better outcomes when prisoners are released, as well as fewer problems and less violence inside prisons; and

Whereas #3 the most recent report from Canada's Correctional Investigator documents the poor state of education and training in prisons; and

Whereas #4 several countries allow controlled as-of-right online access to online technology without jeopardising public safety, but CSC security rules prevent prisoner access to contemporary remote learning technology which is critical for educational, vocational, cultural, rehabilitative, and reintegrative purposes in other parts of life; therefore be it

Resolved #1 that the National Council of Women of Canada adopt as policy that Canada's practical and academic educational penal policies and processes allow controlled as-of-right prisoner access to computers and the internet for educational, vocational, cultural, rehabilitative, reintegrative and personal needs and expectations of prisoners; and be it further

Resolved #2 that the National Council of Women of Canada urge the Government of Canada to act immediately through amendments to the 2021 Federal Framework to Reduce Recidivism to ensure Correctional Services introduce policies and practices that meet the educational, vocational, cultural, reintegrative, rehabilitative, personal needs and expectations of prisoners through:

- a) provision of controlled as-of-right access to computers and the internet for educational, vocational, cultural, rehabilitative, reintegrative and personal needs and expectations of prisoners
- b) continued CSC advancement of pilot projects and examination of ways to modernize its educational infrastructure
- c) comprehensive and significant investments in updated educational materials and on-site equipment and qualified staff.

5. Safe Transportation of Nuclear Waste

Whereas #1 the Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO) has approved, in January 2024, a permit to construct a Near Surface nuclear waste disposal site on the property of Chalk River Laboratories; and

Whereas #2 NWMO is currently in discussion with two other rural western Ontario communities to process Canada's High Level nuclear waste: the township of Ignace (Revell area) in northwestern Ontario and South Bruce in southwestern Ontario; and

Whereas #3 transporting Canada's nuclear waste over thousands of kilometres via the Trans-Canada highway to be treated and buried in the Deep Geological Repository (DGR) projects from the nine existing and any future nuclear plants puts at serious risk contamination of air, soil and water, fauna, flora, people and animals, and is contrary to NCWC's policy of Rolling Stewardship; and

Whereas #4 numerous scientists, ecological organizations and community groups, including NCWC, continue to oppose NWMO's authorization to process, transport and eventually bury the high-level nuclear waste accumulated over decades from Canada's numerous nuclear plants peppering the Canadian landscape; and

Whereas #5 as statistics demonstrate, trucks are increasingly involved in highway accidents due to numerous factors including fatigue, in spite of government laws limiting the maximum hours allowed at the wheel in a 24-hr period, and the additional risks associated with the icy, snowy conditions of Canadian highways for an average of six months annually; therefore be it

Resolved #1 that the National Council of Women of Canada adopt as policy that a transparent, consultative, open process be undertaken about the management of nuclear waste - from the location and security of the sites in relation to proximity to environmentally vulnerable watersheds, to communities, to fragile eco-systems, including consideration of the distances to be travelled, modes of transportation, and the types of nuclear waste levels from Low-Level, Intermediate-Level and of High-Level radioactive waste; and be it further

Resolved #2 that the National Council of Women of Canada urge the Government of Canada to ensure that a transparent, consultative, open process be undertaken about the transportation management of nuclear waste including consideration of the distances to be travelled, modes of transportation, and the types of nuclear waste levels from low-level, intermediate-level and high-level radioactive waste; and be it further

Resolved #4 that the National Council of Women of Canada urge its federates to raise concerns with their respective jurisdictional governments about risks of transporting high level nuclear waste across the country, including:

- a) radioactive contamination on fellow travellers from following, crossing, or passing the transport trucks, on the truck drivers and other staff
- b) contamination of air, soil and water in case of accidents or rollovers
- c) contamination of flora, fauna, agriculture, domestic and farm animals, and hundreds and thousands of residents living along the truck routes.

6. Comprehensive Canadian National Literacy Program

Whereas #1 literacy involves being able to understand, evaluate, use, and engage with written texts thus enhancing communication with friends and family, securing and being successful in career choices, and having active involvement in civic affairs; and

Whereas #2 research shows that those with inadequate literacy skills are more likely to have poorer overall health, lower salaries, and lower levels of participation in their community; and

Whereas #3 48% of adult Canadians have literacy skills that fall below a high school level, and 17% function at the lowest level where they may be unable to read and understand the dosage instructions on a medicine bottle; and

Whereas #4 third grade signifies the shift from learning to read to reading to learn, when children must apply their reading skills to other subjects like math, science, and history; and

Whereas #5 students who cannot read proficiently at their grade level by the end of 3rd grade are four times more likely than their proficient counterparts to drop out of high school and are more likely to experience long-term behavioral and mental health issues; therefore be it

Resolved #1 that the National Council of Women of Canada adopt as policy the goal that 90 percent of students will read at or above grade level by the end of third grade, ensuring students in kindergarten, first, second, and third grades master basic literacy skills, thus improving the likelihood they will reach their full potential in learning, work, and life; and be it further resolved

Resolved #2 the National Council of Women of Canada strongly urge the Government of Canada to ensure 90% of students will read at or above grade level by the end of the third grade by developing and implementing a comprehensive National Literacy Program with an emphasis on support for students, teachers, and families of those in pre-school, kindergarten, first, second, and third, grades so they can master basic literacy skills, thus ensuring they reach their full potential in learning, work, and life; and be it further resolved

Resolved #3 that the Provincial and Local Councils of Women strongly urge their respective Governments to ensure 90% of students will read at or above grade level by the end of the third grade by implementing the National Literacy Program with an emphasis on support for students, teachers, and families of those in pre-school, kindergarten, first, second, and third, grades so they can master basic literacy skills, thus ensuring they reach their full potential in learning, work and life.

7. Emerging Issue Resolution

Canada's Housing Crisis and Human Rights- Based Federal Government Policies and Practices

Whereas #1 housing that allows all people to live in dignity in a safe and secure home without discrimination or harassment, is a human right in Canada, that all levels of government have the legal duty to ensure; and

Whereas #2 homelessness has reached a crisis point in communities across Canada, with thousands of Canadians, Indigenous people being a significant majority, living in tent encampments in public spaces, temporary hostels, hotels, and on the streets; and

Whereas #3 some municipalities have made every effort to alleviate these conditions, by providing clean water, shelter from bad weather, health care, heating, and sanitation services, but lack the funds to move quickly and completely enough to provide the ever growing demand; and

Whereas #4 some municipalities have forcibly removed tent encampments, some using police and threat of jail, and other municipalities asking the Province to use the "notwithstanding clause" to clear the encampments; and

Whereas #5 in its April 3rd 2024 report to Government, the Office of the Federal Housing Advocate commended the Government for its recognition of the human rights-based encampment responses that put people experiencing homelessness at the centre of efforts to find solutions within its recent Canada Housing Plan, but urged it to provide full-funding and resources to address Metis, Inuit and First Nations Housing & Infrastructure Gap by 2030 as well as additional federal housing funds and resources for municipalities on the front lines so communities can provide long-term solutions; therefore be it

Resolved #1 that the National Council of Women of Canada adopt as policy that housing as a human right for all people be central to all Federal inter-Provincial/ Territorial and Local community housing plans, policies and funding agreements; and be it further

Resolved #2 that the National Council of Women of Canada urge the Government of Canada to work with all governments to provide support to municipalities by:

- a) ensuring that its National Housing Plan emphasizes its "Human Rights-based approach" in its public and inter-provincial/territorial and community correspondence, funding, and programs
- b) including minimum human rights standards requirements within Provincial/Territorial Federal funding agreements
- c) precluding Provincial and Territorial use of the notwithstanding agreement for the purpose of enforced tent encampment removals
- d) providing additional federal housing funds for municipalities on the front lines so communities can provide long term solutions
- e) ensuring resources to co-ordinate community housing efforts and full-funding to address all those in need of affordable housing as defined by costing no more than 30 percent of total household income before taxes, and addressing the Infrastructure Gap by 2030
- f) prioritizing meeting the Metis, Inuit and First Nations Housing & Infrastructure Gap by 2030.