

2000.04PU GENETIC ENGINEERING/RESEARCH

Whereas: in 1998 the National Council of Women of Canada adopted a resolution Mandatory Labeling and Long-Term Testing of Genetically Engineered Foods which urged the Government of Canada to: impose immediate mandatory labeling of all foods containing genetically engineered ingredients; impose a moratorium on the distribution and sale of genetically engineered foods until they have been adequately tested in Canada by a Federal Government Bureau and proven safe; and alert the public by TV, radio and written media as to the presence and possible effects of genetically engineered foods; and

Whereas: in 1999, the National Council of Women of Canada adopted policy which urges the Government of Canada to ensure that an independent Health Protection Branch tests all health and food products; and

Whereas: human beings depend for their nutrition and very survival on basic food crops; and

Whereas: scientific technology has enabled scientists to go far beyond and away from traditional grafting and cross breeding techniques used by plant scientists and farmers for millennia, to interventions in fundamental genetic makeup of plants; and

Whereas: while there may be potential benefits to farmers and consumers, harm may also accrue from the little known long-term effects on the health, resiliency, genetic diversity and sustainability of seeds, the environment and human health; and

Whereas: a very few chemical, seed and pharmaceutical companies, who stand to profit enormously, are increasingly monopolizing the production and distribution of genetically engineered seeds through patenting and restrictive farm contracts; and

Whereas: these same companies have increased control of genetic research through the direct funding and control of university and institutional labs and through in-house product testing for (in absence of) government testing; and

Whereas: monies from chemical, seed and pharmaceutical companies as well as governments are being directed away from more traditional proven plant breeding techniques; and

Whereas: there is little incentive under present commercial law for the commercial seed producer to consider the long-term health of the public ahead of its own short term commercial gain and to date there is no way for the public to know if a food product contains genetically modified components and to protect Canadians from possible harm; therefore be it

RESOLVED: that the national Council of Women of Canada urge the Government of Canada to:

- a. ensure sufficient funding to food health and research institutions to ensure their independence from commercial interests and commitment to long-term public good as it relates to the health, resiliency, genetic diversity and sustainability of seeds, the environment and human health; and
- b. that the precautionary principle be applied where the environment, health and nutrition are involved, so that food testing requires toxicological, immunological and biological tests as well as the current standard chemical tests; and

- c. that food tests be done by Health Canada internally or by independent food health and research institutions, rather than by profit-oriented companies; and
- d. make it mandatory that all foods with a Genetically Modified component be clearly labeled.