

2001:06

**STRENGTHENING AND ENFORCING CANADA'S IMMIGRATION POLICIES,
INCLUDING GENDER SENSITIVITY**

Whereas: Canada's Immigration Policies, set in consultation with provincial and territorial governments to mesh with their employment and settlement policies, have set targets for the three main categories of immigrant (independent/business, family reunification and refugee); and

Whereas: Canada needs more younger immigrant families of child-bearing age who will contribute to the economy and will ensure a better population ratio between young and old as their families grow; and

Whereas: the targets, particularly for independent in business category immigrants, have generally been set with the economic needs of Canada being given priority over the needs of the aspiring immigrants. Meanwhile, there is a growing need for economic opportunities through emigration from countries which are suffering increasing economic inequities stemming from current inequitable international trade and investment policies; and

Whereas: women and girls experience particular problems when applying to Canada for refugee status because they face threats of persecution, violence or physical abuse which are more likely to occur in the private spheres of their lives rather than in the public spheres, where men's fears of persecution are more often located; and

Whereas: women and children often are the most vulnerable and are increasingly subject to being drawn into sweatshop employment or prostitution; and

Whereas: gender-sensitive guidelines currently exist in Canadian Immigration Policies but lack the authority of legislation or regulation, and the application of these guidelines is not systematically monitored; and

Whereas: Canada is a signatory to the 1995 UN Beijing Platform for Action for the Advancement of Women which includes references to gender-sensitive treatment of women refugees (Para. 147.f which refers to the "need for special treatment of refugee women to ensure equality, prevention of sexual violence the responsibility of the states"; and Para. 226 which states that "factors causing flight of women and men differ"); and

Whereas: the 1990 UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrants and the Members of Their Families: Article 64 calls for the promotion of equitable treatment of migrants and the members of their families; and

Whereas: an Immigration and Refugee Protection Act introduced to Parliament in February 2001, fails to address gender equity as promised by the Minister in the initial press release; therefore be it

RESOLVED: that the National Council of Women of Canada adopt as its policy the strengthening and enforcing of Canada's Immigration Policies by the promotion of equal treatment of women and men as in Articles 64 and 64.2 of the 1990 UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrants and Minorities; and be it further

RESOLVED: that the National Council of Women of Canada urge the Government of Canada to further strengthen and enforce its Immigration Policy by:

1. ensuring targets for all types of immigration are reached; and
2. ensuring, within any target group, that the number of women and children admitted as refugees and immigrants is proportional to their number in that target group; and
3. encouraging adequate funding of the necessary settlement services for immigrants and refugees through the provinces and territories; and
4. raising the gender-sensitive guidelines to the status of legislation and regulation; and
5. giving special treatment to refugee women to ensure equality, their safety and the prevention of sexual abuse and exploitation in accordance with Para. 136 and 147 of the UN's 1995 Beijing Platform for Action for Women to which Canada is a signatory; and
6. instituting better training for refugee hearing boards including race and gender sensitivity and awareness of events in other countries around the world.