

Whereas: many seniors have limited income; and

Whereas: there is a range of federal and provincial income support and benefit programs based on specific eligibility criteria -Federal: basic Old Age Security

[OAS], Guaranteed Income Supplement [GIS], Allowance (was called Spousal Allowance, Allowance for Survivors; Provincial: variable ; and

Whereas: the National Council of Women of Canada recognizes the current government method (2002) of making seniors aware of OAS benefits for seniors with a low or modest income through an information folder enclosed with 2001 T4 forms; and

Whereas: the current methods of advertising these programs, though extensive, may still fail to reach some of the seniors who might qualify, many of them older women living alone (for example, in the case of the GIS, a study showed an average of 20% of those who were eligible failed to apply); and

Whereas: an annual income tax return provides the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency with the relevant information to determine possible eligibility for both federal and provincial programs (except, for example, Quebec which has its own Income Tax System) but this is not currently used as a tool for identifying seniors who might qualify and for communicating with them directly about their possible eligibility and how to apply; therefore be it

RESOLVED that the National Council of Women of Canada adopt as policy that every senior be provided with easily understood information on federal and/or provincial income support programs as well as information on how to apply for them; and be it further

RESOLVED that the National Council of Women of Canada urge the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency, in cooperation with the relevant provincial and territorial governments, to examine information on income tax returns to reach seniors who might qualify for one or more of the federal or provincial income support programs or benefits, and to send, within the notice of assessment, to each senior so identified:

1. information that on the basis of their tax return they might qualify for one or other of the federal or relevant provincial income support programs or benefits;
2. information on how and when to apply; and be it further

RESOLVED to urge Human Resources Development Canada to issue a form which alerts potentially eligible seniors to apply for the Guaranteed Income Supplement; and be it further

RESOLVED that the National Council of Women of Canada urge the relevant Departments of the Government of Canada, in cooperation with the provincial and territorial governments and the agencies they fund, to identify, through food banks, long term care facilities, shelters etc., those low income seniors who may not submit income tax returns; and to find ways to inform them, in an easily understood format, of their possible eligibility for income support programs or benefits.