

**RAISING THE AGE OF PROTECTION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH FROM SEXUAL EXPLOITATION**

Whereas: the Criminal Code currently allows the defense of “consent” for very serious crimes against young people, but young people of this age (14) are rarely mature enough to recognize the potential for exploitation in such situations and require the protection of the law; and

Whereas: the central issue is the restriction of the privileges of adults with respect to young people and the assignment of responsibility for behavior to adults. Abusers must be charged and held accountable for these very serious crimes of sexual exploitation; and

Whereas: any change to raise the age of consent from 14 to 16 years as the age of consent must be reflected in the sections of the Criminal Code dealing with pornography; and

Whereas: exceptions can be incorporated in the law which protect teenagers who are exploring their sexuality, preferably limiting this protection to partners whose ages are within a peer relationship; therefore be it

RESOLVED: that the National Council of Women of Canada adopt as policy that the age of consent to sexual activity be 16 years; and be it further

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

150. amend the Criminal Code of Canada (Section 150.1) “the age of consent to sexual activity” to reflect the age of 16 as the age of consent, rather than the current age of 14;
151. amend all sections in the Criminal Code dealing with Pornography and Prostitution to reflect the above change to the age of consent;
152. include an explicit exemption to prohibitions of sexual activity based on the age of consent to sexual activity for 14 to 16 year olds exploring their sexuality, provided their ages are within a peer relationship.

Note: A peer relationship is considered to be an age differential of not more than three (3) years.