



**CFUW Ontario Council Submission  
for the  
Ontario Pre-Budget Consultations**

To the  
Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs

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## **CFUW ONTARIO COUNCIL**

Ontario Council of the Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW) is a voluntary, self-funded, non-profit organization with 54 clubs across the province, which is affiliated with the national CFUW and Graduate Women International.

Our mandate is to promote education and life-long learning, to encourage the participation of members in their communities and to enhance the status of women and girls.

CFUW Ontario Council has six traditional concerns that have always motivated us as a women's organization: high quality public education, universal health care, a clean safe environment, the economic security of women, the prevention of violence against women and women's leadership. Each year the priorities and the foci do change.

This year our attention is drawn to:

1. Implementation of action plans
2. Social Infrastructure
3. Education and the Achieving Excellence Initiative
4. Early Learning and Child Care with the Early Years consultation
5. Gender Wage Gap
6. Poverty
7. Environment, especially water-taking and the mercury contamination of Grassy Narrows

While we are cognizant of the responsibility of the Ontario Government towards the public with respect to the electricity rates, CFUW Ontario Council feel that the government must understand that there are other financial stresses affecting women, families and communities in Ontario that also need to be considered.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. While we are pleased to see the government tackle many of the issues that are important to us, it is the implementation of the consultations' recommendations and action plans that is of vital importance. Without sufficient funds, programs cannot be implemented fully or monitored for problems and accountability.
2. The definition of social infrastructure also include jobs creation, and that those jobs are also in the maintenance and growth of a service, as much as the creation of the service. When child care centres are built, early childhood educators can then be hired.
3. Achieving Excellence in education should be continued with added resources for math strategy, as well as special funding be designated for teaching materials relative to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

4. A **quality, affordable, universally accessible and comprehensive early learning and child care program which emphasizes the development of the whole child continue to be developed, that staff be paid commensurate with training** and that funding for an ELCC program involve all levels of government through cost-sharing mechanisms, as in other human services such as health, education and social programs.
5. A “Close the Gender Wage Gap by 2025” plan be initiated, with funding to include monitoring and where necessary investigation by the bodies involved.
6. Research required for the water-taking regulations within such a short time-frame will require a much larger allocation in this year’s budget, and for the next two years, in order to enable that research to be undertaken.
7. Create a designated fund - with assistance from the Federal government – that will accumulate (or accrue) to pay for the final, eventual clean-up of the English-Wabigoon river system to eliminate the persistent and rising toxic presence of mercury in the water and in the surrounding ecosystems. The government’s commitment to honour the recommendations of the TRC Report demands nothing less

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

In 2017 CFUW Ontario Council will be waiting for the reports from consultations and committees:

- Early Years and Child Care
- Gender Wage Gap Working Group
- Changing Workplace Review
- Basic Income Pilot Project for Ontario
- Income Security Reform Working Group
- Environmental Bill of Rights

While we have been pleased to see the government tackle these topics, and to be able to add our comments to most of these consultations, it is of course the implementation of the recommendations that is of vital importance.

**At the Beijing + 20 conference held by the United Nations, the comments were that the countries had the policies required for gender equality, but they were missing the resources for implementation, the budget, monitoring and accountability.**

Therefore while the work of these Ontario committees and consultations has been vital to garner insights and political will, without the funds and the implementation plan to put them into place, we will be no further ahead.

## SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

“Your government's top priority will ... remain job creation and economic growth”

The Speech From the Throne, Sept.16, 2016

A major part of job creation and economic growth is infrastructure, in particular for CFUW Ontario Council, social infrastructure fully defined.

If you define infrastructure as the **organizational structures** needed for the operation of a society, then social infrastructure becomes so much more than physical buildings and structures. Supporting citizens - women, men, children, families - in order for them to fulfil their lives, by providing and maintaining that social infrastructure is as important as any highway, road or building.

This support both creates employment, for example, early childhood educators and personal service workers, and in turn enables others to join the workforce.

## EDUCATION

**Achieving Excellence** in education should be continued with the added resources for math strategy, as well as special funding be designated for teaching materials relative to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

We support many of the initiatives, especially **the expansion of Community Hubs**, with three concerns:

- **Truth & Reconciliation Commission**
  - Teachers need the resources and the training to assist with this; textbooks will also need to be rewritten--this funding is essential.
- **Building and renovating schools**
  - Funding for renovations is essential, especially in communities with many older schools
- **A renewed Math Strategy:**
  - For at least the last two decades, the focus has been on literacy with some "benign neglect" of Mathematics, resulting in very low testing results (EQAO)—the province needed to address this and quickly as Ontario students are being left behind in STEM.
- **Ontario Student Grant:**
  - This is an exciting first step, but there is concern from students that because of the exceptionally high cost of post secondary education in Ontario (highest in Canada according to Statistics Canada, 2014-15), combined with the high cost of living in Ontario, the debt burden for students is very high in this province.

## EARLY YEARS AND CHILD CARE

For many years CFUW and its members have been pushing governments to consider the importance of the early years as the foundation for the development of the whole child, and linking this with the essential child care necessary as women began working in larger numbers<sup>1</sup>, now accounting for 48% of the workforce<sup>2</sup>.

Comments based on the Four Pillars as expressed in *Building a Better Future (2016)*:

**1. Universal and equitable accessible.** The word “accessible” is of fundamental importance.

- Affordable for both families no matter what their income is, and for municipalities and providers.
- Availability and flexible no matter where they live and when they work
- A child care system needs to be available to all – those with special needs, be it cultural, emotional, intellectual, physical

**2. Quality**

- A non-profit provider, using an evidence-based play-based curriculum, that is age and culturally appropriate, with a stable well-paid workforce, well trained in age appropriate pedagogy and care, following standards and regulations that license all child care centre, whether within homes or within larger centres.

**3. Funding**

- Subsidies for families, and the resources for municipalities who are providing those subsidies.
- Stable funding for providers.
- Cost-sharing programs for governments

**In summary, a high-quality early years and child care system is all about well-trained, well paid, compassionate and caring staff, combined with an early learning program based on pedagogy provided by a not-for-profit service within a safe environment, structured by evidence-based regulations, funded through cost-sharing similar to health.**

## GENDER WAGE GAP

The reports of both the Gender Wage Gap Strategy Steering Committee and Changing Workplace Review recognize the problems of women in the workplaces.

Funding of the future recommendations from the Changing Workplace Review and the Gender Wage Gap Working Group will be essential to assisting women in using their education, and transferring their skills to the workplace.

Some current recommendations from these reports and the Equal Pay Coalition that we will be watching for, and that will have financial implications:

1. As already mentioned an **early learning and child care system** within a defined timeframe, that is: high quality, affordable, accessible, publicly funded and geared to income, with sufficient spaces to meet the needs of Ontario families.
2. Review **access and eligibility for child care fee subsidy programs**; meet the need for services on a flexible basis that allows for children to stay in a centre during the mother's unemployment or maternity leave
3. Create sufficient capacity in the **long-term care system**, home and community care services for Ontarians.
4. Establish a **Parental Shared Leave**.
5. Prepare an action plan **to increase women's participation in male-dominant skilled trades and men's participation in female-dominant ones**.
6. Apply **gender-based analysis** to all government policies and programs.
7. Develop a '**Close the gender pay gap by 2025 Plan**'.
8. Provide proper funding for **the Pay Equity Commission, Pay Equity Hearing and Tribunal, and Human Rights Commission Tribunal** in order to enforce the current pay equity laws

## **POVERTY**

2017 will see a number of actions and reports here:

- Basic Income Pilot Project for Ontario
- Income Security Reform Working Group
- Bill 185, Social Assistance Research Commission
- Changing Workplace Review

These four, together with a number of other programmes (Promoting Affordable Housing Act 2016, Ontario Student Grant among others) have the potential to assist Ontarians dealing with economic problems.

There is potential that the work done in 2017 can suggest a positive direction, but only with proper and full funding vis-à-vis the provincial budgets both for 2017 and 2018, and with support to municipalities which, in the case of affordable housing, must find ways to 'afford' it either through direct funding, taxation, or some determined action.

The high cost of poverty to both the individuals and to services should always be remembered. A person who cannot afford medication will continue to be ill, affecting both medical and emergency services.

We have the opportunity to stop the vicious cycle.

## ENVIRONMENT

### **Water-taking regulations:**

We are pleased with the government proposals:

- to enforce the two year moratorium on granting any new water-taking licenses for water-bottling companies pending further study;
- to tighten the procedural and technical regulations affecting extraction of groundwater by bottling companies; and
- to increase the fee for the extraction of groundwater to \$503.71 per million litres.

However, in order to conduct meaningful research studies within such a short time-frame, a much larger allocation will be required in this year's budget and for the next two years in order to enable that research to be undertaken.

### **Clean-up and rehabilitation of the English-Wabigoon river system:**

We recognize and commend the government's allocation of \$300,000 to the Grassy Narrows First Nation and their mercury contamination expert John Rudd, as well as a further \$300,000 to fund a renewed investigation by government scientists to identify the source of the ongoing release of mercury into the river system. However, in light of the recent studies that have shown that over 90% of the residents of the Grassy Narrows and Wabaseemoong nations, including children, are still suffering from disability and disease caused by mercury poisoning – and the fact that a new possible source site for ongoing mercury contamination has been identified as the result of investigations by the Earthroots organization (and the fact that 13,600 kg of mercury remain unaccounted for), we would ask that the government include in the budget an allocation this year, and over the next 10 years, to create a designated fund – with assistance from the Federal government – that will accumulate (or accrue) to pay for the final, eventual clean-up of the English-Wabigoon river system to eliminate the persistent and rising toxic presence of mercury in the water and in the surrounding ecosystems. This would honour the government's commitment to the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Report.

Respectfully submitted,



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<sup>1</sup> In 1976, 31.4% of women whose youngest child was less than 6 was in the labour force, by 2009 it was 66.5%. As dramatic was the change for youngest child under 3, from 27.6% to 64.4%. Women in Canada, Paid Work, 2010, pg. 9 <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-503-x/2010001/article/11387-eng.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Statistics Canada, **Labour force, employment and unemployment, levels and rates, by province (Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba) 2016** <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/l01/cst01/labor07b-eng.htm>