

Submission to

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE DOUGLAS FORD

Premier of Ontario

By



**THE BUSINESS & PROFESSIONAL
WOMEN OF ONTARIO**

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**Working towards improving economic, political, social,
and employment conditions for women in Ontario**

“Stepping Forward”

Member of:

The Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women (BPW Canada)

The International Federation of Business and Professional Women (BPW International)

August 2022

INTRODUCTION

The Business and Professional Women of Ontario (BPW Ontario) is a non-partisan and non-sectarian organization which represents dedicated working women across Ontario. Our members represent a diverse group of women working in public and private sector, industry, and the professions.

Our members meet monthly to discuss issues relevant to women. Being part of BPW Ontario means each member also enjoys the privilege of membership in the Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women (BPW Canada) and the International Federation of Business and Professional Women (IFBPW) which were both founded in 1930. The International Federation of Business and Professional Women has members in over 100 countries around the world and maintains Consultative Status in the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

Since 2016, BPW Ontario continues to use the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals to empower women. We continue to work in collaboration with BPW International, BPW Canada, and the United Nations' and other likeminded organizations across the province seeking gender equality. Since 2020, BPW Ontario has continued to play a role in the successful #ProjectMapleLeaf awareness campaign regarding the human sex trafficking of minor aged victims.

Since 1910, BPW Ontario has promoted the interests of working women by making submissions to government regarding issues such as closing the gender wage gap, employment equity, childcare, health issues, and other areas of concern to women. BPW Ontario promotes equality as a basic human right.

This year, BPW Ontario discussed the regulation of all opioids and the need for safe alternatives and assisting addicted persons and their families in sustained recovery. Also, fixing long-term care in Ontario by updating the Long-Term Care Homes Design Manual 2015, ensuring new beds are granted to homes that are compliant and appoint ministry inspectors as provincial offences officers with the power to lay charges. Finally, to assist human trafficking victims' rights by ensuring sex traffickers' names are placed on Ontario's Sex Offenders Registry and data on human trafficking cases including conviction rates is made readily accessible to the public

BPW Ontario looks forward to the opportunity to discuss the resolutions in this brief and ways we can work collaboratively to positively impact the lives of women in Ontario.

Respectfully submitted,

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Business and Professional Women of Ontario

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Resolutions presented by Business & Professional Women Ontario Conference/Annual General Meeting, June 2022

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RESOLUTION 2022-01 - Regulation of All Opioids

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Business and Professional Women of Ontario urges the Government of Ontario, specifically, the Minister of Health, the Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity, the Chief Medical Officer, and Public Health Ontario (PHO), to provide people at risk for opioid overdose with safe alternatives including the provision of a regulated pharmaceutical-grade supply of opioids, in a supervised supportive educational and awareness distribution setting;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the Business and Professional Women of Ontario urges the Government of Ontario, specifically the Minister of Health, the Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity, the Chief Medical Officer, and Public Health Ontario (PHO) to recognize the current opioid crisis as a "poisoning epidemic", born out of a medical and pharmaceutical induced addiction, that requires investment in appropriate measures to prevent opioid addiction and to assist addicted persons and their families in a sustained recovery.

Rationale

The Centre of Excellence for Women's Health evidence summary (2018) stated that "among women the greatest risk for opioid addiction is receiving a prescription for an opioid medication. Women are also more likely than men to: hoard unused prescriptions, report dependence on and craving for opioids, report greater pain dependence on and craving of opioids, and report greater pain despite chronic opioid therapy for pain relief" (p 1). Among women opioid users in Ontario, the monthly number of opioid-related deaths increased 43.6% from February 2020 to December 2020. The largest increases were observed at a 61.4% increase for the 25 to 44 age group, and 119.5% increase for the 45 to 64 age group monthly (Gomes T., Murray R., Kolla G., Leece P., Bansal S., Bessharah J., Watford J.. (2021).

Tyndall (2018) wrote that the core of the current crisis is a drug supply contaminated with potent synthetic opioids, mainly fentanyl and carfentanil. Various testing sources including border seizures, confiscated street drugs, post-mortem toxicology and front-line drug testing have confirmed these, and other drugs are pervasive. He also stated, "The public health response to any poisoning epidemic should be to provide safer alternatives for people at risk. In the case of the overdose crisis, this would mean providing a regulated supply of pharmaceutical-grade opioids to people at highest risk of overdose." (p. E35).

In Ontario we are part of the illegal drug trade's route from the open border between Mexico and the United States at our Canadian/USA border crossings. Over 100 countries now have immigrants crossing the Rio Grande to gain access to the U.S. and some are bused or transported north. It is not hard to imagine that some will arrive in Canada and without proper vetting or their personal identification, some will be drug dealers.

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RESOLUTION 2022-02 - Fixing Long Term Care in Ontario

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Business and Professional Women of Ontario urge the Government of Ontario, specifically the Minister of Long-Term Care, Retirement Homes and Home Care add to the *Providing More Care, Protecting Seniors and Building more Beds Act 2021*, and Schedule 1 Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021 in coordination with the Minister of Justice, the power to appoint ministry inspectors as provincial offences officers with the power to lay charges in court under the *Provincial Offences Act* for contraventions to the Act;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the Business and Professional Women of Ontario urge the Government of Ontario, specifically the Minister of Long-Term Care, Retirement Homes and Home Care to update the Long-Term Care Homes Design Manual 2015 to include recommendations from the National Long-Term Care Services Standard CAN/HSO21001:202 including to update the Long-Term Care Homes Design Manual 2015 to include recommendations from the National Long-Term Care Services Standard CAN/HSO21001:2022 including those on infrastructure and environmental design, operating systems, design and layout elements, and technology;

AND FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the Business and Professional Women of Ontario urge the Government of Ontario, specifically the Minister of Long-Term Care, Retirement Homes and Home Care to ensure no new bed licences are awarded to organizations who have been noncompliant with the Act, and that more licences be given to non profit homes in addition to funding support be provided only to non profit homes.

Rationale

Over two years of pandemic protocols, lessons learned, and *Bill 37, An Act to enact the Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021 and amend or repeal various Acts*, was enacted in December 2021, as the *Providing More Care, Protecting Seniors and Building More Beds Act 2021*. This law left residents of 384 out of 626 Long Term Care homes that faced outbreaks in wave 5 continuing to live in isolated situations or detained in their homes without access to family or advocacy, and the Ministry of Long-Term Care was left without meaningful measures to address noncompliance Government of Ontario (2021; Marrocco, 2021).

This resolution first presents the case for compliance and enforcement of protections for residents of Long-Term Care Homes (LTC) in Ontario, secondly the case for the primary adoption of the restorative care philosophy in resident care planning in lieu of the currently placed emphasis on palliative care, and thirdly the case for not permitting these rights to be unduly suspended by loopholes in the Act. These are rights, not targets. These issues affect proportionately more women than men – more than 70 percent of long-term care and nursing home residents are women who should have the right to live long productive lives contributing to family and society (Ontario Health Coalition, 2021).

BPW Ontario adopted and presented to the Government of Ontario a resolution in 2021 on Safe Long-Term Care Ontario focusing on solutions based on lessons learned during the pandemic. However, upon passing Bill 37, the government immediately awarded 12,000 bed licences to the private for-profit facilities with poor results during the COVID-19 pandemic. For-profit nursing homes had on average 6.3 deaths per 100 residents, compared to 2.8 deaths per 100 in non-profits and 1.4 deaths per 100 in publicly owned nursing homes. This high rate of death was due to lower staffing ratios with more part-time and temporary staff, and more crowded conditions in for-profit homes, despite government incentives to upgrade resident rooms. No providers were prosecuted. Bill 37 leaves a gap in compliance enforcement (Swift, 2021).

The Act in Part II. Residents: Rights, Care and Services. Residents' Bill of Rights deals with the rights of residents: the right to be provided with care and services based on a palliative care philosophy, later mentioning restorative care philosophy. The restorative care principles need to be stressed as primary philosophy as the framework for care planning with palliative care principles being applied only as end-of-life is approaching based on a medical assessment (Swift, 2021).

Finally, the social isolation and negative impact of residents' mental health during prolonged outbreaks, Standards addressing different aspects of LTC homes, need to focus on infrastructure and environmental design, including operating systems, design and layout elements, and technology, which will help ensure a nimbler response to future major outbreaks without prolonged isolation of residents from daily activities outside their room and in-person interactions their families (Swift, 2021).

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RESOLUTION 2022-03 – Ensuring Ontario’s Justice System Protects Human Trafficking Victims’ Rights

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Business and Professional Women of Ontario urges the Government of Ontario, specifically, the Attorney General, the Solicitor General, the Associate Minister of Women’s Social and Economic Opportunity, and their deputy ministers to ensure the Crown Attorneys are given the means necessary, including education and training, to prosecute all human trafficking charges laid as a matter of legal practice to protect victims of human trafficking’s rights under the Ontario Victims’ Bill of Rights and ensuring sex traffickers names are placed on Ontario’s Sex Offenders Registry and sent to Canada’s Sex Offender Registry;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the Business and Professional Women of Ontario urges the Government of Ontario, specifically, the Attorney General, the Solicitor General, the Associate Minister of Women’s Social and Economic Opportunity, and their deputy ministers to ensure data on human trafficking cases including conviction rates is made readily accessible to the public.

Rationale

Human trafficking is a human rights violation (Government of Ontario, 2021). According to the Criminal Code of Canada, “trafficking in persons, also known as human trafficking, involves recruiting, transporting, transferring, receiving, holding, concealing or harbouring a person, or exercising control, direction or influence over the movements of a person, for the purpose of exploiting them or facilitating their exploitation” (Ibrahim, 2021, para 1). There are various forms of human trafficking, however sexual exploitation is the most common (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes, 2018).

The hidden nature of human trafficking makes it difficult to detect thus the data collected underestimates the true magnitude of the crime. From 2005 to 2014, the Criminal Code added specific human trafficking offences including defining exploitation related to human trafficking, prohibiting human trafficking of persons under the age of 18 to minimum mandatory sentences (14 years) on all child trafficking offences (Ibrahim, 2021). Between 2009 and 2016, 95% of identified human trafficking victims were women and girls with 70% of victims being under the age of 25 (Government of Canada, 2019). From 2009 to 2019, there were 2,468 police-reported human trafficking incidents in Canada (Ibrahim, 2021). Over the past decade, Ontario had the majority (65%) of Canadian human trafficking incidents (1624 incidents) (Statistics Canada, 2019). Police in 2019 reported 511 incidents of human trafficking, a 44% increase from 2018. In 2019, police reported 67% of human trafficking incidents were *Criminal Code* violations, and 33% of incidents were *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* (IRPA) violations (associated with cross-border offences) (Ibrahim, 2021). The majority of human trafficking cross-border IRPA human trafficking violations (76%) in 2019 occurred in Ontario. For example, 77% of human trafficking offences in the St. Catharines – Niagara region were IRPA violations (Ibrahim, 2021).

While more human trafficking related cases are being processed in Canadian courts, the conviction rate is low. In 2019, 83% of individuals accused of human trafficking were males aged 18 - 34 years. Of police-reported human trafficking incidents, 35% of these incidents involved other crimes with the majority (89%) reporting human trafficking being the most serious violation. Ironically, the majority (89%) of human trafficking charges are stayed, withdrawn, dismissed, or discharged. Only 7% of human trafficking cases result in conviction. This data does not include Ontario conviction rates. Research suggests crown attorneys in exchange for guilty pleas for lesser offences may withdraw human trafficking charges. Reasons for this include reluctance of victims to charge their traffickers as these cases can be harder to prove, the increased time required to complete the case, and lack of hard evidence which shows our current judicial system does not effectively serve victims of human trafficking and sexual based offences which reduces the likelihood of traffickers being added to the Ontario Sex Offender Registry. When this happens, the victim's rights as outlined in Ontario's Victims' Bill of Rights are not being supported. (Ibrahim, 2021; Bogdan, 2021).

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