

Submission to

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE DOUGLAS FORD

Premier of Ontario

By



**THE BUSINESS & PROFESSIONAL
WOMEN OF ONTARIO**

bpwontario@bpwontario.com

bpwontario.com

**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)

October 2023

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 at our annual general meeting, BPW Ontario discussed the issue of sexual violence occurring towards women at post-secondary institutions and the need for post-secondary institutions to provide training for their students and staff regarding this issue as well as reviewing their practices regarding investigating reported incidents, while providing appropriate support to victims. We also discussed the need for more affordable housing for women in Ontario.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Marlene McKinnon

BPW Ontario President
president@bpwontario.com

Copies of this submission have been sent to:

Premier & Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario: Hon. Doug Ford
doug.fordco@pc.ola.org

Deputy Premier & Minister of Health: Hon. Sylvia Jones
sylvia.jones@pc.ola.org

Leader of the Ontario NDP: Marit Stiles
MStiles-QP@ndp.on.ca

Deputy Leader, Official Opposition: Sol Mamakwa
smamakwa-qp@ndp.on.ca

Interim Leader of the Ontario Liberal Party & Critic of Children's Health, Labour, and the Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Services: John Fraser
jfraser.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org

Leader of the Green Party of Ontario: Mike Schreiner
mschreiner@ola.org

Ministers

Attorney General: Hon. Doug Downey
doug.downey@pc.ola.org

Solicitor General: Hon. Michael S. Kerzner
michael.kerzner@pc.ola.org

Minister of Children, Community and Social Services: Hon. Michael Parsa
Michael.Parsaco@pc.ola.org

Minister of Colleges and Universities: Hon. Jill Dunlop
Jill.Dunlop@pc.ola.org

Minister of Education: Hon. Stephen Lecce
Stephen.Lecce@pc.ola.org

Minister of Finance: Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy
Peter.Bethlenfalvy@pc.ola.org

Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development: Hon. David Piccini
David.Piccini@pc.ola.org

Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing: Hon. Paul Calandra
Paul.Calandra@pc.ola.org

Associate Minister of Housing: Hon. Nina Tangri
Nina.Tangri@pc.ola.org

Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity: Hon. Charmaine Williams
Charmaine.Williams@pc.ola.org

Associate Minister of Mental Health, and Addictions: Hon. Michael A. Tibollo
Michael.Tibollo@pc.ola.org

Opposition Critics

Critic, Attorney General: Kristyn Wong-Tam
kwong-tam-qp@ndp.on.ca

Critic, Solicitor General: John Vanthof
jvanthof-qp@ndp.on.ca

Critic, Affordability: Bhutila Karpoche
BKarpoche-QP@ndp.on.ca

Critic, Children, Community and Social Services: Monique Taylor
MTaylor-QP@ndp.on.ca

Critic, Colleges and Universities: Peggy Sattler
PSattler-CO@ndp.on.ca

Critic, Finance: Catherine Fife
[Fife, Catherine](mailto:Fife,Catherine)

Critic, Health: France Gélinas
fgelinas-qp@ndp.on.ca

Critic, Housing: Jessica Bell
JBell-QP@ndp.on.ca

Critic, Mental Health and Addictions & Critic, Poverty and Homelessness Reduction: Lisa Gretzky
LGretzky-QP@ndp.on.ca

Critic, Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity: Jill Andrew
jandrew-qp@ndp.on.ca

Liberal Critic: Finance: Stephanie Bowman
sbowman.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org

Liberal Critic: Health and Colleges and Universities: Dr. Adil Shamji
ashamji.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org

Liberal Critic: House Leader, Attorney General, Solicitor General: Lucille Collard
LCollard.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org

Liberal Critic: Municipal Affairs and Housing: Stephen Blais
sblais.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org

Liberal Critic: Solicitor General: Karen McCrimmon
KMcCrimmon.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org

Independent:

Bobbi Ann Brady
babrady-co@ola.org



Business and Professional Women of Ontario

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RESOLUTION 2023-01 – Sexual Violence Against Women in Post-Secondary Institutions

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Business and Professional Women of Ontario (BPW Ontario) urges the Government of Ontario and relevant ministries to:

- A) provide students and staff in post-secondary, secondary, and elementary schools an interactive, graduated and age-appropriate curriculum, which includes a testing component including specific material around rape culture, misogyny, bystander intervention, and concept of consent;
- B) provide mandatory training for all staff as it relates to the Code of Conduct regarding sexual assault and unwanted sexual behaviours;
- C) establish a clear Code of Conduct for student behaviour in post-secondary institutions that clearly define sexual assault and unwanted sexual behaviors, to include extensive training on gender-based violence, informed consent, and bystander intervention training;
- D) mandate that post-secondary institutions review their investigative processes, provide remedial action, and partner with local professional organizations that have the skills and knowledge to provide appropriate investigation, guidance, and supports as required; and
- E) continue to increase funding for survivor supports, services, accommodations, and resources on and off-campus with the determination of those supports and services to be made using input from students and particularly student survivors.

Rationale

Post secondary students who identify as female experience higher rates of sexual assault in both on and off-campus locations than students who identify as male. The highest rates sexual assault occurs among Indigenous, new immigrant, disabled and transgendered women. In September 2021, the Government of Ontario directed post-secondary institutions to update their policies around reporting of sexual assaults prior to March 31, 2022. Yet there has not been a significant reduction in the incidence of sexual violence on and off-campus.

BPW Ontario believes more supports are needed for students who have experienced and witnessed sexual assault, violence, and unwanted sexual behaviours. BPW Ontario also understands the important education has played in increasing the number of cases reported and reduce incidents. Statistics and surveys show that the attitudes and behaviours of men continue to exhibit sexually aggressive, harassing, and coercive behaviours towards women with respect to dating and substance usage with substance usage have the potential to escalate encouraging sexual coercion.

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RESOLUTION 2023-02 – Providing More Affordable Housing for Women in Ontario

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Business and Professional Women of Ontario (BPW Ontario) urges the Government of Ontario and relevant ministries to legislate a quota of twenty percent Fair Share Affordable Housing in each development financed with provincial funds or on property owned or sold by the Province, with at least:

- Twenty percent of the quota of units to be affordable to people at or below fifty percent of the median Ontario provincial income and
- Forty percent of the quota of units to be affordable to those at or below sixty percent the median Ontario provincial income

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the Business and Professional Women of Ontario (BPW Ontario) urges the Government of Ontario and relevant ministries, to legislate a program, such as New Jersey's Historic Tax Credit program, that would contribute to the funding of this quota.

Rationale

The Government of Ontario has passed omnibus amendments to many planning and housing laws including Bill 23-More Homes Built Faster Act which removes protected land from the greenbelt to meet development targets, limits the ability of municipalities to block development, reduces development fees, all with the specific goal of increasing the housing supply by incentivizing the construction of 1.5 million homes over the next 10 years. The changes the Government of Ontario has made does not included increased proportions of required affordable housing and only used the definition of affordable housing rates to 80% of market rates in lieu of to include rental housing for low to moderate income Ontarians at rates proportionate to 50% to 60% of median income. A large proportion of these Ontarians who would benefit from more affordable rental housing are female working in essential professions.

There are housing funding models available to be used in Ontario. An example is the state of New Jersey with the Fair Share Housing Law. This law requires that municipalities participate in the Fair Share plans which ensures twenty percent of newly built units are reserved for low- and moderate-income families when the development is financed with state funds or on property owned by the state. This program is funded by The Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program. BPW Ontario believes that at least twenty percent of the quota of units being developed need to be affordable to people at or below fifty percent of median Ontario provincial income and forty percent of the quota of units be affordable to those at or below sixty percent.

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