

**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**

***“Connect – Collaborate – Commit”***

Member of:

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

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

October 2025

## 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 issues of quality mental health for women and 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,

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**Business and Professional Women of Ontario**

**Resolutions - Table of Contents**

**Resolutions presented at the Business & Professional Women Ontario Annual  
General Meeting, September 2025**

**Contents**

RESOLUTION 2025-01 – Strengthening Ontario’s Mental Health Policy Through a Gender Lens .....	7
RESOLUTION 2025-02 – Providing More Affordable Housing for Women in Ontario ....	9

## **RESOLUTION 2025-01 – Strengthening Ontario’s Mental Health Policy Through a Gender Lens**

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Business and Professional Women of Ontario urges the Government of Ontario and relevant ministries to:

- Expand access **by increasing targeted funding for** affordable, inclusive, **quality** mental health services that **address the diverse and specific needs of women, especially those in marginalized communities.**
- Mandate trauma-informed care practices across all mental health services to better support women who have experienced and **been impacted by violence, abuse and systemic inequalities.**
- Modernize Ontario’s Mental Health Act and Health Care Consent Act to allow **earlier gender responsive interventions that ensure more effective interventions for women** with severe mental health and addiction challenges while safeguarding human rights.

**Relevant Ministries:** Health; Finance; Children, Community and Social Services

### **Rationale**

Mental health issues disproportionately impact women due to a range of biological, social, and environmental factors. Women are nearly twice as likely as men to experience depression and anxiety, partly due to hormonal fluctuations, reproductive health challenges, and gender-based violence (American Psychiatric Association, 2022). Gender-based violence including domestic violence, sexual harassment, sexual assault, and human trafficking are major risk factors for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other trauma-related disorders and contribute to chronic stress, increased susceptibility to depression and anxiety (World Health Organization [WHO], 2021).

Despite growing awareness, Ontario’s mental health care system does not clearly address gender-specific needs. The Canadian Women’s Health Network identified the lack of trauma-informed care, which is critical for women who have experienced violence. Accessible and affordable mental health care for marginalized communities remains especially limited (Canadian Mental Health Association [CMHA], Ontario, 2023).

Ontario’s Mental Health Act (MHA) does not effectively address modern crises, including homelessness, opioid addiction, and the unique challenges faced by women accessing mental health care. Current legislation restricts the use of involuntary treatment for individuals with severe mental health and addiction issues resulting in many women cycling through temporary care without receiving the long-term support needed for recovery. Misuse of extended involuntary admission periods, with potential risk for women to be held against their will requires safeguards to prevent abuse and ensure the ethical application of extended admission periods. Balancing the need for effective interventions with protections for vulnerable individuals must be addressed explicitly in any reforms. Advocacy groups and Ontario mayors have called for reforms to the MHA and the Health Care Consent Act to expand involuntary treatment options and improve access to trauma-

informed, gender-specific care. These reforms must also prioritize addressing systemic inequities and societal factors that disproportionately impact women's mental health, particularly those from marginalized communities who are most at risk (Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario, 2023).

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## **RESOLUTION 2025-02 – 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 its relevant ministries to legislate a quota of 20 percent affordable housing in each development financed with provincial funds or on property owned or sold by the province, with at least 20 percent of the units to be affordable to people at or below 30 percent of median Ontario Provincial pretax income and 40 percent to be affordable to those at or below 60 percent.

**Relevant Ministries:** Municipal Affairs and Housing; Finance

### **Rationale**

Canadian Mortgage and Housing Commission (CMHC) data indicates Ontario housing starts have fallen by 25 percent compared with last year while the rest of Canada saw a 17 percent increase in the same period. British Columbia and Alberta had more success in increasing the provision of housing and affordable housing in the last two years than Ontario. From 2023 to 2024, Ontario averaged 86,650 housing starts each year, short of the 105,000 to 150,000 starts a year required to meet the Ford government's target of 1.5 million new homes by 2031 (Canadian Mortgage and Housing Commission, 2025).

The Provincial government has passed legislation such as Bill 23, 108, 109 and 17 to relax development rules and benefit of private developers but has failed in the following key performance indicators:

1. Increase density: The provincial government has refused the call to upgrade zoning rights, such as the proposal Allowing fourplexes 'as of right' throughout provincial municipalities, which was a condition both new federal housing infrastructure fund in April 2024 and the provinces own Ontario Housing Affordability Task Force (Globe & Mail, 2024).
2. Affordable Housing: In over 100 Municipal Zoning Orders (MZOs) issued by the province of Ontario to supersede municipal requirements for community amenities and affordable housing in planned proposed developments, minimal affordable housing units have been provided in developments approved to proceed and/or limited to maximum 5 percent without tracking goals for the number of units or affordable housing (Office of the Auditor General of Ontario, 2024).
3. The auditor general stated the province used the tool 114 times from 2019 to 2023 under Premier Doug Ford's government, a 17-fold increase from the previous 20 years. In 2021, Ontario had 100,000 housing starts (Statista Research Department, Oct 22, 2024), which has been reduced to 20,600 units in 2024 Q3 or 82,000 units yearly (Office of the Auditor General of Ontario, 2024).
4. While the provincial government has incentivized private development without gaining the desired effect of more housing, they must pivot to use part of the massive funds committed to market rate development and infrastructure and move to deliver increased affordable rental housing that costs less than 30 percent of a person's pre-taxed income per CMHC definition, and to affordable housing for women which should include low—to modest-income women and their families in Ontario.

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