

<b>Resolution Number</b>	<b>Proposing Body</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Pages</b>
Resolution 1	Montreal Lakeshore UWC	Bullying and Cyber-Bullying	<b>2 - 6</b>
Resolution 2	CFUW Cornwall and District	Hyper-sexualisation: Countering Exploitative Child Images	<b>7 - 12</b>
Resolution 3	CFUW South Delta	The Need for a Federal Commissioner for Canada's Children	<b>13 - 19</b>
Resolution 4	CFUW Guelph	An Adequate Income for All Canadians	<b>20 -26</b>
Resolution 5	CFUW-Ottawa	Reduction of Dietary Sodium	<b>27 - 33</b>

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## **Resolution 1**

### **Title: Bullying and Cyber-bullying**

### **Proposed by: Montreal Lakeshore UWC**

**RESOLVED**, That the Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW) urge the federal, provincial, territorial and municipal governments of Canada to establish a framework to:

- (i) Raise public awareness about bullying and cyber-bullying and the legal remedies already in place;
- (ii) Discourage and deter bullying and cyber-bullying, and ensure that educational institutions establish or develop programs which train educators and counselors to recognize and address bullying and cyber-bullying by integrating such training into their core curriculum and also into ongoing professional development.

## **Background**

Bullying is defined as the repeated domination and harming of another by coercive and aggressive means which include physical, verbal and psychological bullying. This is the result of a situation where an imbalance of power leads to a stronger person(s) taking advantage of a weaker person, being deliberately mean and bending them to their own will. Though bullying has existed for a long time, in recent years it has been added to by cyber-bullying which involves the same process as bullying but, in addition, its sphere is expanded to include bullying over electronic media such as the computer and cellular telephones where derogatory information, photographs and/or videos are posted via the internet by e-mails, text messages and social media for all to see.

Bullying with the adjunct of cyber-bullying has become a fast growing problem in our society and though laws exist in certain areas many provinces still do not have specific legislation to combat the problems ensuing from cyber-bullying. The damaging effects of bullying and cyber-bullying were well exemplified in the movie "Bully" which follows the lives of five children and their families through a tragic school year (Bully 2012). This movie is being used in the United States to sensitize school children to the harmful effects of bullying and cyber-bullying.

Public awareness campaigns have been shown to be successful as seen by the campaign about the dangers of smoking and the one about the dangers of drinking and driving. Anti-smoking campaigns which include no smoking in public places in addition warning labels on cigarette and little cigar packages have reduced smoking. The drop in smoking since 2001 is quite dramatic at 9.4 percent from 20.8 percent among teens aged 15-17 (Huff Post 2012). The campaign against impaired driving has been successful and has included MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Driving) and getting a ride or a taxi after a night out on the town. It has also included government advertising campaigns which continues as a part of road safety programs. A University of Regina study on "Social Marketing Campaigns Aimed at Preventing Drunk Driving" showed that Canada had the lowest incidence of drunk-driving fatalities among the English-speaking countries which were analyzed (Canada, US, UK, Australia and New Zealand) at 2.61 per 100,000 population (Cismaru et al, 2009).

Quebec New Democrat MP Dany Morin called for a non-partisan, national anti-bullying strategy for Canada (CBC, 2012). The strategy must include a national public awareness campaign to address bullying and cyber-bullying. In addition, a concerted education of students, teachers and parents is

required across the country for all the stakeholders to work together to address this growing social problem.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police offered to speak to schools about cyber-bullying and the legal remedies in place with a lesson plan and procedures for students and teachers (RCMP 2012). In criminal law there is inclusion of certain actions of cyber-bullying which include criminal harassment, uttering threats and defamatory libel (Criminal Code Section 264). The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms does not generally uphold the use of the “freedom of expression” argument against the “right to life, liberty and security of the person” (RCMP 2012). In civil law, cyber-bullies can be sued for defamation, contributing to an unsafe environment and for events they could reasonably have surmised (RCMP 2012).

Though laws exist to address aspects of bullying and cyber-bullying, only Manitoba, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Quebec and the Yukon deal specifically with these issues.

- Manitoba has Bill 30 the “Safe Schools Charter” and the “Public Schools Act” (Manitoba 2012)
- New Brunswick has introduced Bill 52 Amendments to the Education Act to include bullying and harassment into the Act (Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick, 2012),
- Nova Scotia has Bill 30, “Promotion of Respectful and Responsible Relationships” and its “Cyber-bullying Task Force” has completed its report (Nova Scotia 2012)
- Ontario has Bill 13, “Accepting Schools Act” which was amended to include bullying and cyber bullying (Legislative Assembly of Ontario, 2012) and Bill-212 “Progressive Discipline and School Safety Act” which include (Legislative Assembly of Ontario, 2007)
- Quebec has Bill-56, “An Act to Prevent and Stop Bullying and Violence in Schools”; and
- Yukon has Policy – 1011 “Safe and Caring Schools” where cyber bullying is not permitted in schools.

Federally, Bill-273 is in its second reading to explicitly make cyber-bullying a criminal offence. This amendment would add cyber-bullying to existing portions of the criminal code dealing with Criminal Harassment, Defamatory Libel and False Messages.

A comprehensive research program is underway at McGill University directed by Dr. Shaheen Shariff (2008; 2009), an international expert on cyber-bullying, and in partnership and supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, Stanford Law School: The Center for Internet and Society, The Minister for Education, recreation and Sports, Quebec, and The Tolerance Foundation. The project termed “Define the Line: Clarifying the blurred lines between cyber-bullying and digital citizenship” provides information in clear and concise terms on their website and deals with Cyber bullying, Digital Citizenship, Education, and Law and Policy (Define the Line, 2012).

Ultimately, education at all levels is the primary line of defense that must be used to bring about meaningful change and aid in the understanding of the power of a new technology and the laws that must govern its responsible use. Removal of electronic devices or restricting their use would not bring about remediation of the problems. Educating students to use the technology wisely and realizing that technology can be an instrument of harm, just as dangerous as a gun or knife if misused. Proactive education where students can be persuaded to become invested in a program and a school philosophy of non-violence where they would take ownership of such a life style would lead to an increased likelihood of responsible behaviour. It is also imperative that the education of students start at a young age similar to the education on other safety issues and progress in an age-appropriate manner.

First, however, the educators must be educated. Teachers need to be trained not only to teach the students the subject matter but also appropriate behaviour. Furthermore, teachers must be educated to identify early signs of bullying and cyber bullying, and the procedures necessary to address the issues, handle the perpetrator(s) and assuage the bullied. Bullying and cyber-bullying education needs to be provided or elaborated at the outset as part of the core curriculum during the training of new teachers as well as later during ongoing professional development as new information and processes become available and to reinforce the education.

Schools and administrators also need to be trained in the handling of these situations and in making the tough decisions of disciplining the perpetrators, dealing with the parents, sometimes in cooperation with law enforcement. They need to learn not only how to deal with the bullies and the bullied but also the parents.

Together with the teachers, the administrators should set up program not only for the students but also for the parents many of whom may be too busy, too enamoured with their offspring or sometimes even abusive in their relationships with their children. There are parental responsibility laws which can also be invoked in Alberta (1997), Ontario (2000) and Nova Scotia (2012) amongst others which are being amended to specifically include responsibility for bullying and cyber-bullying. Currently most of the laws deal with parental responsibility for property damage by their minor children. These laws should be exercised and parental responsibility laws should be explained to the parents as part of parent education seminars in schools.

### Outcomes

We expect that with the concerted effort of burgeoning education programs at all levels (public, students, teachers, educators, parents) across Canada, there will be a better understanding of bullying and cyber bullying and their effects among students, parents and the education community at large; the responsible use of electronic media will increase; and that prophylactic education will result in increased tolerance and understanding with a concomitant reduction in harassment incidents.

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## **Resolution 2**

### **Title: Hyper-sexualisation: Countering Exploitative Child Images**

**Proposed by: CFUW Cornwall and District**

**RESOLVED**, That the Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW) urge the Government of Canada to implement and enforce laws that prohibit the use of sexualized images of prepubescent and adolescent children in media.

**RESOLVED**, That CFUW recommend a nation-wide education program be designed to raise Canadians' awareness of the hyper-sexualisation of children, especially girls in advertising, commercial products, and mass media.

**RESOLVED**, That CFUW urge the Government of Canada to develop media literacy that counters sexist conditioning and provides positive role models as a fundamental part of a National Action Plan to End Violence Against Women and Girls.

**RESOLVED**, That CFUW urge the Government of Canada to allocate resources to support programs that expose the relationship between hyper-sexualisation and gender inequality in society.

**RESOLVED**, That CFUW urge the Government of Canada to allocate resources to programs that support the positive depiction of women.

## **BACKGROUND**

Healthy sexuality is an important component of both physical and mental health, fosters intimacy, bonding and shared pleasure and involves mutual respect between consenting partners (Satcher, 2001; Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States [SIECUS], 2004).

In contrast, sexualisation occurs when:

- A person's value comes only from his or her sexual appeal or behavior, to the exclusion of other characteristics;
- A person is held to a standard that equates physical attractiveness (narrowly defined) with being sexy;
- A person is sexually objectified – that is made into a thing for others' sexual use, rather than seen as a person with the capacity for independent action and decision making; and/or
- Sexuality is inappropriately imposed upon a person.

For some time it has been argued that young girls are becoming sexualized at younger and younger ages. There are consequences which include harm to the sexualized individuals themselves, to their interpersonal relationships, and to society. This increased sexualisation and objectification of girls and women is occurring throughout North American culture, and particularly in mainstream media. These representations can be seen in virtually every medium, including prime-time television programs, television commercials, music videos, and magazines. Even when women's sports are featured, coverage is often selective (Kane, 1996) and commentary often sexually objectifies female athletes, as well as female fans in the audience (Schultz, 2005).

Although scholars documented differential and sexist treatment of female athletes over a decade ago (Messner et al., 1993, 2003), available evidence suggests a trend for increasing sexualisation of female athletes comparable to their overall increasing visibility.

The sexualisation of girls can be defined occurring along a continuum, with sexualized evaluation (e.g., looking at someone in a sexual way) at the less extreme end, and sexual exploitation, such as trafficking or abuse, at the more extreme end. Here are several examples of the less extreme sexualisation of girls to clarify the above definition:

- A 5-year-old girl walking through a mall wearing a short T-shirt that says "Flirt";
- Instructions given in magazines to preadolescent girls on how to look sexy and get a boyfriend by losing 10 pounds and straightening their hair;
- Print advertisements that portray women as little girls, with pigtails and ruffles, in sexual poses.

A central concern is that frequent exposure to media images that sexualize and degrade girls and women affect how girls conceptualize femininity and sexuality, leading them to accept more constrained and stereotypical notions about gender roles and unhealthy sexual roles. Findings across several studies indicate that this appears to be the case. Girls and young women who more frequently consume or engage with mainstream media content also offer stronger endorsement of sexual stereotypes that paint females as sexual objects. (e.g., Ward, 2002; Zurbriggen & Morgan, 2006).

There is also evidence that sexualisation contributes to impaired cognitive performance in college-aged women, and related research suggests that viewing material that is sexually objectifying can contribute to body dissatisfaction, eating disorders, low self-esteem, depressive affect, and even physical health problems in high school-aged girls and in young women (Report of the American Psychological Association Task Force on the sexualisation of girls, 2007).

Studies exposed college-age women to highly feminine-stereotyped television commercials, which emphasized a young woman's sexual attractiveness and physical beauty (Davies, Spencer, & Steele, 2005). After exposure to these ads, compared with the gender-neutral or counter-stereotypic ads, women indicated less interest in vocational options that emphasize mathematics and science, and also endorsed lower leadership aspirations, suggesting that sexualisation may indeed "prime" lower achievement orientation among young women (APA Task Force, 2007).

In one study on adolescent ethnic Fijian girls in Western Fiji, Becker (2004) found that the beginnings of weight and body shape preoccupation, purging behavior to control weight, and body disparagement were linked to the introduction of television. Before television, traditional Fijian culture emphasized a robust body shape and based notions of identity not on the body but on family, community and relationships. Three years after television was introduced, girls' eating behaviors and attitudes about their bodies had shifted and rates of disordered eating had increased.

Studies based on objectification theory have shown that the near-constant monitoring of appearance that accompanies self-objectification leads to increased feelings of shame about one's body (e.g., McKinley, 1998; Tiggemann & Slater, 2001). Shame is an emotion that occurs when one perceives one's failure to meet cultural standards of conduct (Lewis, 2000). Individuals who feel shame deem the whole self as deficient and typically have the urge to hide or disappear. Given that so few women meet the dominant cultural standard for an attractive, sexy appearance (Wolf, 1991) it is not surprising that a girl's chronic comparison of her own body to this impossible cultural standard would result in feelings of inadequacy



and shame. These can lead to depression and although rates of depression are the same among boys and girls until puberty, twice as many women are diagnosed with depression post-puberty (“Depression”, 2010).

The sexualisation and objectification of women in the media appears to be teaching girls that as females, all they have to offer is their body and face and that they should expend all their effort on physical appearance (APA Task Force, 2007). This may be behind the fact that the number of cosmetic surgery procedures performed more than tripled for youth aged 18 and younger from 1997-2007 (Sweeney, 2009).

If, as the self-objectification literature suggests, girls’ preoccupation with appearance ties up cognitive resources, girls will have less time and mental energy for other pursuits. Girls may be learning to prioritize certain rewards (male attention) over other rewards (academic accomplishment) thus limiting their future educational and occupational opportunities (APA Task Force, 2007).

In an analysis of children appearing in advertisements drawn from five popular magazines such as *Ladies Home Journal* and *Newsweek* over a 40-year period, O’Donohue, Gold and McKay (1997) reported that the depiction of sexualized girls was found to increase significantly over time.

A recent Canadian documentary looked at how, from tiny tots strutting bikini-clad bodies in beauty pageants to companies marketing thongs and padded bras to nine year-olds, images of ever-younger sexualized girls have become commonplace and the line between pop culture and porn culture is increasingly blurred. Researchers tracked how the pressure to be sexy is changing teen and sexual behavior (SextUpKids, 2012).

Across several studies, women and men exposed to sexually objectifying images of women from mainstream media -including R-rated films, magazine advertisements, and music videos- were found to be significantly more accepting of rape myths, the belief that women invite rape. They were also more susceptible to sexual harassment, sex role stereotypes, interpersonal violence, and to adversarial sexual beliefs about relationships than were those in control conditions (e.g. Milburn, Mather, & Conrad, 2000; Ward, 2002).

A recent study by the Parents’ Television Council found that since 2004, there has been a 120 percent increase in depictions of violence against women on television and even more disturbingly, there was a 400percent increase in the depictions of teen girls as the victim of violence. Peers perpetrate 79 percent of the sexual harassment in schools (American Association of University Women, 2001), and much of this harassment is in the form of sexual jokes, leering, touching or grabbing areas like the breasts or buttocks, and comments on physical appearance (Duffy, Wareham, & Walsh, 2004).

There are mounting concerns about the social cost of the exposure to media sexualizing young girls and depictions of violence against girls and women. It has been shown to have a direct effect on boys’ and girls’ views on dating, boys’ sexual harassment of girls and attitudes toward sexual violence. Objectifying girls and women gives boys and men permission to view them as sexual objects and can increase the propensity of violence towards girls and women, the sexual exploitation of girls, and rape culture (Chiu, 2012).

Rape culture is the insidious culmination of rape myth belief. Rape culture is defined as

“A concept used to describe a culture in which rape and sexual violence are common and in which prevalent attitudes, norms, practices, and media normalize, excuse, tolerate, or even condone sexual violence.” Examples of behaviors commonly associated with rape culture include victim blaming, sexual objectification, and trivializing rape. Rape culture has been used to model behaviour within social groups, including prison systems where prison rape is common and conflict areas where war rape is used as psychological warfare. Entire countries have also been alleged to be rape cultures. (e.g., Sommers, & Hoff, 2010; Steffes, Micah, 2008; Rozee, 2012; Upendra, 2002)

We believe that the Government of Canada, through the Status of Women Canada, is in the best position to:

- Create policies that prohibit the presentation of sexualized images of girls in all forms of media and products.
- Develop nation-wide education media literacy training programs which could be a key element in combating the influences of sexualisation. We believe that media literacy training can provide media consumers with analytical tools that promote autonomy and critical understanding of the media.
- Organize forums that will bring together members of the media and a panel of leading experts to discuss strategies on increasing awareness about this issue and reduce negative images of girls in the media.
- Implement a public awareness campaign to help facilitate effective conversations about the sexualisation of girls and its impact on girls, as well as on boys, women and men.
- Build linkages and partnerships with like-minded organizations that promote positive depictions of girls in the media and to provide support to organizations that develop and implement media literacy programs.\*

With the passing of this resolution, the Canadian Federation of University Women will be at the forefront of a movement to deconstruct the limiting images of girls in mainstream media, and to promote positive representations of females for the betterment of all. This is a foundational step toward the ultimate goal of eliminating violence towards girls and women, because objectifying girls is dehumanizing, and dehumanization leads to powerlessness and victimization.

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### **Resolution 3**

#### **Title: The Need for a Federal Commissioner for Canada's Children**

#### **Proposed by: CFUW South Delta**

RESOLVED, That the Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW) urge the Government of Canada (CFUW) to:

- (1) Take the necessary measures to establish the office of an independent federal Children's Commissioner with the necessary human, technical and financial resources to secure its independence and efficacy in conducting comprehensive and systematic monitoring of all children's rights and to ensure the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in Canada.
- (2) Promote public awareness and education about the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child and in particular of the need to ensure the implementation of the rights of Aboriginal and other marginalized children in Canada.
- (3) Review all legislation for compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and other international conventions and protocols which Canada has ratified including the *UN Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography* and the *UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking*, and to fully implement the terms set out within these documents.

#### **Background: Implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child - Canada's Unfinished Business.**

**Introduction:** This resolution builds on existing CFUW policy concerning the need for the federal government to address violations of the human rights of Aboriginal and other vulnerable children in Canada.

The proposed resolution is intended to guide CFUW in advocating for the appointment of an independent federal Children's Commissioner reporting to Parliament. The role of the Commissioner will be to promote the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) nationally, to ensure comprehensive and systematic monitoring of all children's rights at the federal level and to report publicly on the federal government's compliance or lack of compliance with the CRC. Canada ratified the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* on December 13, 1991 and also signed two optional protocols: the *Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict* and the *Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography* (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2011 p.1).

**The Convention on the Rights of the Child:** The *Convention* is a "legally binding instrument" providing a "universally agreed set of non-negotiable standards and obligations" to be adhered to by all countries ratifying it. The *Convention* spells out "the basic human rights that children everywhere have; the right to survival; to develop to the fullest; to protection from harmful

influences, abuse and exploitation; and to participate fully in family, cultural and social rights” (UNICEF UNCRC, 1989, *Introduction*, p.1). A child under the *Convention* is any person under 18 years of age. Globally, every UN member country except Somalia, South Sudan and the US has ratified this Convention (UN House Foreign Affairs Committee, July, 2009; UNchildrights, 2012, p.1).

The UN CRC Committee that monitors how well states are meeting their obligations in practice requires states (after an initial two-year report) to report every five years on their implementation of the CRC. The CRC Committee then reviews, comments on these reports, and makes recommendations. It also accepts reports from non-governmental organizations, academic institutions and the press. In its 2003 comments on Canada’s second periodic report, the CRC Committee recommended that “Canada establish at the federal level an ombudsman’s office responsible for children’s rights and ensure appropriate funding for its effective functioning” and as well the establishment of a comprehensive rights-based national plan of action. (CRC, Committee on the Rights of the Child, 34<sup>th</sup> session, Concluding Observations, Canada, 2003, p.4).

Both the appointment of a national Ombudsman for Children and the need for a national strategy to ensure the implementation of the Convention are again recommended in the CRC Committee’s 2012 concluding observations on Canada’s next two, combined reports documenting its compliance with the CRC. The CRC Committee found that Canada’s compliance with the CRC was deficient and that Canada’s reports to them lacked reliable information about government plans or initiatives addressing the needs of vulnerable children. The Committee was also critical of Canada’s inability to provide information on the impact of existing initiatives. In its concluding observations on Canada’s reports, the Committee states that it “strongly recommends that the State party [Canada] adopt a national strategy that provides a comprehensive framework for the federal, provincial and territorial levels of government spelling out as is appropriate the priorities, targets and respective responsibilities for the overall realization of the Convention and that will enable the provinces and territories to adopt accordingly their own specific plans and strategies” (UN CRC, October 5, 2012, 34<sup>th</sup> Session, Considerations ...Canada, p.5. ).

### **Canadian efforts to establish the office of a federal Child Rights Commissioner:**

Many recommendations and proposals have been made since at least 2001 on the need for Canada to appoint a federal Children’s Rights Commissioner. More than a decade ago, Senator Landon Pearson, then Advisor on Children’s Rights to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, developed a detailed proposal for the establishment of the Office of a federal Children’s Commissioner. That proposal set out the guiding principles, the mandate, the role and responsibilities, the societal context, the organization of the Office and the possible financial cost of such an Office (Langdon, 2001).

A decade later, in June 2012, Liberal M.P. Marc Garneau sponsored a similar Private Member’s Bill (PMB) that also describes in detail the mandate, roles, authorities and responsibilities of an

independent federal children's commissioner. (Canada, Parliament of Canada, 2012). Though this Bill has proceeded further than Senator Pearson's proposal, an analysis of the success of PMBs suggests that, although PMBs may be indirectly influential, only 1.5 per cent of PMBs receive Royal Assent and that virtually all Bills that do become law are sponsored by members of the government caucus (K.Blidook, 2007; B.Curry, 2012).

Two different reports by the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights have recommended the appointment of a federal Children's Commissioner. One example of Senate Committee in-depth studies of the issues is the 2007 *Final Report of the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights: Silenced Citizens*. This report finds that "consecutive federal governments have not kept the promises that were made upon ratification [of the CRC]." The Committee concludes that "At the ground level, children's rights are being pushed aside and even violated in a variety of situations... The Convention has been effectively marginalized when it comes to its direct impact on children's lives." The report recommends that "Parliament enact legislation to establish an independent Children's Commissioner to monitor implementation of the *Convention of the Rights of the Child*, and protection of children's rights in Canada" (Senate Standing Committee on Human Rights Report, 2007, pp.v1, v2, x1).

In November 2011, a report of the Senate Committee on Human Rights entitled *The Sexual Exploitation of Children in Canada: the Need for Action* reported that "nowhere is the devastation of sexual exploitation more pervasive than among Aboriginal children and youth." The report concludes: "We are failing these children. It is time to take action." The Committee's recommendation number four was that "the Government of Canada introduce legislation to establish an independent Children's Commissioner as an officer of Parliament who is appropriately resourced to monitor the implementation of Canada's obligations under the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child* and to promote and protect the rights of children in Canada, with particular attention to be given to the issue of sexual exploitation" (Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights, 2011 pp.v1,x1).

A 2011 report by the Office of the Auditor General of Canada to the Senate Standing Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, notes that "In some cases, [Aboriginal] conditions have worsened since our earlier audits. For example: the education gap has widened, the shortage of adequate housing on reserves has become more acute, the presence of mould on reserves remains a serious problem, administrative reporting requirements have become more onerous" (Office of the Auditor General of Canada, Opening Statement [by R. Campbell] to the Senate Standing Committee on Aboriginal Peoples. 2011, pp.1-2).

**The Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates Special Report to the CRC:** Most Canadian provinces and territories have appointed child and youth advocates. Together they form the Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates (CCCYA). They are knowledgeable about the issues affecting children and youth in their jurisdictions and know whether some children are being adequately protected or not within our federal and provincial system. They have found that the rights of some children are not protected and they have spoken out in a unified voice in a "special report" presented to the UN *Committee on the Rights of the Child*

documenting the violations of the rights of Aboriginal children and advocating the appointment of a federal Children Rights Commissioner. The *Special Report* identifies “critical systemic challenges impacting Aboriginal children’s lives and requiring urgent attention” and notes that: “there are many intertwining circumstances affecting many vulnerable children ... Refugee, unaccompanied and separated children also intersect with these groups.” The Council also contends that the past recommendations to Canada of the CRC Committee remain “largely unaddressed to the fullest extent possible and that a high percentage of Aboriginal children fail to realize their rights under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and other human rights instruments.” (Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates, 2011) pp.1, 1, 42-43.

### **Refugee, Trafficked and Sexually Exploited Children:**

Immigration law affecting refugee, unaccompanied minors and separated children falls within federal jurisdiction. “Unaccompanied minors” refers to those children who arrive entirely alone in Canada. “Separated children” refers to children who are outside their country of origin without parents or a legal or customary caregiver. This category includes a child who arrives in Canada with a relative who is not his or her legal guardian and who is considered not to have the capacity to provide the child with adequate protection in Canada.

Parliamentary reports confirm that the implementation of initiatives intended to be responsive to refugee, unaccompanied and separated children has been problematic although growing numbers of children are arriving alone, whether trafficked or smuggled or without legal guardianship (Parliamentary Reports, PRB 07-15e, p.1).

The CRC Committee and evidence given at the Senate Committee on Human Rights hearings has identified the following concerns:

- 1) Children kept in detention: Children are routinely held in immigration detention centres, even though the law says detention should be a last resort (UN CRC/C/CAN/CO/3-4, Sixty first session, 17 Sep-5 Oct/2012, para. 74(a));
- 2) Children deported without considering their best interests: Children are sometimes deported from Canada without attention being paid to the impact on their lives. The CRC states that the best interests of the child should always be a primary consideration (UN CRC/C/CAN/CO/3-4, paragraph 35);
- 3) Stateless children: In 2009 Canada changed its laws to limit Canadian citizenship to the first generation born outside Canada to Canadian parents. This means that some children of Canadian citizens are born stateless (i.e. no country considers them a citizen) (UN CRC/C/CAN/CO/3-4, paragraph 40, 41);
- 4) Families separated: Children often wait years in dangerous situations before they are allowed to travel to Canada to be reunited with their families. (Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights, Issue 9 – Evidence, 2006, Testimony, Sr. Deborah Isaacs).
- 5) Care of separated children: In 2003, the UN recommended that Canada adopt a national policy to care for children separated from both their parents who are seeking refugee



status in Canada. Children are vulnerable. There is still no national policy and the appointment of a designated representative to act in the best interests of the child is often mishandled (UN CRC/C/CAN/CO/3-4, paragraph 34, 35, and 73).

- 6) Trafficked children not protected: Canadian law does not protect trafficked persons, including children. Detained and deported, they are sometimes treated more as criminals than as victims of a crime (UN CRC/C/CAN/CO/3-4, paragraph 82).

The appointment of the designated representative is of particular concern. In Canada, when a child migrant is party to an asylum proceeding, a designated representative should be appointed to act in the child's best interests before the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB). However, the child's lawyer is often appointed by the IRB. This appointment in many cases creates a conflict of interest. As well, the appointment may not be made in a timely manner (Brief to Standing Committee, Minwalla, May 13, 2010, Section "v."). In addition, the role of the designated representative is not spelled out clearly in federal legislation and the representative is not mandated to act before the first immigration hearing. As a result, a child migrant may be interviewed by immigration or border services officials without a guardian present to represent his or her best interests

Clearly, the Canadian government is well aware of ongoing violations of the CRC related to the well-being of Aboriginal and other vulnerable children in Canada. What is apparently lacking is the political will to ensure compliance with the CRC and, as a key step to doing so, the appointment of a Commissioner/Ombudsman to ensure compliance with the CRC.

**Purpose:** CFUW presently has policy on the protection of vulnerable children and specifically on the need for the Government of Canada to take action to improve First Nations and other Aboriginal children's education, health, well-being and living conditions. This resolution calls for the appointment of a federal Children's Rights Commissioner as a specific mechanism for bringing about the changes that CFUW has long advocated for and to help to ensure Canada's compliance with the CRC. CFUW has the means and the opportunity to bring a strong voice to create the political will that has so long been lacking and in so doing to bring about long-needed change in the lives of the most vulnerable children in our society. This is Canada's unfinished business.

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#### **Resolution 4**

##### **Title: An Adequate Income for All Canadians**

##### **Proposed by: CFUW Guelph**

**RESOLVED**, That the Canadian Federation of University Women urge the federal, provincial and territorial governments of Canada to implement a basic income program that ensures that all adult residents of Canada, as defined for tax purposes, receive an income adequate for the necessities of life including safe housing, nutritious food, clothing, transportation and other basic needs.

##### ***Related CFUW Policy:***

Poverty

CFUW 2000 Montreal

**RESOLVED**, That the Canadian Federation of University Women urge the federal government to renew its commitments to the UN regarding poverty; and

**RESOLVED**, That the Canadian Federation of University Women urge the federal, provincial and territorial governments to:

1. Implement measures intended to reduce and prevent poverty, especially child poverty.
2. Initiate a careful re-evaluation of the situation regarding the real economic, healthcare and educational needs of Canadian children, as well as the actual public resources available to fight poverty.

##### ***Background***

No matter how one defines poverty, there are Canadians living in dire circumstances due to a lack of income to pay for their basic needs. Allowing people to live without having their basic needs met is a violation of their human rights and CFUW has a strong history of defending and advocating on human rights.

Researchers and policy makers are calling for a different approach to tackling poverty in this country – an approach based on ensuring that everyone, regardless of their personal circumstances, has a basic income sufficient to cover the necessities of life. There is both a moral and an economic argument for addressing this issue. CFUW has a role to play in supporting this strategy.

##### ***Prevalence and trends in poverty***

Poverty has been defined as “having too little income to meet basic needs and reasonably participate in the society in which you live” (UNICEF). While Canada has no official measure of poverty, using the number of people and households with incomes that fall below Low Income Cut-offs (LICOs) (Statistics Canada 2012), it is estimated that since the mid-1970s, between 10-15% of the population lives in poverty (UNICEF).

At almost 14%, the rate of child poverty in Canada remains high. Canada ranks 24<sup>th</sup> among 35 industrialized countries (UNICEF). Children living in poverty are less well prepared for school, are more likely to need special education or have emotional problems requiring intervention and are more likely to be involved in illegal activities (CCSD 2006). Among working age adults (18-64 years), women, single parents, members of racialized, immigrant or aboriginal communities, persons with serious physical or mental health problems, and persons with low levels of literacy, education and skills are at the greatest risk of poverty (OECD 2011).

Furthermore, a job does not guarantee protection against poverty. In fact, most working age adults living in poverty are employed. Almost half of low-income households include at least one working adult (Torjman 2008). The lower earnings of women put them and their families at greater risk of poverty. In 2008, women aged 25 to 54, working full-time for the full year, earned on average 23%-24% less than men (Williams 2010). Female heads of lone-parent families had the lowest total income of all family types and only 70% of the income of their male counterparts. The net worth of single mothers averaged only 20% of that of single fathers (\$17,000 vs. \$80,000) (Williams 2010).

The impact of living in poverty is exacerbated by growing income inequality among working-age persons in Canada (OECD 2011). Between the mid-1990s and the late 2000s, Canada had the fourth largest increase in inequality of all advanced industrialized countries (Conference Board of Canada 2011). Simultaneously, the top federal marginal income tax rate dropped from 43% to 29% (OECD 2011). Households in the top 20% income bracket spent 43.2% of their total income on food, shelter, clothing and transportation compared to 67.4% spent by the bottom 20% (Survey of Household Spending). Families who spend more than 30% of total pre-tax income on housing (based on the median local rent) are considered to be at risk of homelessness (Wilkinson and Pickett 2009).

### ***Approaches to Alleviating Poverty***

Since the end of World War II, federal and provincial governments have introduced a range of publically-funded programs and tax-based initiatives to mitigate the deleterious effects of poverty on individuals and communities. The most well-established are the [Guaranteed Income Supplement](#) for seniors, the [National Child Benefit Supplement](#) and [social assistance/welfare](#). While each province operates its own version of social assistance, all programs share common features including: “requirements to be nearly destitute to qualify; incomes that are far below poverty levels; and complex rules and restrictions that make it hard to get ahead” (NCWR 2011).

Welfare recipients may also qualify through various tax measures, services and subsidies, for assistance with expenses related to prescription drugs, dental care, child care, housing, and employment training. Each of these supports has its own rules and eligibility criteria. In 2007, the federal Working Income Tax Benefit was also introduced to provide financial support for low-income workers to stay in the workforce. This program supplements low earnings and helps to reduce disincentives like the loss of medical benefits that welfare recipients face when they try to re-enter the work force.

This piecemeal approach to the problem of poverty, especially poverty among working age adults, has produced a complex and uncoordinated set of programs and fiscal measures that have different and often contradictory purposes and eligibility criteria (Eggleton and Segal 2009). As a result, those needing assistance spend a great deal of time and energy trying to navigate the “system” and meet reporting requirements (Stapleton 2007). Large bureaucracies, with their associated costs, have developed at the federal, provincial and municipal levels to administer and manage the array of poverty relief measures.

Recently, various studies have examined the direct, indirect and societal costs of poverty and its impact, as well as the societal benefits of poverty reduction measures (Stapleton 2007; Eggleton and Segal 2009; Hoepfner 2010). The costs are substantial. For example, in Ontario in 2011-12 social assistance programs cost \$7.5 billion (Larkin and Shiekh 2012). An estimate of the social costs of poverty in Ontario concluded that \$10-14 billion of public funds were spent in 2007 to address only the indirect costs of poverty (Laurie 2008).

While anti-poverty measures have helped to reduce the number of children (Battle 2008) and elderly (StatsCan 2009) living in poverty, their overall impact has been “to make living within poverty more manageable” (Eggleton and Segal 2009). The measures have failed to lift people out of poverty. Eggleton and Segal (2009) noted that when all programs are working and when individuals get all possible income and social supports, the resulting income too often continues to maintain people in poverty, rather than allowing them full participation in the economic and social life of their communities.

Most studies of poverty and social assistance programs conclude with recommendations to streamline and coordinate programs and tax-based measures and/or increase the level of benefits payable to those in need (Eggleton and Segal 2009). Increasingly, researchers and policy makers are also urging consideration of a different strategy for tackling poverty, one based on some type of basic or guaranteed annual income for all Canadians.

### ***Basic Income Programs***

A basic income program leads to income security by ensuring that every individual has unconditional access to a modest, but adequate, income to meet basic material needs. Basic Income Earth Network (BIEN), an international research organization, defines a basic income as “an income unconditionally guaranteed to all on an individual basis without means test or work requirement”. Other common names for Basic Income are: Guaranteed Annual Income (GAI), Guaranteed Adequate Income, Citizen’s Income and Refundable Family Tax Credit. The two most common models are:

- Negative Income Tax - this “consists of a payment administered through the tax system to those below a set level of income. As additional income rises, part of the benefit is clawed back.” The Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) for seniors is an example of this type of benefit.

- Universal Demogrant - “is a non-taxable payment made to every person, regardless of income.” Typically recipients with higher incomes would pay the benefit back through the taxes on their other income. The Old Age Security (OAS) is a universal demogrant.

The Canada Child Tax Benefit is similar to a guaranteed income, in this case for children.

### ***Strengths and Limitations of a Basic Income Program***

There are differing opinions and evidence concerning basic income models. Those supporting a basic income argue that it would:

- Reduce costs associated with health and social problems (Wilkinson and Pickett 2009)
- Enable citizens to participate more meaningfully in society (e.g. schooling, parenting) and to carry out civic duties by removing the focus on survival (Forget 2011)
- Support gender equality by allowing women to leave abusive relationships (Forget 2011)
- Recognize the value of unpaid work such as care giving (Forget 2011; NCWR 2011)
- Give workers the financial security needed to adjust to changes in market forces that may lead to unemployment or the need for retraining (Pasma and Mulvale 2009)
- Enable workers in low paying, unattractive jobs to demand better working conditions (Young and Mulvale 2009)

Concerns about basic income programs focus on:

- Basic income being a work disincentive
- The notion of people getting something for nothing
- The program being unaffordable
- Benefit levels being inadequate to meet basic needs
- The program being unresponsive to individual circumstances
- The impact on other services

Low income earners are equally as motivated to give back to society as those in other income groups. The 2007 Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating found that people with incomes less than \$20,000 had the highest average annual volunteer rate (Hall et al 2009).

A basic income program is a fundamental shift in how we tackle poverty. There is little evidence to suggest that such a program would be either unaffordable or unworkable. The MINCOME experiment in Manitoba from 1974 to 1978 found no significant decline in work effort under a Guaranteed Annual Income (GAI). While married women returned to work less quickly after giving birth and adolescence children entered the workforce later and reduced their hours of work significantly, young people stayed in school longer and graduation rates increased. (Forget 2011)

The cost of a basic income program depends on several factors including benefit levels and the structure of the program. A 1994 Government of Canada report projected that the negative income tax option (with an estimated total cost of \$37.3 billion) would be “cost-neutral” (NCWR 1994). It could be financed by savings in other programs, including employment insurance, the child tax benefit, and federal contributions towards social assistance (Young and Mulvale 2009).

Because a basic income program is simpler to administer, savings could be reinvested in programs targeted to help those with exceptional needs (Pasma and Mulvale 2009). The Caledon Institute suggests that regional cost of living differences could be recognized through a provincial top-up to the Basic Income benefits, using the federal administrative machinery, as is done for the Canada Child Tax Benefit (Mendelson et al 2010).

The hidden costs of maintaining people in poverty are significant. In 2007, the poverty gap (the cost to lift all Canadians above the poverty line, using after-tax LICOs) was estimated at \$12.3 billion. Using the most cautious estimates, the direct (social assistance, and benefits), indirect (health care, criminal justice system, special education), and societal costs (loss of productivity, instability) of poverty are twice that amount (NCWR 2011). The Manitoba MINCOME experiments found a decrease in hospitalization rates for accidents, injuries and mental health issues (Forget 2011). It makes good economic sense to view an adequate basic income as an investment rather than an expense.

Canada can afford to spend more to address poverty. A key policy recommendation of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to alleviate the impact of income inequality is a reform of the tax system and an increase in government transfers. The OECD points out that due to their growing share of income, top income earners have the ability to pay more (OECD 2011). There are alternatives to raising income taxes, including special taxes on the use of natural resources, consumption, wealth, capital transfers, information transfers, electronic transactions, or an ecotax (Pasma and Mulvale 2008).

Conservative Senator Hugh Segal is a vocal proponent of a basic income, stating that it “means no massive program, no massive intervention, no public means test or interrogation at the welfare office, no embarrassment, less fraud and more dignity and self-respect.” (Segal 2008)

### ***Conclusion***

Most of our current income programs attempt to alleviate the hardships of poverty but do not focus on moving people out of poverty. A basic income program available to all, regardless of status, has the potential to do this in a straightforward, cost-effective and non-stigmatizing way, thereby improving the wellbeing of individuals, families and society. The costs to society of lives lived in poverty (healthcare, criminal justice, education and other service systems) will be reduced. Complex and uncoordinated social assistance systems can be streamlined to focus on helping citizens achieve their education, employment and other goals. Reducing poverty is perhaps the single most meaningful and measurable test of how well a government lives up to its responsibility for all citizens.

With the formation, in June 2012, of the Federal All-party Antipoverty Caucus, now is the time for CFUW to help make an annual basic income part of the conversation about ending poverty in Canada.



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## **Resolution 5**

### **Title: Reduction of Dietary Sodium**

**Proposed by: CFUW-Ottawa**

**Related policies by name:** None

**RESOLVED**, that the Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW) urge the Government of Canada to amend the Food and Drug Regulations to change the basis of the Daily Value (DV) for sodium calculations on food labels from 2300 mg to 1500 mg to reflect the current Adequate Intake (AI) level.

**RESOLVED**, that CFUW urge the Government of Canada to work with the food industry to establish sodium reduction targets by food category so that Canadians can consume a healthy, varied diet without exceeding the current Adequate Intake (AI) for sodium levels (1500 mg/day for adults).

**RESOLVED**, that CFUW urge the Provincial, Territorial and Municipal governments to establish sodium levels for food services and restaurant food so that Canadians of all ages may enjoy healthy meals in restaurants and cafeterias without exceeding age-appropriate recommended sodium levels.

**RESOLVED**, that CFUW urge the Government of Canada and the Provincial, Territorial and Municipal governments to promote public awareness of healthy, age-appropriate levels of sodium consumption based on the current Adequate Daily Intake (AI) (1500 mg/day for adults).

## **BACKGROUND**

In July 2010 Health Canada's Sodium Working Group (SWG) reported that Canadians are consuming an average of 3400 mg of sodium each day, more than twice the 1500 mg/per day recommended by the Institute of Medicine of the US National Academies (IOM) which is deemed "adequate" by Health Canada (Health Canada, 2010). A more recent study of eastern Ontario residents found that the average sodium consumption was closer to 6000 mg/day (Schmidt, 2012). The SWG suggested a two-step process to reduce the amount of sodium in Canadian diets, first to 2300 mg/day by 2016 and eventually to 1500 mg/day. About 77 percent of the sodium we consume comes from processed food products; SWG recommended that Health Canada work with the food industry to establish voluntary sodium reduction targets and that Provinces and Territories work with the restaurant and food service industries to establish voluntary sodium reduction targets for the meals and menu items they sell (Health Canada, 2010).

Health Canada disbanded the SWG in December 2010. Currently the Health Canada web site recommends that an adequate intake (AI) of sodium is 1500 mg daily for healthy adults, less for children and seniors (Health Canada, 2012), and has encouraged food manufacturers to reduce sodium levels in their processed foods. However, the government has not set targets for reduced levels of sodium. In the absence of government action, members of the Ontario Medical

Association met in Toronto in February 2012 to begin their own plans to work with industry to reduce salt in Canadian diets (Weeks, February 2012).

Humans lose sodium in sweat and urine and need to replace it. Health Canada now recommends an upper limit (UL) as 2300 mg/day; however, 1500 mg is expected to be adequate for everyone except elite athletes and those with some specific medical problems (Health Canada, 2012). Statistics Canada's Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) indicated that 78 percent of Canadian adults had sodium intakes exceeding the UL of 2300 mg/day (Health Canada 2012).

How is sodium related to salt?

One teaspoon of salt (sodium chloride) is about six grams of salt and contains 2300 mg of sodium. About 40 percent of table salt is sodium; 60 percent is chloride. Sodium is consumed in a variety of table salt as well as in baking powder, baking soda (sodium bicarbonate), and in food additives and preservatives such as monosodium glutamate (MSG), sodium benzoate, sodium nitrite, sodium propionate, sodium sulphite, disodium phosphate sodium alginate (Rosenbloom, 2012).

Health concerns related to high sodium intake

High blood pressure is a major factor in cardiovascular disease and stroke. The relationship between daily sodium intake and blood pressure has been studied in animal experiments, epidemiological studies, controlled clinical trials and population studies, and the evidence that sodium intake is directly associated with blood pressure is convincing (He et al., 2005; WHO/FAO, 2003).

Osteoporosis has a debilitating effect on older Canadians and negatively impacts our health care system. Its development is related to the amount of bone built early in life and the rate at which bone is lost after age 50 (Cappuccio et al., 2000). Matkovic et al. (1995) found that a high intake of sodium reduced peak bone mass in adolescents. Devine et al. (1995) found that it also increased bone mineral loss in post-menopausal women. These phenomena occur because sodium increases the level of calcium excreted in urine. For every teaspoon of salt we eat, 40mg of calcium is lost in urine (Ward, 2012).

Kidney stone formation can be related to high levels of salt in the diet. Excess calcium in the urine as a result of high sodium levels can combine with oxalate and phosphorus to form the most common type of stones (Cappuccio et al., 2000).

Kidney disease: Excess sodium puts the kidneys under pressure to eliminate it. Over time this extra strain can damage the kidneys (Blood pressure UK, 2012).

Gastric ulcer and gastric cancer: A high level of dietary salt is a risk factor for mortality from gastric ulcer (Sonnenberg, 1986) and for the development of stomach cancer (Kono and Hirohata, 1996; D'Elia et al., 2012).

Pre-menstrual syndrome (PMS): Limiting salt intake has been shown to reduce symptoms of bloating associated with PMS (Abraham, 1983).

Countering the argument that reduced sodium intake is bad for you.

A recent long-term study by Cook et al. (2007) followed people on a low-sodium diet for 10 to 15 years and clearly showed fewer cardio-vascular events than the control group. A large number of studies agree on the relationship between sodium and hypertension (He and MacGregor, 2010; Strazzulo et al., 2009; and others). However, two recent Cochrane metastudies have suggested that salt reduction has either little effect on blood pressure levels, or is dangerous (Taylor et al., 2011, Graudal et al., 2011). The media has picked up on this, encouraged by The Salt Institute, an organization with a vested interest in preventing the reduction of salt in processed food. Other researchers have taken issue with the Cochrane metastudies, arguing that there are methodological flaws affecting the results (He and MacGregor, 2011). Indeed, Taylor et al. (2011) themselves write: "Our review does not mean that asking people to reduce salt should be stopped. People should continue to strive to do this. However, additional measures – reducing the amount of hidden salt in processed foods, for example – will make it much easier for people to stick to a low salt diet."

A re-analysis of the Taylor et al. (2011) data by He and MacGregor (2011) found a significant reduction in the risk of cardiovascular events with a daily salt intake reduction of 2 g. The study by Graudal et al. (2011) followed subjects for a month and reported an undesirable increase in lipid fractions, including cholesterol, with salt reduction, but MacGregor (2011) argued that this rise is a normal short-term reaction and goes away in studies that last longer than one month. Francesco Cappuccio, Head of the WHO Collaborating Centre for Nutrition, does not believe that the Cochrane reviews have provided convincing evidence against the benefits of salt reduction (Gray, 2011). Lowering intake of dietary salt is one of the top ten recommendations of the WHO for reducing chronic diseases (Gray, 2011).

Why 1500 mg as a Daily Value (DV) rather than 2300 mg

The evidence points to 1500 mg as an appropriate average DV. In Canada 1500 mg is being considered as a lower level to replace sodium lost through sweat and urine. However, the medical community says 1500 mg is an upper limit for good health (Science Daily, 2011). The lower limit for adults may be much lower. For example, the Australian Government recommends a lower limit of 920 mg sodium per day (Riley and Beard, 2003). As well, the current 2300 mg DV is drifting upward. Doing the math on the Nutrition Facts Tables shows many manufacturers now use 2500 mg. If we stick to 1500 mg, any upward drift will not be so potentially harmful. At present, it is possible to achieve a diet of 1500 mg of sodium a day. However, that diet cannot include much prepared food. If prepared foods were lower in sodium, everyone could use prepared foods while those who want more salt would still be free to add it. Manufacturers are afraid people would not buy their products because consumers have acquired a taste for salt but other countries have achieved changes in prepared foods without consumer complaints.

Sodium in our food

The Heart and Stroke Foundation's Health Check program from 2004 to 2008 resulted in 150 products reducing salt levels which took a total of 800,000 kilograms of salt out of the

Canadian food supply - the equivalent of 88 dump trucks of salt (Rosenbloom, 2012). Despite that, Canada still has high salt consumption. The salt content of some items sold in Canada's fast food restaurants is substantially higher than the same items sold by the same chains in other countries (Weeks, April, 2012). Besides what we taste, sodium lurks in many foods that don't taste salty (Rosenbloom, 2012).

Restaurant meals: The level of sodium in restaurant food is usually high and, in most cases, the facts are hidden from consumers. Pizza (1 large slice has over 1000 mg) and Chinese food (chicken with black bean sauce has about 3800 mg) can be especially sodium-laden. Canadians should be able to enjoy a restaurant meal without compromising their health (Canadian Stroke Network, CSN, 2011). The Canadian Centre for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) recommends that nutrition information be available in restaurant food (CSPI, 2012).

Children's food: Many parents fail to realize that children are especially vulnerable to a high sodium diet. The acceptable daily intake (AI) for children is: ages 1-3 (1000 mg); ages 4-8 (1200 mg); ages 9-18 (1500 mg) (Health Canada, 2012). Yet fast food restaurants market sodium-laden meals to children. Some examples are: A & W's Chubby Junior kids' meal (1910 mg); Harvey's hamburger kids' meal (1485 mg); Swiss Chalet's kids' grilled cheese sandwich and fries (1165 mg). According to the CCHS, more than 80 percent of Canadian children have daily sodium intakes in the 2000 to 2700 mg range. This type of excess puts them at risk for early onset hypertension (Canadian Stroke Network, 2011) and for osteoporosis later in life.

Experience in Other Countries.

World Health Organization: In 2003, the WHO set a guideline of less than 5 grams of salt (2000 mg sodium) per person per day (WHO/FAO Expert Consultation, 2003, p.90). In September 2011, a UN High level meeting attempted to set a target for sodium reduction worldwide to 5 grams of salt per day by 2025 but Canada worked with other wealthy countries to block the target (World Action on Salt and Health, 2011; Webster, 2011).

The United Kingdom: In 2003, the UK introduced an ambitious national strategy to reduce population levels of salt intake with voluntary, but targeted, reductions in the salt content of manufactured foods. The Food Standards Agency (FSA) reviewed the strategy in 2006 and 2008, with projections for 2010. By 2007, an associated publicity campaign resulted in significant, but modest, reductions in population level salt intake (Wyness et al., 2012).

The United States: The US Department of Agriculture 'Dietary Guidelines for Americans' recommends limiting daily sodium intake to less than 2300 mg for most people and less than 1500 mg for people aged 51 or older, all African Americans and, regardless of age, for people with hypertension, diabetes, or chronic kidney disease (US Dept. Agriculture, 2010). In January 2010, New York City launched the National Salt Reduction Initiative, modeled after the one in the UK, calling on food manufacturers to voluntarily reduce the amount of sodium in their products. The overall goal was to reduce sodium in packaged and restaurant foods by 25% by 2015.

Australia, Finland, France, Ireland, Japan, the Netherlands and Sweden have national activities on sodium reduction. Japan has reduced salt intake over 40 years from a high of 18 g (7200 mg sodium) by over 20 percent, reducing stroke mortality by 80 percent at the same time. Finland, over the last 30 years, has reduced intake by a third, along with a 75-80% reduction in

stroke and Coronary Heart Disease (CHD) mortality and a five to six year increase in life expectancy (He and MacGregor, 2009).

## **OUTCOME**

A Daily Value of 1500 mg of sodium per day, along with a program with binding targets to require manufacturers of processed foods and the restaurant and food services industry to lower the sodium content of their products, together with a program to raise consumer awareness and understanding of healthy levels of dietary sodium would lead to better health, fewer major illnesses, lower medical costs, and a longer life expectancy for the Canadian population.

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