

NUPGE Advisory Committee on Women's Issues

February 19 – 20, 2007
Ottawa, Ontario



In attendance:

National Union	Marie Bean Brenda Hildahl Lisa Bullée
BCGEU	Colleen Jones
SGEU	Linda Anweiler
HSAA	Mary Dahr
MGEU	Kelly-Ann Ivory Gay Pagan
OPSEU	Cindy Haynes
NBUPPE	Susie Proulx-Daigle
NSGEU	Martha Brown
NAPE	Joyce Webber

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 9:35 by Chair Marie Bean. Sister Bean welcomed the sisters and introductions were made around the table. A special welcome was extended to Sister Joyce Webber who is the new ACWI committee member for NAPE/NUPGE.

Sister Bean advised the committee that she is retiring after this meeting and introduced Sister Brenda Hildahl as the new Chair of the ACWI. Chair Hildahl thanked Sister Bean for her hard work and efforts on the ACWI.

1. Adoption of Agenda

Sister Brown requested that "Future Direction" be added under "Other Business". The agenda was adopted as amended.

2. Adoption of Minutes – October 1, 2006

Sister Jones moved and Sister Ivory seconded that the October 1, 2006 minutes be adopted.

CARRIED.

3. International Sisterhood Conference

Copies of the *Building International Sisterhood Conference Report* were distributed to the Committee. The sisters were informed that discs containing photographs, speeches and the International Sisterhood Idol were included in the binder.

Chair Hildahl then asked the committee for feedback on the Building International Sisterhood Conference. The feedback was very positive. Sister Haynes told the sisters that Dr. Anne-Marie Zajdlik, who spoke at the National Union Building International Sisterhood Conference, will be also be a presenter at the OPSEU/NUPGE conference.

Sister Jones reported that the BCGEU/NUPGE women's committee enjoyed the workshops. She was grateful for such a great conference. Sister Webber advised that the NAPE/NUPGE sisters who attended spoke highly of it stating that it was a real eye opener and it gives a better perspective on the issues faced by women around the world. Sister Proulx-Daigle stated that everyone enjoyed it. Sister Dahr made special mention of the presentation by Bev Jacobs.

Sister Anweiler said it was an excellent conference. She stated that the video *Grandmothers: The unsung heroes of Africa* was very moving and there were so many tears during the slide show. It was the first such experience for a lot of women. Sister Ivory felt it brought people together. It was agreed by all that networking is what sisterhood is all about.

Sister Brown felt that although everything else was fine and they were "pumped" when they got back home, the workshop was far too slow at first; they weren't clear on the direction.

There were many compliments for the tote bags (bought by NUPGE from Ten Thousand Villages) and OPSEU/NUPGE will be purchasing them for their conference members as well.

Sister Brown reported that there were no sparks in her Component to fund raise and she wondered how they would bring attention to the Masai for Africa Campaign. Should they bring forward resolutions? Sisters Ivory and Brown asked if ACWI could bring it up at the NUPGE Convention. Sister Hildahl pointed out that one of the National Executive Board resolutions being submitted to Convention was the inclusion of the four international projects in the NUPGE Solidarity Fund, including the Masai for Africa Campaign.

The Sisters in Spirit buttons, from the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC), were distributed to each committee participant.

4. Component Reports

BCGEU

Sister Colleen Jones reported:

BCGEU Women's Committee

Since our last meeting, the BCGEU Women's committee has been busy organizing our own regional Women's conference that is scheduled for March 2nd and 3rd in Vancouver. Our conference title is "Sisters Across Borders: Solidarity with Migrant Workers". We have invited a number of community groups to participate as well. We are hoping to have 75 participants, which will include community women and union activists. A panel discussion will take place on Day 2 of the conference followed by four workshops that are related to the panel discussion. Workshop topics are:

1. Bargaining for Misery;
2. Globalization and Privatization;
3. Healthcare Workers & Migrant Workers; and
4. Sweatshops.

It is exciting to be including the community groups in this conference and we are looking forward to a great weekend.

Campaigns & Bargaining

Childcare Campaigns

With the recent announcements from the Minister of State, Linda Reid, on childcare cuts, BCGEU members and other childcare advocates have been very busy raising awareness on these issues trying to pressure the government to reverse its decisions. Town hall meetings, public forums, leafleting and rallies have been scheduled around the province. On February 26, 2007, a television show, "Kids can't Wait", will be aired across the province as well as an ad campaign.

Conversation on Health

The BC Liberal government is planning to hold town hall meetings around the province to discuss the issues around health care in BC. These meetings have been very well organized by the government and our members want to be a part of them. We are encouraging our members to register for these meetings so that the government won't easily be able to lead the discussions towards pre-determined conclusions. Health issues that are directly relevant to our members will also be discussed. Educational materials have been provided to our

members who are participating in these forums. The BCGEU is also preparing a formal submission to the Conversation on Health.

Climate Change

Many resolutions at our Policy Convention in November brought forward the issue of climate change. The BCGEU has developed presentations on global warming and is in the process of preparing a workshop for a BCGEU organizing school in April. We will continue to work with the BC Federation of Labour, church groups and environmental groups on this issue. The objective is to force the provincial government to adopt serious legislative targets for greenhouse gas emission reductions.

NUPGE International Sisterhood Conference

The delegates from the BCGEU expressed their appreciation for the great conference that was held in October. For many of our sisters this was their first women's conference and it was a very educational experience. The workshops were very interesting and informative. The entertainment and the international food were wonderful. It was a very safe and comfortable learning environment. The need to make sure that NUPGE continues to have affiliate support to ensure another conference in the future was also discussed. There is a need to build on International Sisterhood with the NUPGE Components and we look forward to playing a part in that.

HSA

Sister Mary Dahr reported:

Political Climate

Alberta has a new Premier, following the Tory leadership race in late '06. Much to most people's surprise, "Honest" Ed Stelmach was elected on the second ballot, and is now the Premier of our province.

In mandate letters provided to each of his Ministers, the Premier gives an indication of direction. There are a number of encouraging signs in these instructions, which include:

"public service renewal initiatives; access to quality, affordable childcare options; an updated plan to expand long-term care and improve standards of care; a Housing Task Force to develop a plan to increase the availability of affordable housing"

Health and Wellness Minister Dave Hancock's mandate reads as follows:

• Implement health care productivity reforms and long-term sustainability initiatives in consultation with health care professionals and regional health authorities.

- *Implement a comprehensive workforce strategy to secure and retain the health professionals needed over the next 10 years.*
- *Implement a new pharmaceutical strategy to improve the management of government drug expenditures to ensure that Albertans have access to sustainable government drug coverage.*
- *Strengthen public health services that promote wellness and injury and disease prevention and provide preparedness for public health emergencies.*¹

Employment, Immigration and Industry Minister Iris Evans' mandate reads as follows:

- *Improve and strengthen Alberta's immigration approach by developing a "Made in Alberta" immigration strategy that includes:*
 - *Improvements to the Provincial Nominee and Temporary foreign worker programs,*
 - *A new immigration agreement with the federal government,*
 - *Increased settlement services, and*
 - *Improved recruitment and attraction initiatives.*
- *Continue to implement a comprehensive labour strategy that includes:*
 - *An Aboriginal and Metis skills, training, and labour force development initiative, and*
 - *Sector strategies to address needs in areas such as tourism and hospitality, construction, manufacturing, health care, energy and mining (Note: retail has already been released).*
- *Continue to make progress on Alberta's Rural Development Strategy by considering opportunities in bio-energy, tourism and community development.*
- *Consolidate official statistics and other key government data to support the efficient and strategic management and dissemination of information for policy and decision making, through an Office of Statistics and Information.*¹

Expectations are that an election will be called within a year. Municipal elections will occur in October.

Labour Climate

We will be seeking a meeting with the new Minister to determine the direction she will be taking, and how she will be interpreting her mandate.

Alberta's lack of first contract arbitration legislation continues to be a factor in getting collective agreements for newly organized unions. Members of the United Food and Commercial Workers Local 401 have been on strike at the Palace Casino in Edmonton since September, and have just rejected an offer that was put to a vote on order of the Labour Relations Board, which acted in response to an application by the Employer.

The Alberta Federation is leading or coordinating several campaigns, including:

Anti-CLAC – a defamation lawsuit has been filed by CLAC against both the AFL and the CLC, in discovery stage, stalled at the moment because CLAC has been asked to produce documents.

Foreign Temporary Workers – Advocating to ensure that these workers get true status, rather than being at the mercy of unscrupulous Employers. The Federation has resourced a lawyer to assist individual workers, even though they are not unionized, hoping to show that the House of Labour will fight worker exploitation of all types, get some positive profile, debunk the view that the opposition to TFWs is racist, and hopefully shame governments into providing assistance to these folks.

First Contract Arbitration

Challenge of the Labour Relations Board's involvement in drafting of the legislation that it interprets and enforces.

Intervener status at the Supreme Court of Canada supporting the Alberta Teachers' Association's challenge of legislation that would prohibit any school board employee from running to be a trustee on a school board, regardless of whether it is the board by which they are employed.

Economy

The Alberta boom has led to labour shortages in virtually every sector of the economy, including health care, which is our jurisdiction. This shortage has widespread impacts, draining skilled workers, including health care professionals, from other provinces and countries. Presumably that may create some upward pressures on wages in some jurisdictions, but clearly there are also negative consequences due to the migration of skilled workers. As predicted, some foreign workers have not fared as well as others in obtaining work, or if they have they are being mistreated, underpaid and undervalued. The AFL has started a campaign fund to assist these workers.

Pensions

Local Authorities Pension Plan (LAPP) covers the majority of HSAA members. It is a defined benefit plan. HSAA's Director of Labour Relations is on the Board of Trustees, and is its current chair. While the board has many of the powers enjoyed by those of fully trusteed plans, the Minister of Finance continues to be the legal trustee. Recent plan details:

Contribution rates remain unchanged in 2007. The Board of Trustees carefully reviewed LAPP's financial performance and decided to keep the rates stable this year. This decision was consistent with LAPP's funding policy which seeks to keep contribution rates stable. Contribution rates are shown below.

Members' Rates	6.75% up to YMPE	9.64% over YMPE
Employers' rates	7.75% up to YMPE	10.64% over YMPE

The previous year's valuation indicated that the plan was in a deficit position, at 86.4% funded. Current contribution rates, as set by the Board a year ago, included an amount to amortize this deficit over a 15-year period. As the plan's funding position has improved slightly over the past year to 89.3% funded, higher contribution rates are not necessary.

The preliminary performance figures for 2006 indicate that the funding status of the Plan continues to improve. Assets under management as of December 31, 2006 total \$14,618,770 billion, an increase of \$2,087,270 over December 31, 2005. We should, therefore, be able to maintain the current rates for 2008.

The Alberta Government has introduced an amendment to the Employment Pension Plans which is causing the Board some concern.

The amendment gives former employees an opportunity to "unlock" up to 50% of the retirement funds that were originally accumulated on their behalf by LAPP. In the opinion of the Board unlocking of retirement funds undermines the fundamental purpose of the pension system – to provide a secure source of income to the retirees. The new rules allow a former employee to unlock up to 50% of the funds when they purchase a Life Income Funds (LIF), typically at age 50 or older. These unlocked funds can then be transferred tax-free into a regular RRSP or withdrawn as cash (and taxed accordingly). The Board believes this new amendment may result in employees being encouraged by others (e.g. banks, etc.).

The Board has also developed a communication plan to address the small but growing number of employees who are withdrawing and transferring the commuted value of their pension into a Locked-in Retirement Account (LIRA) just before age 55.

A new way of transferring pension service between the LAPP and the Public Service Pension Plan was finally agreed to and is expected to make transfers more equitable for the majority of members.

Structured defined contribution plans are in effect for members at Calgary Laboratory Services and Canadian Blood Services (CBS). The latter has some members still participating in a defined benefit plan. Other units have group RRSPs, or matching RRSP provisions.

Human Rights & Equality Committee (formerly HSAA's CARE Committee)

HSAA's Board of Directors approved its terms of reference and has recommended that it become a standing committee.

Arbitrations

Currently in preparation mode for our next round of provincial facility, community and mental health bargaining (current collective agreement expires March 31, 2008).

This means that we are identifying our research needs, developing our member survey tools, our bargaining time lines / protocols and our bargaining committee policies preparatory to planning our mandate setting bargaining conference currently scheduled for January 2008.

Most of the bargaining associated with Long-term Care and NGO's has concluded. Ambulance Service bargaining (which we organize for the most part on an individual geographical region basis) continues as we organize these groups. As of this writing we have one possible strike in this sector looming.

As a result of a chronic shortage of workers in our classifications we have found it necessary to enter into a number of "recruitment and retention" letters of understanding with various Employers.

Our meetings with the provincial representative body of the health care Employers (Health Boards of Alberta) continue under the auspices of a joint committee established under the terms of the provincial agreement. Amongst other issues the joint committee deals with the issues emanating from the recent decision by the Alberta government to set up discipline specific Colleges and Professional Associations for many of the groups we represent.

The committee also looks at such issues as professional development, insurance benefit issues and work life balancing issues.

HSAА continues to meet with Employers on the findings of the Quality Work Life survey that was conducted on our members. For the most part, the survey findings have reflected the same issues that Employers have found in their own surveys (job satisfaction, work / life balance questions).

The Classification Evaluation Project currently being conducted on all of the classifications that are represented by HSAА under the provincial collective agreement continues. Currently the committee is developing job analysis tools for use in analyzing the various disciplines. At this point the development is involving a high degree of usage of focus groups to glean accurate information on the classifications. One of the challenges faced by the group is to create a methodology that will measure some of the classifications that are not discipline specific, i.e. "Case Coordinators" who may have a professional designation of P.T., O.T., Social Worker or Nurse. Another example is "Mental Health Therapist" which covers a wide spectrum of disciplines from Social Worker to Psychologist.

HSAА is currently surveying Albertans on their level of awareness of HSAА. The purpose of this is primarily twofold. One, to get a base line awareness prior to running our media program and two, to assist us in targeting our information ads in the event we determine we need to send out a message during the next round of bargaining.

HSAА continues to expend a significant amount of our resources to staff development. Over the course of the spring we will be conducting courses for our junior staff (Assistant Labour Relation officers, Classification Analyst, Researcher) on a modified version of the more in depth Arbitration workshop that we present to our Labour Relations Officers. In addition, we will be putting on a collective bargaining course for our staff negotiators.

On the member education front, interest in courses such as pre-retirement planning and work / life balancing issues ("Boomers and Bangers") tend to be popular. Ironically, the course entitled "Let's Get Involved" had to be cancelled for lack of interest.

We are currently putting together an OH&S conference which will include such issues as violence in the workplace and ergonomics.

Bargaining

We are developing a course for our bargaining committees on their appropriate role during negotiations.

As a general observation, HSAА continues to find opportunities for growth through organizing in our traditional area by signing up small groups of technical / professional members at non-union health facilities in the rural areas of the province. These new members are in addition to the natural growth increase caused by the relatively rapid growth in the provincial population. We are also more active in organizing in the pre-hospital care (Ambulance) sector and have had good success with our organizing drives in that area.

As indicated above, our provincial collective agreement, which covers over 11,000 of our 14,000 members, will expire in 2008. Other major agreements, such as the Alberta Cancer Board and Calgary Laboratory Services, generally follow suit.

Currently, in one set of ambulance negotiations it is very apparent that the Employer and its negotiator are determined to break the union. We received a strike mandate, and hope that will have the desired effect at the bargaining table.

In another set of negotiations at Wainright and District Ambulance a deal was met whereby the Employer agreed to a 5% wage increase in each of the three years plus an increase to the on-call rate as well as many other contract improvements. This unit faced similar difficulties to Flagstaff in getting a first agreement. However, the relationship with the Employer has become constructive, and this second renewal agreement was reached in short order.

Coalition work and sponsorships

We continue to participate in a number of coalitions, including the Labour Coalition on Pensions, the Labour Coalition on Workers Compensation, Friends of Medicare and Public Interest Alberta (PIA).

PIA released a discussion document called Democratic Renewal in Alberta, focusing on nine major areas of the democratic deficit. PIA's Democracy Task Force proposed more than 80 suggested solutions that are designed to spark discussion across the province. PIA will kick start the discussion with eight public forums across the province.

We are a longtime sponsor of the Parkland Institute, which celebrated its 10th anniversary last year. We also provide sponsorship to Careers the Next Generation. The latter works with high school students to provide opportunities to learn about various occupations through internships.

HSAA terminated its sponsorship of MADD Canada following the negative publicity in late 2006. We have left the door open so that if they can provide objective evidence supporting their claims as to the percentage of funds going to programs, we would consider a renewal.

Other – We have started a radio advertising campaign to raise public awareness of HSAA. These ads will run on the radio from February 12 – March 4.

Quality of Work Environment Survey

Meetings with Employers: We have met with a number of Employers to discuss the survey results and the feedback has tended to verify what regions have found through their own surveys. Most of the Employers expressed appreciation for the information, though it remains to be seen whether that translates into real initiatives.

The following table is the most current information we have on file and provides a breakdown of employment status.

Table 2: Employment characteristics		
		Percent
<i>Job status</i>	Full time	56.3
	Part time	37.1
	Casual-temporary	6.5
<i>Employed in more than one health care job</i>	Yes	12.4
	No	87.6
<i>Years with current employer</i>	< 1 year	6.7
	1-3 years	16.1
	4-6 years	20.9
	7-10 years	15.0
	> 10 years	41.5
<i>Ongoing supervisory responsibilities</i>	No	79.1
	Yes, for employees who are HSAA members	10.2
	Yes, for employees who are not HSAA members	7.5
	Yes, for both groups	3.2
<i>Type of health sector</i>	Hospital	60.6
	Community health	15.0
	Lab services	12.6
	Mental health	6.5
	Long-term care	3.0
	EMS	2.2
Total Respondents = 5,131		

Staffing shortages continue to plague the health care system, not unlike other industries. Recently Calgary Emergency Medical Services called for a legislated 30 minute turnaround time for its ambulances. They have faced situations where no ambulances were available to respond to emergency calls as they were waiting to offload patients. However, legislation will not put staff into the facilities, and we continue to ensure that all levels of government participate in a solution, which will not be a short-term project.

¹ See the mandates at www.gov.ab.ca (news releases Dec. 19, 2006)

SGEU

Sister Linda Anweiler reported:

The following activities have taken place within SGEU since our last NUPGE Women's committee meeting October 2, 2006.

Community Service Sector

The Community Services Sector, in conjunction with SEIU and CUPE, gathered in Saskatoon October 24 - 25 for a conference to plan the next stage of the campaign for better CBO wages. "Our efforts over the past 10 years resulted in

an additional \$30 million injection of new funds to the sector," said SGEU staff representative Kerry Armbruster-Barret. "While the additional funds are an important step, it by no means achieves wage parity." One of the difficulties has been that money earmarked by the government for wage improvements is not being passed on to employees. A CUPE group home, Cheshire Homes, is on strike over this issue: their board received \$97,000 extra for better wages, but has offered a meager two percent increase – this will result in the wage gap widening instead of narrowing. SGEU members at Citizens All in Moose Jaw are taking a strike vote over the same problem on February 12.

Crowns Sector

Workers Compensation Board members have been holding membership meetings in advance of bargaining. This is the first time this bargaining unit has carried membership meetings to determine bargaining proposals. A greater emphasis on grassroots participation is a positive development.

The Information Services Corporation members agreed to try negotiating within an interest-based bargaining process called "Mutual Gains". Both management and union teams took training together in October. In its January bargaining report, the ISC team reported that bargaining has been proceeding very well under this process.

As a provincial election is expected in the near future, there are always worries about preservation of the crowns. Thankfully, Saskatchewan people remain protective of their crown corporations. Last election, the Saskatchewan Party lost critical support after indicating some major crowns might be privatized. Their new strategy may be to go after smaller, less well-known crowns.

Education Sector

Academic members at the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST) are at the table. The negotiating committee is seeking wage and pension improvements, increased funding for professional development, long service recognition, better treatment of part-time, casual and end-dated employees, and more fair and open hiring and scope designation practices. They also want improvements around workplace problem-solving, to help reduce the high number of grievances.

Health Sector

Members at the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency are about to go to the table. Recruitment and retention remain major issues for health care employees in Saskatchewan.

Public Service Sector

Members of the Public Service/Government Employment (PS/GE) Bargaining Unit withdrew their services at 11:00 p.m. on December 20th in the first of a series of rotating strikes. About 1,300 workers were off the job over a six-week period. This is the largest bargaining unit in SGEU, representing about 13,000 government employees. Following the release of a report by mediator Vince Ready on January 31, the negotiating committee indicated acceptance of the report. The details are now under discussion with the membership and the union is not commenting publicly at this time. The workers should be back on the job by the time you read this report. During the strike, successful solidarity rallies were held in Regina, Saskatoon and Prince Albert, with great turn-out from our brothers and sisters in the union movement. Special recognition should be given to the brothers and sisters of AUPE, who traveled all the way from Edmonton to Saskatoon in wintry weather to join the line for a day.

Retail / Regulatory Sector

There are serious concerns that the next provincial government will move very quickly to privatize liquor sales. The Canadian Taxpayers Association has been extremely vocal about Saskatchewan's "overpaid" liquor employees and has been working hard in the media and behind the scenes to sway opinion to their side. In expectation of a provincial election, SGEU is gearing up a major anti-privatization campaign on this issue. Any assistance or advice from NUPGE Components – particularly in the area of research – would be greatly appreciated.

Also of Note: Courts Uphold Picket Line Discipline

A December Provincial Court ruling upheld SGEU's right to recoup strike pay loans and to impose disciplinary fines on members who cross picket lines without union approval during a strike. The ruling noted the Trade Union Act is "crafted to uphold the right of collective bargaining" and hence upholds the power of the union to enforce bargaining strategies and recoup strike costs from all members, whether they agreed with the majority who voted in favour of strike action or not. "This is obvious in section 3 of the Act, which grants the crucial power for the union selected by a majority...to be the exclusive representative of all employees in the unit for purposes of collective bargaining," concluded the ruling.

Women's Committee

SGEU Women's Conference:

Sisterhood Without Borders, November 23 & 24, 2006

We decided to take our knowledge from the NUPGE Women's conference, *Building Sisterhood Around the World*, and build on the theme at our own

conference, which we called *Sisterhood Without Borders*. Sisters who attended the NUPGE conference presented a full report to their sisters in Saskatchewan about what they'd learned and experienced at the Ottawa conference.

Some 50 women attended SGEU's conference, with nearly half being new to union activism. On the first afternoon, we offered a basic union leadership development course to 21 of these newly active members.

This was followed by supper. The SGEU Women's Committee did a presentation and slide show of the NUPGE *Building Sisterhood Around the World Conference*. We had an emotional video about the Grandmothers of Africa and how they are raising their grandchildren who are victims of AIDS/HIV. We were so pleased to learn that one of our SGEU sisters is traveling to Africa in January to meet with some of these grandmothers to provide assistance.

The following morning, the women broke into two workshops. One group workshop was *Harassment In Your Workplace* presented by Louis Burch from Mobile Crisis in Regina. They explored the difference between harassment and other forms of disrespectful behavior in the workplace. Participants learned some tools for building respectful workplaces, and constructed resolutions to go to convention from this.

The other workshop was *Women and Globalization* presented by Tracy Mitchell from the Saskatchewan Council for International Cooperation. They explored the effects of globalization on women around the world and how to support them.

This was followed by the introduction of the Silent Witness Project, the first to be introduced into Saskatchewan by SGEU. The Project is a traveling exhibit of life-size red wooden silhouettes. Each represents a woman who was killed by a husband, partner or acquaintance. Because these women no longer have a voice, the silhouettes are called the Silent Witnesses. Each figure will bear a chest-plate with the name of a woman who once lived and worked among us. A few silhouettes are anonymous, reflecting unsolved, or uncounted, murders of women.

The ultimate goal of the Project is to help raise public awareness about domestic violence. It also has the potential to help families, friends and communities heal following the murder of a woman at the hands of her partner and to help save the lives of other women.

In the afternoon we had a presentation of *Unionism on Turtle Island* presented by Darla Leard from the CLC. This was a detailed introduction to the four-day course "Unions on Turtle Island", an Aboriginal awareness course for union members.

There was also a collection taken to raise funds for our sister to take to the Grandmothers of Africa to assist them. We will have a presentation at our annual convention from this sister.

This was a very emotional conference which brought both international and national awareness for women of what is happening not only within SGEU, but also at the national and international level. It truly met our objective of *Sisterhood Without Borders*.

Prairie School for Union Women

The next Prairie School for Union Women will be held June 17 - 21 at beautiful Waskesiu Lake in northern Saskatchewan. The line-up of workshops is exciting, including topics related to environmental issues, First Nations awareness, sexual orientation, and women's struggle for freedom and justice, to name a few. As usual, the SGEU women's committee will be sponsoring several women to attend this educational event.

SGEU Women's Brochure

The brochure was updated for 2006 and was distributed. Copies are available by contacting the Women' Committee Office in Regina.

SGEU Convention

This year, the committee will make a presentation to our annual convention about the SGEU and NUPGE women's conferences. We have developed a colourful PowerPoint slide show from the NUPGE conference. We will also launch the Silent Witness project at convention, and hold our annual networking luncheon.

Front Line Office Workers

We continue to support noon hour meetings for front line office workers, to show the video we developed a few years back.

Acknowledgements

This will be my last report to the NUPGE Women's Committee, as I will be retiring in April 2007. It has been such a privilege and honour to be a member of the Women's Committee over the many years. The committee has grown stronger, overcome obstacles, become a voice and taught us all so much. I know that the committee is strong and will continue to represent women's issues.

MGEU

Sister Kelly-Ann Ivory reported:

Activities of the MGEU Women's Committee

On October 19 & 20, 2006, the MGEU held its biannual convention. Before the call to order of the convention, the MGEU Women's Committee had organized a women's breakfast forum. Many of the women who attended this forum were first-time delegates. The sisters took this opportunity to familiarize themselves with some of the resolutions that affected women and used this time to network with each other. During the convention, one resolution that was very exciting for the MGEU sisters (and brothers too!) was "Whereas there has not been an increase in the childcare per diem for several years; Therefore be it resolved to maintain ongoing wage parity with the minimum wage scale". The recommendation from the Finance Committee was non-concurrence; with effective speeches, our sisters were able to defeat the Committee's recommendation. Other resolutions including lobbying for an accessible childcare system and ending violence against women were also discussed and all were supported. The MGEU provincial officers were elected by acclamation.

As per the MGEU constitution, following the convention each of the eight areas are responsible to hold elections to our various standing committees; this includes the MGEU Women's Committee. The Committee now has five new members with three sisters returning for another two-year term. Other elections following the convention include election to the MGEU Board of Directors; 16 sisters and 12 brothers were elected to the Board. This new majority more accurately reflects our membership representation, as nearly 70 percent of the MGEU members are women. During the first meeting of the newly elected Women's Committee, which was held on January 12, short and long-term goals were developed which included a commitment to host the MGEU Women's Conference in May 2008. The Committee will be celebrating International Women's Day by attending a fundraising event hosted by Grassroots Women (MB). Proceeds will be used to support international missions in the Philippines where the government is murdering labour leaders, human rights activists and leadership of both women's organizations and indigenous people. Arrangements are being made to have Sister Becky Thiessen from UNPAC – United Nations Platform for Action Committee Manitoba Gender Budget Project come to our next meeting and provide us with a presentation that highlights how women are affected by provincial and federal budgets.

MGEU Women's Committee members have been attending various events and information sessions regarding the Harper government cutbacks to Canadian women's programs. Committee members attended a mock funeral procession mourning the loss/closure of the local Status of Women Office. Committee members also attended presentations from local coalition groups "Women Action Group" and NAWL (National Association of Women and the Law). Committee

members along with sisters from the MGEU Board can be seen wearing buttons from the “Women are Angry” project. These buttons have the logos “Women are Angry” and “Harper owes me 29 cents” to bring the attention to the Harper anti-women mandate.

Summary of Events from the MGEU

Bargaining

- Recently the Manitoba’s 13,000 **Civil Service** employees voted in favour of ratifying a new four-year deal. The contract delivers general pay increases of 2.5% for the next three years retroactive to March, 2006, and 2.9% in the fourth and final year. The **Corrections** Sub-Component bargaining table voted overwhelmingly to reject the government’s offer. The Bargaining Committee will attempt to return to the bargaining table with government negotiators. Should the government be unwilling to reopen negotiations, the union will file for arbitration.
- The two-dozen YECSS (**Youth Emergency Crisis Stabilization Systems**) employees at MacDonald Youth Services have been without a contract for almost two years. On January 22, they voted overwhelmingly in favour of accepting a deal meaning that a strike that was scheduled for January 23 was avoided. The deal will result in higher salaries in all wage classifications and improved benefits in several areas for those working as crisis workers, mobile crisis team members, clinicians, clinical follow-up facilitators, and intake workers.
- On January 19, members at **Red River College** (RRC) voted “no” to strike action and instead narrowly opted to accept a recent contract offer by the College’s negotiating team. The percentage in favour of accepting the offer was 52 percent. Talks between the MGEU, the College’s bargaining committee, and the College’s management team broke off on January 11, 2007 when the College’s management team refused to continue negotiating toward a collective agreement.

Other Events

- **Childcare Campaign** – Recently the MGEU had the opportunity to meet with the Provincial Minister responsible for family services to review our commitment to organize Childcare locations and to develop a “hub” model by bringing five local day cares from a regional area in Winnipeg to a collective bargaining table with the Government.
- **President and Chief Steward Seminars** – In the first two weeks of February 2007, various local presidents and chief stewards will be invited to attend regional all-day meetings to discuss issues regarding successes and accomplishments, new member orientation, education programs, respectful workplace and provincial elections and the importance of public services.

- **myMGEU** – December 8, 2006 saw the launch of an exciting new initiative called **myMGEU**. Similar in nature to on-line banking, **myMGEU** is a secured web site, which allows members to access everything from their collective agreement to meeting notices to recent updates about their Local – all from any computer with an Internet connection. This one-stop shop makes it easier to find information that pertains directly to members, rather than having to search through multiple pages on the union’s main web site.
- **Workers Compensation Act** – As of January 1, 2007, Employers in Manitoba have new obligations to re-employ injured workers due to legislative changes to the **Workers Compensation Act**. This has been followed by changes to the **Workplace Safety and Health Act** effective February 1, 2007. The new regulatory package will consolidate existing regulations and address deficiencies in the current regulations by adding specific areas that focus on particularly hazardous work environments.

OPSEU

Sister Cindy Haynes reported:

Ontario colleges have 17,000 part-time and seasonal employees – almost 1,000 per college – but only 15,000 full-time employees. Most part-time workers have no job security, no benefits, no pension, and are paid poorly and inconsistently. No other Employer in the province has the ability to exploit its workforce in the way the Ontario college system can. We need to ask Dalton McGuinty to change the law excluding college part-timers from organizing and bargaining like any other workers. All it takes is one stroke of a pen. The International Labour Organization in Geneva tells the province of Ontario its colleges are not living up to world labour standards. OPSECAAT, has been formed to act like a “union in waiting” for these workers. OPSECAAT is signing up members this winter in every college. OPSEU members are a key part of this drive.

Private Agency “Temps” Score Major Arbitration Victory

In a ruling that could have far-reaching implications for temporary workers hired from outside private agencies, an arbitrator has ruled in favor of a policy grievance filed by OPSEU which argued that they are entitled to the terms and conditions of the collective agreement.

In a case that dates back to August 2001, arbitrator Rick MacDowell has ruled that temporary employees of the former Ontario Property Assessment Corporation (now called the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation – MPAC) were unjustly excluded from the collective agreement negotiated between OPAC and OPSEU covering the period 2000 – 2002.

OPSEU president Leah Casselman hailed the ruling as “visionary” and said it would have a profound impact on the way current and future temporary employees hired from outside private agencies are treated by their Employers.

Two new regional education programs are being developed by the OPSEU education unit. The Women in Leadership course has been launched in two regions to date. The other course is more of an introduction to OPSEU with a focus on how women can get involved, it will be piloted early in the new year.

OPSEU convention will take place April 19, 20 & 21. It is an election year. Leah Casselman will **not** be re-offering this year.

The planning for the Women’s Breakfast at convention is well underway; speakers are lined up for an introduction to the Sisters in Spirit campaign. Donations collected at the breakfast will go to support the campaign. The breakfast will also provide an opportunity to recognize a woman with the OPSEU Bread and Roses award for her work.

The OPSEU biennial Women’s conference will take place in the fall of 2007. We are working to make this a rewarding experience for all the participants. The venue will be changed this year and it is our goal to ensure more women will have an opportunity to attend.

NBUPPE

Sister Susie Proulx-Daigle reported:

General Information

Since our last meeting in October 2006, our organization held its Annual Convention. Close to 450 members participated in the two-day event. Our theme this year was “I stand by You / You stand by Me”. During this meeting a special motion to move to a Biennial Convention garnered much discussion on the convention floor and in the Unit Annual meetings. The motion was passed by the membership, with the next Convention to be held in 2008. The move to a Biennial format will restore our balance wherein one year the focus will be on unit annual meetings, and the next year on the Convention.

The acceptance and implementation of the Strategic Plan continues to provide much discussion for the New Brunswick Board of Directors. Key points to the Plan are the development of local structures (union representatives at the work place level) to facilitate better service and communication with our membership on important workplace issues.

The board also continues to focus on training for activists, which continues to be a priority. Over 60 members participated in the fall training session which was held in Fredericton and offered six courses: Workplace Health and Safety; Labor

History; Chairing a Successful Meeting; Orientation to N.B. Union; Introduction to Pension Plans; and Contract Administration.

The New Brunswick Union continues with its efforts to improve on the Public Service Superannuation Pension Plan as reported to you last meeting. And, in addition to this, we have resumed our position as lead spokesperson for the New Brunswick Public Automobile Insurance Coalition which was established in the fall of 2003, in response to the public outcry against the auto insurance industry's behavior in New Brunswick. We need affordable, accessible, stable coverage. Studies have shown that the present system is discriminatory by region and/or by age, the public is buying the very minimum coverage and generally people fear putting in a claim as they do not want to be penalized. Just one year ago, we had received a firm commitment from our Premier with regards to public auto insurance. We were very positive and excited about the work done, knowledge shared, and the commitment made. We were looking forward to positive results. The announcement came in December that after further studies, nothing would change. We are very disappointed with this decision. The Coalition will continue to bring solid information and continue to advocate. We believe and know a public system is the solution for New Brunswick.

Negotiations

As for the negotiating process within NB Union, we are currently beginning the negotiation process for only one set of negotiations: Community College Instructors. All other contracts are complete.

Women's Committee

Since our last meeting, the committee has yet to meet. Scheduling a meeting date to accommodate all has proven to be a challenge. To date, we are scheduled to meet in March. During this meeting, we will be establishing our priorities and goals. The women who participated in the International Sisterhood Conference certainly came back very enthusiastic and inspired, with lots of new ideas of what we could take on.

As for the Annual Women's Committee Breakfast, it was a great turnout. Sally Wells Di Carlo (guest speaker) addressed the audience. Her session was entitled "Born to Be Alive". The Advisory Committee on Family Violence in the Workplace Tool Kit also had a presentation. The Silent Witness Silhouettes joined us at our Convention. As for our member who recently passed away in the hands of violence, her family has created a silhouette for her and celebrated the launch in December.

Recently, I attended a Pay Equity Forum and was also appointed to the Provincial Pay Equity Committee as well as the Advisory Committee for

Childcare. We have yet to meet for both committees; therefore I have nothing to report.

NSGEU

Sister Martha Brown reported

General Issues

Biennial Convention

Planning is underway for NSGEU's Biennial Convention May 9 – 12, 2007. The convention theme is "Quality of Work & Life". All officers will be up for re-election.

Restructuring of the Civil Service Bargaining Units

Current nine bargaining units reconfigured to four – Clerical - CL, Professional - PR (PR & HSN), Educational - EDC & Technical & Services – TS (TE, HSA, HSB, MOS, & SE). Currently awaiting Cabinet's approval of an Order in Council, as mandated under the Civil Service Collective Bargaining Act, to change the structure of the Civil Service Bargaining Units, as voted by the majority of Civil Service members.

Coalition Against Violence in the Workplace

Coalition formed between Nova Scotia Government & General Employees Union (NSGEU), Nova Scotia Teachers Union (NSTU), Nova Scotia Nurses Union (NSNU) & Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE). Communications Officers from all the unions developed the campaign which was launched November 15, 2006. The unions met with government officials to either push for Workplace Violence Legislation or to amend the current Occupational Health & Safety Act that would see the workplace violence regulations become part of the legislation. The regulations have sat on the shelf for over 11 years.

The Coalition is hosting a series of provincial forums to educate workers on workplace violence and to discuss our ongoing campaign.

Pensions

Last meeting I informed you of a coalition formed in the spring of 2007, whereby NSGEU formed a coalition with CUPE, NSNU, CAW and SEIU to address serious concerns with the management of the NSAHO Pension Plan especially the surpluses. I am pleased to report that an agreement was reached.

Highlights of the agreement:

- Plan is subject to collective bargaining following decades of the Employer & NSAHO refusal to allow pensions to be collectively bargained – this is a major victory.
- An immediate end to the Employer contribution holiday.
- Surplus cannot be used unless agreed to by the unions.
- Joint Pension Committee – Unions gain equal representation (similar to Joint Trusteeship). This committee will identify research and resolve issues about the governance of the NSAHO Pension Plan.
- In the event of any decision making deadlock – 3rd party mediation / arbitration process kicks into place.

Week-Long Labour School – Digby Pines, NS

Very successful week-long labour school held for the National Union Atlantic components (NS, PEI & NB). Courses on Leadership, Organizing, Political Action and Advanced Stewards were held.

Nova Scotia Peace Officers Memorial

NSGEU is working with Halifax Regional Municipal (HRM) Police, Cape Breton Regional Municipal (CBRM) Police, Policing Services, Police Association of Nova Scotia (PANS) and Municipal Association of Police Personnel (MAPP) to establish a permanent memorial for fallen officers as Nova Scotia is the only province yet to establish one.

Private Health Clinic Licensing Legislation

Nova Scotia government introduced legislation in November 2006 (based on the Quebec model). After recognizing the many faults with the legislation, the government has committed to consult and meet with concerned groups including NSGEU before the final legislation is passed.

Agency Stores

In December 2006 the Nova Scotia government announced the opening of 36 more agency stores (all located in small communities) – bringing the total of 72 agency stores across the province. The deadline for RFP was January 17, 2007.

NSGEU'S Website

Be sure to check it out at www.nsgeu.ca.

Bargaining Issues / Updates

Bargaining

We are in the process of negotiating 48 Collective Agreements. Lead tables are Local 42 – CDHA Health Care & Local 22 – IWK Health Care.

Women's Issues

8th Annual NSGEU Women's Conference

NSGEU Women's Conference is scheduled for March 30th – April 1st, 2007 at the Debert Hospitality Centre. Due to the tremendous response of last year's conference we are repeating the theme "Women & Violence – Still on Guard...One Step Closer to Freedom".

Various speakers addressed the following topics:

- Violence in the Workplace and Workers Rights in Respect to the NS OH&S Act
- Safety for Women: at home, in your vehicle, when walking, when traveling
- Transition Services for Women in Nova Scotia
- Self defence for Women
- Nova Scotia Silent Witness Project (progress to date)

Silent Witness Project

NSGEU continues to work with other women's organizations in the province on the NS Silent Witness Project. Silent Witness Nova Scotia has designed a "Silent Witness" lapel pin. Members of the organizing committee of Silent Witness Nova Scotia Project have been making presentations across the province in an effort to establish regional chapters.

FemJEPP Initiative

In December the entire NSGEU Board of Directors attended a media conference organized by FemJEPP – Action for Women's Equality and Human Rights "A Call to Equality in Governance" Public Launch, in response to the federal government cuts to the Status of Women funding.

Also we are participating in their "The Women are Angry" Valentine's Day post card campaign.

Post card reads:

Dear Prime Minister Harper,

This Valentine's Day, our hearts are broken. Women's equality matters to us and to Canada.

I am calling on you to:

1. Reinstate the equality mandate and funding to the Status of Women of Canada.
2. Restore the Court Challenges Program and Law Commission.
3. Restore funding to adult literacy programs, post-secondary education and C@P sites.
4. Recommit to the Early Learning and Childcare Agreements.

Future Plans

- Planning & preparations for Convention 2007 activities.

NAPE

Sister Joyce Webber reported:

NAPE continues to challenge the Williams Government for fairness and respect regarding our public workers. The latest being a response from NAPE's President, Carol Furlong, to the Auditor General's Report where the findings indicated a blatant disrespect towards public sector workers who were out on strike in 2004.

A week after Government forced a wage freeze of 5% over four years, they honored themselves with a tax free allowance of \$2,875. A NAPE member earning \$30,000 a year would have to receive an increase of approximately 9.5% to realize the same return before taxes.

Senior management at the College of the North Atlantic awarded themselves salaries in excess of Treasury Board guidelines. This is a convenient way for senior management to give themselves a pay raise, while everyone else is subjected to a wage freeze.

This has gone on for years. In the past, the Auditor General identified similar problems with Health Care Boards and with School Boards. Successive governments keep saying they're going to deal with it. Well, it's obvious it is not being dealt with and this outrageous practice continues.

Clearly what has developed in this Province is one system for the House of Assembly, a similar system for senior management, and a completely different system for members of the bargaining unit.

Our members are outraged that the lowest paid employees in the system were forced to strike to preserve benefits in their Collective Agreements and had their wages frozen while MHAs and management helped themselves to taxpayers' money, all in a shroud of secrecy. For 20 years we have had wages frozen, we have had legislated wages and legislated concessions, while senior management and members of the House of Assembly line up at the trough. Our members live under wage controls and pensioners live below the poverty line and have not had a penny increase since 1989. It seems there is money for everything except front line workers and taxpayers.

Public sector workers generously shouldered an unfair share of the burden when times were supposedly hard. It is a bitter pill to swallow when NAPE members are taking on a role of responsibility for the sake of the Province, while clearly senior management and MHAs have not felt the same obligation or commitment to the citizens of this Province.

At the end of the day we have to develop in this Province a system which treats everyone equally whether they are members of the bargaining unit, members of senior management or members of the House of Assembly – and that system has to be equitably applied to everyone.

In light of the concerns outlined, we are recommending that Government appoint to the Boards referenced in the report and to the Internal Economic Commission, a Citizen's Representative from the general public, who will report directly to the Minister and to the public as necessary.

Home Care

NAPE has been successful in negotiating first time Collective Agreements for eight Home Care Agencies and there are eight remaining to be completed. This was long overdue for many of them. NAPE is currently in conciliation with other Home Care Agencies and expects to have Collective Agreements in place in the near future. This is an ongoing process and NAPE will continue to meet with Government to ensure funding is allocated to enable Employers to provide appropriate salary adjustments.

Pay Equity

After the Wells Government legislated away the retroactive pay equity in 1988, NAPE began challenging this decision by way of arbitration and in Provincial Court and Supreme Court. At every level, the Courts ruled in favour of Government. The president of our union continued to lobby Government and the end result was an ex-gratia award of \$24,000,000 to NAPE, CUPE, Nurses, Allied Health, and IBEW. The five unions involved have hired consultants and lawyers to deal with the payout of these monies and to deal with any taxes to be paid out to Revenue Canada. To date, this has yet to reach conclusion.

Public Service Pension Plan

Since the 1960s, the Public Service Pension Plan has been underfunded and carried an unfunded liability of approximately one billion dollars. NAPE has been lobbying Government for years to correct this very serious problem. NAPE has been advised of an immediate transfer of \$400,000,000 to the Plan and an additional \$400,000,000 in March of 2007. An excellent accomplishment considering that as our population gets older, we have an increased number of retirements each year.

Activities of the Committee

Silent Witness Program – The Committee has had several requests from outside unions and coalitions regarding information on and borrowing the silhouettes for their functions. We are in the process of developing a form / application to be completed for this purpose. We now have three silhouettes dedicated to three of our members who have died due to violence by their significant other and/or spouse. At the NLFL Convention in 2006, we displayed the silhouettes for the Women's Network Evening at the request of the Federation of Labour.

At the December 6th Vigil, 2006, remembering the 14 women who were killed in the Montreal Massacre, the Committee dedicated all of our work for 2007 to these 14 women and to the first three women of our Silent Witness Program.

On December 8th, 2006, women of NAPE joined in the Newfoundland and Labrador Feminist Coalition rally and march protesting the cuts and changes to the Status of Women Canada.

The Committee distributed the postcard campaign – Violence Against Women – to all NAPE Board Members requesting that they encourage their Locals to sign and return them.

At a NAPE Board of Directors' meeting, considering we are the largest union in Newfoundland and Labrador, the Committee challenged every NAPE Local to increase their number of people at public rallies and demonstrations in support of women's issues.

The last Women's Conference was held in September of 2006. It was a huge success and the Committee is working on plans for our next Conference.

Members of the Committee will be attending the International Women's Day Luncheon on March 11, 2007.

The NAPE Women's Issues Committee sees a very active year ahead:

- Vote for President and Secretary-Treasurer of NAPE which is occurring March and April, 2007.

- Biennial Convention – June 3, 4 & 5, 2007.
- Run off votes between NAPE, CUPE and Allied Health in health care.
- We expect a similar vote in our school boards in the future.

5. National Union Report

NUPGE National President James Clancy joined the meeting. Brother Clancy provided a brief overview of the current issues going on across the country affecting the National Union Components. He reported on the SGEU/NUPGE negotiations and the possibility that if the Employer and union fail to resolve issues, it will go to arbitration. He noted there are several Component conventions coming up this spring.

President Clancy commented on the possible upcoming federal election. He advised that it would be a disaster if a majority Conservative government was voted in. He warned that the Status of Women Canada cuts were only the tip of the iceberg.

President Clancy congratulated the sisters on the Building International Sisterhood Conference, saying it was wonderful and successful – they were a small group with a big punch.

Brother Clancy then advised the Committee about various projects the National Union is undertaking. Brother Clancy stated that the National Union has been working on a long-term care paper which will be available shortly. He stated that the National Union has prepared this document as a result of the increasing concerns regarding the lack of long-term care in Canada especially with the large percentage of the population who may soon require care. As well, the National Union represents a large number of long-term care workers. The study entitled “Dignity Denied: Long-term Care and Canada’s Elderly” is the first of its kind. President Clancy noted that the level of care that the aged receive is dependent on income. He stressed that women are disproportionately impacted by lack of policy in this area. President Clancy advised that the paper will be available to the sisters in three weeks and asked the Committee to encourage others to order more copies.

President Clancy then brought to the attention of the committee members the climate change issue. He advised that the National Union’s publication entitled “Keeping Our Cool: A Climate Change Primer” is now in its second run, due to the high demand for copies. He stated that an overwhelming majority of the population recognize that the climate change problem is here to stay and that we will all have to make changes. He spoke about the impact on certain areas of the work force and the difficulty in getting the government to realize that we must establish public policy on how we deal with workers who are affected by changes made in industries who are adjusting to environmental concerns. It is not a fair

choice to ask workers to choose between saving the environment and saving their job. Brother Clancy advised that there is a need for a Just Transition Fund for the workers of industries affected by environmental regulation. He cited the example of the asbestos mine in Quebec which has 1,500 workers relying on this industry for their livelihood. President Clancy concluded by stating that this is the issue of our generation; we all have to make changes in the way we live. He recommended to the sisters the Al Gore video “An Inconvenient Truth.”

Brother Clancy provided details regarding the Community-Based Social Services Conference which is going to be held in Alberta on April 1 – 3, 2007. He explained that workers in community-based social services are increasingly living contract to contract and are overwhelmingly women. This issue will be one of the key focuses at the upcoming NUPGE convention.

Brother Clancy then spoke about the resolution which will be presented at Convention to have NUPGE continue to oppose Harper’s cuts. He advised that there will be an opportunity for speakers. He also advised that a resolution will be presented to Convention to continue funding the four international projects through the Social Justice Solidarity Fund.

Brother Clancy told the participants that the holding of a pre-convention ACWI meeting on Thursday afternoon, June 21, was on the March Executive Board conference call agenda. This special meeting would allow the committee to discuss the Convention tasks, the Saturday morning women’s breakfast and the presentation of the resolutions to Convention on Saturday morning.

6. NUPGE Convention

Chair Hildahl then addressed the Committee regarding details of the upcoming NUPGE Triennial Convention taking place June 22 – 24, 2007 in Fredericton, NB. She stated that as President Clancy had noted in his address, there will be an ACWI meeting prior to the Convention with a primary focus on resolution related to women’s issues. She advised that the women’s breakfast on Saturday morning will be open to all women delegates. Discussion took place regarding conducting a silent auction at the breakfast as was done at the last NUPGE Convention. The committee agreed to conduct an auction at the breakfast and Sister Ivory volunteered to coordinate the gifts. She will remind the sisters to bring gifts.

Any questions or concerns regarding Convention should be directed to Sister Bean who is the Convention Coordinator.

Resolutions

Chair Hildahl then directed the committee to the two NEB resolutions contained in the binder. There was some concern regarding the first resolution, Harper Government's Attack on Women's Equality Programs, about the wording "under the age of five". After some discussion, however, it was decided that it should be left in because it could affect the quoted percentage of 70%.

It was noted that the deadline for submitting other resolutions to the National Union is April 23, 2007. There was some discussion on the new "clear language" format for resolutions.

ORDER OF THE DAY – FEBRUARY 20, 2007 **CATHERINE BELL, M.P.**

Chair Hildahl introduced Sister Catherine Bell - the NDP member from Vancouver Island North. She worked with BCGEU/NUPGE as a Provincial Vice-President for nine years and was a member of the NUPGE Advisory Committee on Women's Issues. Catherine was elected Member of Parliament for Vancouver Island North on January 23, 2006 and is currently the NDP Critic for Natural Resources, Western Economic Diversification, and a member of the Canada-Cuba Parliamentary Association.

Introductions were made around the table and Sister Bell expressed her pleasure at being with the sisters once again.

Sister Bell spoke about the cuts to the Status of Women Canada and how this can cause women, particularly senior women, to live in poverty. The NDP Critic for the Status of Women, Irene Mathyssen, has been working closely with women's groups. They have been calling on the government to reinstate funding. The Conservative government has cut \$5 million out of the Status of Women Canada budget and they have centralized services to access program funding. The NDP has been calling on the Conservative government to reinstate funding. The biggest push towards these cuts has come from the movement, REAL Women, which was started by a man in the southern United States. It is a right-wing, anti-feminist group that believes in the traditional family, where the mother stays home to care for the children. They are pushing the conservative agenda on feminist issues, claiming "feminism is dead". It is the job of progressive women to take it on. She emphasized that "these people are ruthless. These are the people we have to confront – just as we did 40 years ago. It is not hopeless; we have to do it again."

Sister Bell advised that Irene Mathyssen called for the resignation of the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, Bev Oda, because of her unwillingness to step up for women's programs. She stated that it is nice to see NDP women in Quebec; women are speaking French for the French media which helps them to

compete in Quebec. They can thus debate issues with the Bloc Quebecois, enabling people to know there is another party out there.

Sister Bell told the sisters she lives in her riding although she has an apartment in Ottawa. There are three offices in her riding, which is quite big, but there are no cities there. Her duties include caucus meetings and meetings with groups, organizations and members of parliament and briefings with ministers. She writes most of her own speeches and debates, and makes phone calls to constituents at home. The women's caucus meets every six weeks and there are 28 women on the caucus. She performs "house duty" during "duty days", when there are always three members in the house.

Sister Bell stated that the Conservatives have an agenda and they are sticking to it. They want a majority government and are getting ready for an election this year. Sister Bell explained that the NDP has a policy of affirmative action to promote more women candidates. Forty-one percent of their caucus are women, while the Conservatives have 11%. The NDP also provides modest support to all of their women candidates through the Agnes Macphail Fund. This money helps defray the expenses associated with the campaign. As of January 1st, they were allowed to give \$1,100 per campaign / party / riding.

Sister Ivory inquired whether any NDP nominated candidates have been approached to switch to the Liberal party. Sister Bell replied that this has not taken place and the Liberals are third in her riding. The Liberals do not have a mechanism for women; the NDP has it at a grassroots level.

Sister Bell informed committee members that a federal election will probably be held in June.

Sister Bell thanked the sisters and provided her direct contact information.

7. CLC Women's Committee Report

Sister Bean, the NUPGE Representative on the CLC Women's Committee, provided the sisters with a report of the CLC Women's Committee meeting of December 4–5, 2006, which was distributed in the binders. At the CLC meeting, Sister Bean introduced Sister Hildahl as the new representative for NUPGE, effective 2007.

8. Status of Women

The committee members' attention was brought to the correspondence provided in the binder from NUPGE and its Components to Stephen Harper protesting the cuts to the Status of Women Canada. Bev Oda's response to NUPGE was also included.

A lengthy discussion was then held regarding the cuts to the Status of Women Canada and in particular Bev Oda's response. It was viewed that her response was absurd and in particular her comment that the money that is saved with the cuts will be set aside to help women fill out forms online. It was felt that not all women have a computer at home.

9. International Women's Day

The committee was directed to the information contained in the meeting binder regarding International Women's Day (IWD). Sister Hildahl pointed out the new NUPGE poster entitled "Equality: not 'til every piece is in place", which was designed for IWD Day. She informed the Committee that if they would like additional copies to contact her. She also advised that IWD activities from across Canada will be posted on the Ad Hoc Coalition for Women's Equality and Human Rights website and it was requested that Components inform Sister Hildahl of any activities before IWD (March 8th).

The Committee was shown Put Equality Back on Track stickers created by the Ad Hoc Coalition for Women's Equality and Human Rights. The Ad Hoc Coalition does not have a lot of funds so they are requesting a donation of 2¢ each for the stickers (1,000 stickers = \$200). If Components would like to order any of the stickers, they were asked to contact Sister Hildahl.

Sister Jones distributed IWD bracelets from BCGEU/NUPGE to each participant.

10. Other Business

Sister Hildahl advised the sisters that there are several new posters available from NUPGE: AIDS, homelessness and human rights.

Federal Election

Discussion was held regarding the importance of making the cuts to Status of Women Canada an issue for every candidate's office. Sister Brown suggested that a list be made up of important issues to women that the sisters could give to candidates, i.e. questions to ask your M.P. The questions should apply to any party and include background material. Women's groups should be encouraged to invite candidates to debate women's issues.

Future Direction

It was agreed that at Convention, the group initiative will be to get the information out on the four international projects and the work plan was discussed. It was decided to establish a work plan out of Convention which can be looked at again at the October meeting. Longer item initiatives will not be brought up for another year or two.

Sister Brown brought up the subject of succession planning and mentoring someone in each Component. She felt a structured mentoring program would be beneficial. Sister Hildahl suggested the sisters brainstorm and put together a package of ideas in October. She asked the committee members to e-mail her with ideas.

Sister Ivory asked for a report on PSI, i.e. how often do they meet, who will replace Sister Diane Wood on the committee, etc. Sister Brown asked for an update at the upcoming October meeting (an update of Sister Bean's original document) and to distribute it in the next binder. Sister Hildahl will follow up on the request.

Announcements

Sister Ivory announced that the committee would like to extend their thanks to past Chair Sister Bean, adding that there can't be anything more challenging than leading leaders. Sister Bean thanked everyone for giving her the highlight of her career.

Sister Anweiler was wished a happy retirement and she thanked everyone for years of sisterhood, saying that it's been a great experience to serve on the committee.

Sister Webber thanked everyone for making her feel comfortable at her first committee meeting.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for October 15 – 16, 2007 and will be confirmed at the meeting prior to Convention.

The meeting adjourned at 12:15 p.m.