

NUPGE Advisory Committee on Women's Issues

**November 5 & 6, 2007
Ottawa, Ontario**

In attendance:

National Union	Brenda Hildahl Lisa Bullee
BCGEU	Colleen Jones
HSAA	Louise Yarrow
SGEU	Sharon Schewaga
MGEU	Kelly-Ann Ivory
OPSEU	Cindy Haynes
NBUPPE	Susie Proulx-Daigle
NSGEU	Martha Brown
NAPE	Arlene Sedlickas
PEIUPSE	Nancy Reeves



Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. by Chair Brenda Hildahl. Sister Hildahl welcomed the sisters and introductions were made around the table. A special welcome was extended to Sister Sharon Schewaga who attended as an alternate for Sister Marina Matlock.

Adoption of Agenda

The committee was asked to review the agenda. Sister Brown asked for an addition under Other Business: "What is the direction of the committee?". Sister Haynes moved and Sister Proulx-Daigle seconded that the agenda be adopted with the change. Carried.

Adoption of Minutes – June 21, 2007

Chair Hildahl asked the committee to review the report of the June 21, 2007 meeting. Sister Proulx-Daigle pointed out an error in the acronym NBUPPE. Sister Hildahl indicated the correction would be made. It was moved and seconded that the June 21, 2007 minutes be adopted, with the correction made. Carried.

Sister Brown mentioned the wonderful job done by the sisters who spoke to the women's resolutions at the NUPGE Convention. Sister Yarrow circulated a copy of the photos that she took at the Women's Caucus. A request was made that she provide Sister Hildahl with digital copies of these photos which will be copied to a CD and sent to the Committee. Chair Hildahl congratulated the committee on the success of the Caucus and the silent auction.

Sister Ivory inquired about the posting of reports to the NUPGE website as well as the committee receiving a draft copy of the report before it is posted. Sister Hildahl advised

that she will distribute a draft of the minutes to the committee upon completion which should be within a month of the meeting.

The National Union and the Connection with the Global Union Movements International

Sister Hildahl advised that interest was expressed at the October 2006 meeting for the committee to obtain updated information on the National Union's connection with the Global Unions. She directed the committee to the document contained in the binder entitled "The National Union and the Connection with the Global Union Movement".

Sister Hildahl introduced Brother Derek Fudge, NUPGE National Director of Policy Development and Liaison, who then addressed the sisters. Brother Fudge explained that increasingly the major institutions of the international labour movement are being referred to as 'Global Unions'. The Global Unions are comprised of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), the Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC) to the OECD and the ten Global Union Federations (GUFs) which are the international federations of unions from countries around the world that represent and organize members in specific industry sectors or occupational groups. The National Union is represented at ITUC and TUAC through its affiliation in the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC).

Brother Fudge stated that the National Union is an active affiliate of the GUF called Public Services International (PSI). The PSI is divided into four separate regional bodies with Canada belonging to the Inter-Americas region. There is a Canadian titular member on the PSI Executive Board and the Inter-Americas Regional Executive, as well as a Canadian titular member on the World Women's Committee. The Canadian representation is selected by rotation between CUPE, SEIU, PSAC and NUPGE. Each affiliate holds the titular position for 2½ years. Sister Diane Wood, BCGEU/NUPGE, held the titular position on the World Women's Committee until recently.

National President James Clancy assumed the position of the titular member for Canada on the PSI Executive Board and its Inter-Americas Regional Executive immediately following the September 2007 Congress and will hold the position until February 2010. Brother Fudge encouraged the sisters to visit the PSI website (www.world-psi.org) in particular the pay equity campaign which has a newsletter entitled Pay Equity Now.

National Union Report

National President James Clancy addressed the sisters. He welcomed the new sisters to the committee. He thanked the committee for their work at the National Union Convention which was well received.

Brother Clancy gave a brief overview of the recent CAW/Magna Agreement. Brother Clancy expressed concern that the agreement eliminates the members' right to strike, to submit grievances and to appoint stewards. He informed the committee that the

National Union has done an analysis of the agreement, which was then distributed to the committee.

Brother Clancy stressed that it is imperative to push ahead with the National Union's campaign "Labour Rights are Human Rights". He advised that the National Union has developed a publication on the issue. He also stated that NUPGE will hold an international symposium in 2008.

President Clancy then gave an update on the National Union's Medicare Campaign. He told the committee that he recently spoke to 400 doctors at the Physicians for National Health Care Conference in Washington, D.C. He directed the committee's attention to a new publication issued by the National Union entitled "Canada's Medicare System: Building on the Legacy!" Copies of the publication were distributed to the committee.

President Clancy advised that the National Union is working to focus more attention in the area of community-based social services where members are often marginalized because they are from small units. He stated that at a working session for members in community-based social services, he spoke at length with members that work in women's shelters. Based on points from that discussion, the National Union has produced a publication entitled "Women Empowering Women". Copies of the publication were distributed to the committee.

Brother Clancy then asked the committee to refer to an overview of a new project which addresses the issue of the quality of women's lives. He noted that although both genders struggle with balancing their work life with home life, evidence shows that the greater burden still falls upon women. Women are reporting the highest levels of stress, stress-related illnesses, burnout and depression ever recorded. President Clancy informed the committee that the National Union has been following this issue over the last few years and is now prepared to undertake a project to identify the issues and raise awareness of the problem. The project could involve the production of a major research document as well as a small conference.

Brother Clancy distributed copies of a book entitled "No Time: Stress and the Crisis of Modern Life" which was authored by Heather Menzies. This book addresses the issues surrounding stress that workers now encounter and the effects of technology. President Clancy requested that the committee read the book before the next meeting. Brother Clancy informed the committee that the National Union will contact Heather Menzies to see about the possibility of her addressing the women's committee at their next meeting.

Component Reports

BCGEU/NUPGE

Sister Colleen Jones reported:

BCGEU Women's Committee

Our BCGEU Provincial Executive Women's Committee met in September 2007, following a fundraising breakfast sponsored by the United Way. The committee unveiled the new Women's Committee banner designed by Nora Patrich and the new Women's Committee pin. The pin, along with a bookmark listing the key dates in BCGEU women's herstory, were distributed in celebration of Women's History Month to women on local executive members and other affiliate women's committees. For October Women's History Month, a subcommittee was established to interview retired members, women at our worksites, and women in our communities for a documentary video about "what inspired them to become involved in the union". We are looking for personal stories from women to share with activists. The profiles will be featured in The Provincial and on the BCGEU website. We have also begun planning for our annual regional conferences and, at this time, are still deciding on the theme. These conferences will be held in the spring and fall of 2008.

The committee also had two guest speakers:

Mike Orders, a staff representative with the BCGEU, spoke about the tense political situation in Burma and the thousands of Burmese people who have fled military abuse and set up refugee camps along the Thai/Burma border. He displayed some of the products made by the refugees and encouraged committee members to support WEAVE (Women's Education for Advancement and Empowerment).

Darcey Sedgewick, a BCGEU steward who works at the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre as a peer counsellor, spoke about the centre providing assistance and support to 150 to 200 women everyday – women who are victims of violence and abuse, suffer from addictions and are homeless. The centre operates an emergency shelter that is filled to capacity every day and provides legal advocacy, meals, counselling outreach, and referrals. The Women's Committee discussed ways to support the centre through volunteer work and donations.

Our political action committee is also discussing ways to put women's issues on the agenda in the next federal election. The Harper government needs to be held responsible for the cuts to all women's funding.

BCGEU Campaigns

Childcare

Our childcare members had the opportunity to participate in an event and continue to raise the awareness about the need for more public childcare funding. Campbell River resident, Shelagh Germyn, started her "A Million Steps for Childcare" marathon in her hometown of Campbell River and ran to the Victoria Legislature, about 300 km. Earlier this year, Germyn saw a local town hall meeting on the effects of the provincial and

federal childcare funding cuts. She was so touched by the stories that she heard about parents' struggles to find and afford childcare that she decided to do this run to raise awareness. At the Union of B.C. Municipality Convention in September, our Let's Make It Happen Campaign was very effective in getting a resolution put forward from many communities to stop the cuts to childcare. An information table was available and a breakfast was hosted during the convention.

Health Care & Community Care

The Conversation on Health forums has been completed and deadline-for-submissions was at the end of September. The BCGEU continues to focus on keeping the health care system public and promoting the importance of home support and mental health services. The liberal government is continuing with its threat of closure for the Riverview Hospital – a mental health institution – displacing many of our members, and the residents.

Bill 29 contracting out issues is still outstanding for the Facilities Bargaining Associations. The government has appointed the Assistant Deputy Minister of Labour to meet with the unions to begin to discuss the impact of the Supreme Court decision. The process has been very slow and painful for members on the committee and no decisions have been made to date.

The fall season has been a very busy one for the BCGEU as we continue to organize and bargain for our new certifications. We are also preparing for our B.C. Federation of Labour Policy Convention. This year the convention will be offering three workshops: (1) Can we change the climate before it changes us? Labour confronts the challenge of global warming; (2) Changing workplace, changing workforce: Organizing to meet the challenge of the global economy in BC communities; and (3) Reaffirming our vision: Strategies for winning and mobilizing our members to participate in the democratic process municipally, provincially and federally. Many of the resolutions coming forward speak to the cuts of funding to the Court Challenges Program and the Status of Women budget. I am looking forward to participating in this debate.

Death of an Activist

Sister Jones reported with great sadness the passing of long-time activist, Brother Tom Kozar, on Thanksgiving Day weekend. He worked tirelessly for social justice, including the Leonard Peltier Campaign.

HSA/NUPGE

Sister Louise Yarrow reported:

Alberta's political scene is one of a hot debate over the Royalty review that Premier Stelmach is going to have to make a decision. If the recommendations are acted on, the Government would see an increase of over \$2 billion in the budget. Of course, oil companies are unhappy and threatening to pull out of Alberta. A decision is to be made by the end of October and suggestions are it will be a watered down royalty for the oil companies. A rally was held in Fort McMurray on October 18, and was titled *The Real*

Oil Workers Forum and Rally. The oil companies held a rally at the Edmonton Legislature on October 17.

The Carpenters Strike Vote

In September the Alberta Labour Relations Board ruled that the strike notice was not valid. (The Carpenters strike vote was 97% in favor of strike.)

Labour Code says trade unions cannot take strike action at the same time if they are not settled. As the Labourers' union had a tentative agreement they were taking to their members for a vote, the Board ruled they were not settled and had not given strike notice.

Change the Law Campaign by AUPE

There are five goals to this campaign.

- First-contract arbitration. The adoption of first-contract binding arbitration to help newly organized workplaces get a union contract without labour disruption.
- Full bargaining rights. Full and fair collective bargaining rights for public employees, including the right to strike.
- One labour law for everyone. The elimination of the Public Service Employees Relations Act (PSERA) and the creation of a new Alberta Labour Code for all unionized working people in the province.
- Automatic certification. Certification without requirement of a vote when more than half the employees in a workplace sign a union card.
- Anti-scab laws. Legislation that would make use of replacement workers during strikes illegal.

HSAA reassured its members that no names or addresses were given out if they did receive mail or phone calls regarding this campaign. HSAA President put an article in the current Challenger that goes to the members.

Housing in Alberta is seeing a slow down and prices have dropped. They are still high and will see a slight increase in the following months as per the real estate board. Rental property is at a premium as they are converted into condo units resulting in high rents.

Within the HREC committee, we are planning a workshop at HSAA's Labour Relation Conference at the end of October. It is entitled "*Here There and Where We Work*". "Here" will address the issue of Foreign Workers in our country. "There" will address "Sweatshop Abuse" in other countries and "Where We Work" will be about diversity in our own workplaces (i.e. Are there similarities to the bigger picture issues? How do we treat people who are different from us? What can we do as individuals?)

Another workshop being offered is "*Quality Work Life and Bargaining for a Healthier Workplace*".

HSAA has met with the various Health Regions and reviewed the results from the Quality of Work Life Survey done by HSAA. The most active in setting up a committee of union and employer is Calgary Lab Services (CLS). After CLS completed their own survey, many similarities were noted and action is being taken. A proposal was presented to members which would open up to amend the current agreement that runs out on June 30, 2008. If all that is presented and ratified by our members, we would have eight months to see if the various proposals were working, and could be improved on or deleted at the bargaining table. I will have a copy of this for your review at the meeting.

At the provincial level, the current contract ends March 31, 2008. A survey is out with members to answer and return. A bargaining workshop in January will review the results and make decisions on the items to take to the bargaining table. Calgary Lab Services and The Alberta Cancer Board follow the provincial bargaining.

HSAA is having success in signing up new members in the David Thompson Health region.

We have welcomed more than 40 new professional and technical members. The new members include dental hygienists and assistants, public health nutritionists, continuing care counsellors, public health inspectors, school health coordinators and facilitators, occupational and physical therapist, data technician, an info resource coordinator and a program evaluation facilitator. Since then more have been signed up.

AFL Women's Committee

Child Labour: committee to gather information from affiliates and AFL making Child Labour the theme for the Women's course at AFL's Labour School in January 2009 and to assess what other lobbying steps / activities should be developed over the course of 2008.

Domestic Violence: in addition to coordinating a commemorative event on December 6 at Canada Place in Edmonton, the women's committee will take on the issues of domestic violence in terms of developing education tools and possibly a campaign in collaboration with AFL's Education committee.

Sisters in Solidarity: AFL Women's Committee will host a lunch November 16 in Edmonton. This is a time of reflection on the difficulties women and childcare face who are transitioning from poverty. We could not obtain the centre used resulting in the later date for International Day for the Eradication of Poverty and Women's History month.

International Women's Day March 8, 2008: At the present time no one has taken the role to organize; the AFL committee is contacting the affiliates with women's committees to see if we can work together.

SGEU/NUPGE

Sister Sharon Schewaga reported:

The NUPGE Women's Committee members attended the International Women's Conference in Ottawa in October 2006. The SGEU Women's Committee had a special connection to a Colombian trade unionist, Ligia Ines Alzate, who was "our" invited international delegate. During the three day gathering we tried to make her feel welcome and at home. They had a great time and brought lots of good information home to Saskatchewan.

SGEU Women's Conference – Saskatoon November 23 & 24, 2007 with a "*Sisters Without Borders*" theme.

Though there were blizzard conditions, 39 were able to attend. There were 24 participants sponsored by the Women's Committee and 15 sponsored by the sectors.

The Goal: to meet and build solidarity among women, and to encourage women to become active in the union.

Our First Day was based on:

- Union Leadership Development
- Building Sisterhood Around the World
- Union Sisterhood: the first steps start at home

Information was discussed on our ULD5:

- Union Leadership Development Orientation
- Course including Union structure and mentoring
- Bringing Global Sisterhood Home – this revolved around bigger obstacles such as HIV-AIDS in Africa, fleeing Parliamentary goons in Colombia or mourning the loss of a "Stolen Sister" in Canada

There was also a slideshow presentation from the committee members who attended the NUPGE International Women's Conference in Ottawa and stories about our international sisters.

The Second Day Covered was based on:

- Women and Globalization
- Harassment in Your Workplace
- Silent Witness
- Unionism on Turtle Island

Workshop leader Tracy Mitchell got discussions going – Workers, globally, are under pressure to mass produce even cheaper goods under worsening conditions, while

public services are being privatized and deregulated to make the world more “corporate friendly”.

In the harassment workshop, participants learned about ending harassment and bullying in the workplace.

Silent Witness is a program to bring awareness regarding our sisters (wives, mothers, daughters) who have died as a result of spousal abuse. This is one way of drawing attention to the appalling level of violence against women in the province. Most provinces have joined this campaign.

Unionism on Turtle Island is about First Nations history and society and outlines Aboriginal issues.

Comments were good and it got people thinking broader than self, whether locally, provincially, nationally or internationally.

SGEU Convention 2007

We were required to do a 45-minute presentation. This was to include a video of the “Grandmother’s” campaign from the National Conference and an introduction of our “Silent Witness” with the presentation of the video.

We also have a luncheon and were to have one of our SGEU sisters speak on social activism in Africa.

The convention was cancelled on the morning of the second day due to an SGEU staff strike.

SGEU Update

During the last year, we have had several of our sectors settle their contracts for another 2-3 years including provincial government workers. After getting little or no increase in wages, etc. three years ago, most of the bargaining units settled for approximately 3% per year increases and some had a signing bonus.

Any contracts that are being negotiated at this time have been put on hold as we have a provincial election on November 7. One large concern about this election is the possible privatization of our liquor stores (SGEU Retail & Regulatory Sector) which includes many women who only work part-time.

TILMA/Anti-Privatization

One of our big concerns this spring was the TILMA (Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement) hearing in June of this year. During the hearing SGEU, SFL and other interested parties, including the public, presented their concerns. Fortunately for all parties, after the TILMA talks, the Saskatchewan Government turned down this action. There was much celebrating throughout the province, sponsored by the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour.

SGEU Women's Committee Activity

The most recent meeting was held in Saskatoon on October 17 & 18, 2007. All the current committee members are new and Kathy Mahussier and Linda Anweiler were present to provide information and assistance while the new committee members got their bearings. This was much appreciated and their assistance was invaluable. We were to learn that we had some pretty big shoes to fill.

As the chair of the committee is an overwhelming position it has been decided by the new committee members to have a separate person attend the NUPGE meetings. Joyce Hobday has agreed to take over as chair, Sharon Schewaga is the alternate and Marina Matlock will be the NUPGE representative.

There are many projects started by the previous committee that we hope to carry on with and complete.

Silent Witness Project – renew focus on the campaign. We will be printing 5,000 Silent Witness brochures and hope to create a DVD that can be taken to the Annual General Meetings of the different sectors. The long-term plan is to ask sectors to sponsor the cost of a silhouette and have their loved one's name put on it.

We are going to get baggies printed up with the SGEU Women's Committee so members can put their hotel toiletries in for the local women's shelters.

We are going to try to develop a DVD for our ULD 11 – Harassment in the Workplace to be made available to our members.

There will be continued sponsorship for the Prairie School for Union Women.

Women's Conference – the dates for our 2008 conference will be November 13, 14 & 15, 2008. It is to be held in Saskatoon. Our theme is "*Changing Face of the Union*" and the types of workshop are: women and retirement, succession planning in a union context, dealing with conflict, feeling guilty for attending union functions. There will also be a pre-conference session on Harassment in the Workplace and Union Structure for new attendees.

We will be working on language changes in our constitution in order to develop Resolutions to our next convention in April 2008.

Next meeting will be November 22, 2007.

MGEU/NUPGE

Sister Kelly-Ann Ivory reported:

Activities of the MGEU Women's Committee

Since our last meeting there has been only one meeting of the MGEU Women's Committee. The next meeting will be held November 2, 2007; therefore a verbal report highlighting the outcome of this meeting will be given at the November 5 & 6 meeting.

Currently the Committee is diligently planning and organizing for the next MGEU (bi-annual) Women's Conference that is to be held May 1 – 3, 2008. The membership of the Committee is predominantly new activists and they are quickly learning the struggles and excitement of preparing a conference. The theme is "*A Woman's Place is in her Union*" and we have produced t-shirts and conference bags with this logo. They need beginning workshops and seasoned workshops.

Some of the Committee members have had the opportunity to attend events celebrating "Herstory" month. The Manitoba Labour and Immigration Minister Nancy Allan, minister responsible for the status of women, hosted a program and reception to launch Women's History Month 2007 at a local Community Centre in Winnipeg. This year's theme focus was on the "Accomplishments of Immigrant Women in Manitoba". Ms. Flor Marcelino, MLA for Wellington, and Ang'er Ruay, winner of the YMCA-YWCA's Young Women of Distinction Award, shared their personal challenges, experiences and successes after they immigrated to Manitoba. On October 18th MGEU women attended the Manitoba Legal Education Action Fund (LEAF) breakfast with speaker Mary Eberts – Legendary Canadian equality rights lawyer. She spoke about the equality guarantees of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms that have been in effect for over 20 years and what have these guarantees meant for women? In light of opposition to women's equality, what strategies are available? How do Canadians finish what has been called the "unfinished revolution"?

Summary of Events from the MGEU

Bargaining

- The Civil Service Corrections sub-component will be proceeding to arbitration this December.
- Addictions Foundation of Manitoba (AFM) held a demonstration at the Manitoba legislature. The AFM employees, whose last contract expired in March 2006, hoped to increase awareness about the valuable service they provide on behalf of Manitobans and also about the growing wage gap between themselves and employees doing the same work at other similar government agencies. Despite these significant challenges, the government still refuses to offer employees a fair contract, meaning AFM employees are falling further and further behind.
- Bargaining preparations have begun for some of our larger contracts – Manitoba Public Insurance and Health Care Support Services.

Other News

- MGEU held a contest "Portal to Paradise" which encouraged members to access their personal union information on the MGEU website. The goal of the contest was

to increase the number of email addresses. So far, the contest has produced over 8,000 member email addresses.

- Each year, Manitoba Finance Minister Greg Selinger hosts a series of province-wide pre-budget consultation meetings, which give Manitobans an opportunity for input into the next provincial budget. In 2006 more than 70 MGEU members attended the public meetings across Manitoba. Again this year members will attend these meetings to discuss the many challenges they are experiencing in their workplaces, and the need for the government to re-invest in public services. The MGEU invites our members to a mini workshop that is held before the local meeting to review and to coordinate concerns. Our members participate not as MGEU members, but as members of the voting public and individuals whose jobs depend on government funding.
- The MGEU has established a new Humanity Fund to support international and domestic projects in support of anti-poverty initiatives and disaster relief.
- MGEU 3rd Vice-President Brother Jack Van Mulligen had submitted his resignation mid-October. Many will miss him. On October 25th the MGEU Board of Directors elected Kelly-Ann Ivory to the vacant position of 3rd Vice President and subsequent election for the MGEU 4th Vice-President position will be held at the next Board of Directors meeting in December 2007.

OPSEU/NUPGE

Sister Cindy Haynes reported:

The Ontario Human Rights Commission is facing changes through Bill 107. The so called reforms will divert funding away from the Human Rights Commission, giving it to the tribunal and new legal support centre. The Commission will be left with few staff and barely enough resources to do educational pamphlets.

OPSEU fought hard to win amendments to the legislation that give the Commission the legal right to initiate public inquiries, intervene in individual cases and initiate their own complaints before the Tribunal. Unfortunately, the reality is, without a substantial increase in funding the Ontario Human Rights Commission won't have the staff and the resources required to do any of it. We continue to fight this battle to prevent the changes.

Two funds set up by OPSEU in 2004 are working to turn this concept into action. These are the Live and Let Live Fund and the Social Justice Fund. Both organizations help grassroots organizations combat HIV/AIDS in both Southern Africa and Ontario.

The Live and Let Live Fund was set up to support organizations working to fight HIV/AIDS in both Southern Africa and here in Ontario.

The Social Justice Fund was set up to help workers in vulnerable communities in Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean and Asia. It assists development projects in education, health, water supply, fighting poverty, and emergency and humanitarian solidarity.

Election Day is October 10. As of this writing, October 3, it has yet to take place. All members of equity groups, Board members, etc. are heavily involved with this provincial election. OPSEU members and all working people in Ontario can change to a more democratic, modern voting system that delivers fairer results, more choice and stronger representation. In a special referendum, we can decide whether to keep the current voting system – and the winner-take all politics that go with it – or switch to a made-in-Ontario form of proportional representation, known as MMP. The new plan was developed by the nonpartisan Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform – 103 representative Ontario citizens. We'd get two votes: the one we've always had to elect a local MPP, and another vote for a political party. Just 90 MPPs will be elected from single-member ridings. Another 39 will be elected to province-wide seats, to balance the unfairness of the riding system. The result is no 'wasted' votes, and a legislature that looks like the one Ontarians voted for.

This summer, seven OPSEU developmental service bargaining units put themselves on the line in an historic strike that won substantial gains for their members. These courageous workers in London, St. Thomas, Chatham, Strathroy, Meaford, Tillsonburg and Picton successfully raised the bar for the other units still bargaining. It was a hot summer – OPSEU developmental service workers made it much hotter and achieved new collective agreements that significantly boosted wages, especially for the lowest-paid.

College workers across Ontario celebrated August 30, 2007 after a government announcement brought rights for part-time workers a giant step nearer reality. That's when the McGuinty government said it intended to recognize the rights of bargaining collectively. OPSEU's 15,000 full-time academic and support staff, and the Organization of Part-time and Sessional Employees of the Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (OPSECAAT) welcomed this as a huge victory.

As well, in June 2007, a Supreme Court of Canada ruling that collective bargaining rights are protected by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms gave a boost to the workers' cause. Last year, the Geneva based International Labour Organization ruled that Ontario's Colleges Collective Bargaining Act (CCBA) should be changed to allow part-time staff employed by the 24 Ontario colleges to join a union and engage in collective bargaining. The struggle continues, but college workers are now just one step away from our goal.

Our Provincial Women's Committee Conference, in Toronto, will be held on November 2, 3 & 4. The theme is *"Beyond Borders, an International Perspective"*. We intend on educating members on the global broader issues, and the impact they have on us, and what we may be able to do to impact, positively on their issues. An expected 150 women should be attending.

NBUPPE/NUPGE

Sister Proulx-Daigle reported:

Our government is still promoting the quest to self-sufficiency. One idea they are presently exploring is the future provision of health care services in our province. The crowded emergency rooms and waiting lists are frequently cited as evidence that health care is in trouble and proof that public health care doesn't work. It has been suggested that the solution is to allow for-profit companies to play a larger role in the provision of health care services.

The suggestion that the private sector will enhance the provision of health care services is a fallacy. We already have for-profit facilities in Canada such as MRI clinics, private laboratories; private clinics which have been defended on the grounds that they will reduce wait times. This has not proven to be the case. One of the primary reasons for this is a lack of health care professionals. Increased usage of human resources in the private sector means less availability of those resources for the public sector. This leads to longer waiting lists for those using the public system.

Although health care costs are rising, the percentage of our gross domestic product (GDP) spent on health care has not changed significantly in many years. The Canadian public system spends roughly 9.8% of its GDP to insure 100% of its citizens compared to the U.S. system which spends 15.3% to insure 85% of its citizens. Add to this the fact that Canadians live longer and have lower infant mortality rates and our public system comparatively speaking is a pretty good deal for Canadians.

In order to help educate the public on this matter, the coalition of unions have begun campaigning – urging the public to take notice. The campaign speaks on how health care cost increases have been most significant under the private components of our program such as prescription drugs, home care and long-term care.

Another program that has been introduced in our workplaces is the 'Baby-Friendly' initiative. There is a great push in New Brunswick for our hospitals and health centres to become Baby-Friendly. Since the hospitals will not accept donations of formula anymore, they are promoting breastfeeding and, if you bottle feed, they will now be asking you to bring your own. Baby friendly is based on best practices and encourages that work places have spaces for moms to pump and store. They encourage breastfeeding to continue for 1 ½ years after birth. Those who return after the year should have space to pump on breaks, lunch, etc. and space to store.

Since our last meeting in June 2007, our organization has completed the first cycle of component annual meetings. Overall, the meetings went well and were well attended. Components had ample time to do their business and this was certainly a plus for many.

We are also continuing to focus on Activist Training. The session in October promises to be very well received with over 100 activists in attendance. This session is for all levels and only happens once every 18 months.

Negotiations

As for the negotiating process within the NB Union, we are currently in the negotiation process for two sets of bargaining components: Community College Instructors and the Woodstock Police Association. All other contracts have been completed.

Women's Committee

Since our last meeting, the committee has met twice, once in June and another time in August. We also participated in a focus group in September. Our trial Childcare Policy is not a standing policy and is titled: Childcare / Elder Care Policy.

The Coalition for Pay Equity President came to speak to our committee on Pay Equity versus Pay Parity. An open discussion was also held on the provincial wage gap decrease and its causes. We concluded that this resulted from the loss of high paying men's jobs rather than an increase in women's wages.

We also participated in a focus group for the '*Workplace Toolkit*'. Following the focus group, each member of the Women's Committee has committed to presenting the toolkit to three different businesses. The goal is to raise awareness and provide resources. The kits and information are available on the NBU website.

We also were informed that Dr. Anne-Marie Zajdlik from Guelph, Ontario, will be the guest speaker at our next convention, October 2008. We will be launching the \$10.00 campaign at the convention. Prior to, all fundraising will go towards the Masai Clinic special project. The funds will be presented to Dr. Zajdlik at this time.

We also ordered 'Silent Witness' pins that include our logo. The funds raised with the pins will be put aside for future projects.

NSGEU/NUPGE

Sister Martha Brown reported:

General Issues

50th Anniversary

Plans are well underway to celebrate NSGEU's 50th Anniversary – April 18 & 19, 2008. Events include an Open House, Gala, as well as a number of regional events from April – June 2008. A history video is being produced to highlight the struggles and victories over the past 50 years.

Coalition of Unions

The coalition of Nova Scotia Unions who represent Health and Community Care workers – NSGEU, NSFL, NSNU, CAW, CUPE, SEIU, OE) launched their campaign as a united front to defend the bargaining rights of these workers on Labour Day. The focus of the campaign is “taking the right to strike away from health care workers, will only make health care shortages worse”. NSGEU website has a link to the campaign to send a message to the government – that we will not support legislation that takes away our right to strike.

In spite of both the NDP and Liberal parties publicly stating that they will not support the government’s proposed legislation to replace the right to strike with binding arbitration, the government prematurely released the proposed draft amendments to the Trade Union Act, to the public (at a press conference) on October 18, 2007 when the house is scheduled to be open November 22, 2007.

An excellent article was written on the right to strike by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives – Nova Scotia.

Department of Natural Resources – Casuals

In light of the BC Supreme Court decision regarding – NSGEU filed for a hearing before the Civil Service Employee Relations Board to bring all casual employees into the union. Meetings have been held with the Public Service Commission and we are close to an agreement for improved wages and benefits for these workers. While meaningful consultation is ongoing NSGEU has agreed to hold in abeyance the application to the Civil Service Employee Relations Board until the fall sitting of the legislature.

Violence in the Workplace

NSGEU is currently working with a group of members who work in mental health where violence in the workplace has reached a crisis level. Meetings have been held with the affected members, the Employer, the Minister of Health, the Halifax Regional Police and the Mental Health Association. We continue to monitor the situation closely.

Week-Long Labour School – Digby Pines, NS

Successful week-long labour school for the National Union Atlantic components (NS, PEI & NB) held at the Digby Pines Resort, October 23 – 28, 2007.

Staffing

NSGEU welcomes Deedee Slye as our new Communications Officer and Emma Smith as our new Research Officer.

NSGEU’S Website

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

Bargaining Issues / Updates

Bargaining

Fall 2007 continues to be a very busy period of negotiations for NSGEU.

CDHA Health Care bargaining unit recently ratified their tentative agreement – 3 year agreement with 2.9% general economic increase each year, recruitment and retention wage adjustments of 2.1% effective April 1, 2007 & 2008, and classification adjustments for a number of classifications.

Women's Issues

NSGEU Women's Committee

New Committee and Chairperson appointed in September 2007, held their first meeting on November 2 & 3, 2007.

Masai Centre

NSGEU continues to sell the red & white Bracelets for Hope (supplied by the Masai Centre) in an effort to raise both funds and awareness of the plight of AIDS in Africa.

Silent Witness Project

NSGEU continues to be a part of the Silent Witness Nova Scotia project in conjunction with other women's organizations in the province.

Silent Witness Nova Scotia is interested in selling the car magnets as a fundraiser. Sister Brown showed the sisters the silent witness pins and she will let Components know how to order them. She will also have Components see the silhouette made by NSGEU using three different templates.

Death of an Activist

NSGEU mourns the loss of long-time activist Cheryl Morton who was tragically killed in a car accident, July 2007.

FUTURE PLANS

- Annual Purple Ribbon Campaign for December 6th – Day of Remembrance
- Plans are underway for the Women's Conference – Spring 2008

NAPE/NUPGE

Sister Arlene Sedlickas reported:

Activities of NAPE's Women's Issues Committee

Since the last advisory committee meeting, NAPE's Woman's Committee has had one formal meeting. The committee spent part of that time getting to know the new committee members. The committee is comprised of four members. Each member represents a particular region (West, Central, & East) of the province of Newfoundland

and Labrador. One member (General Vice President) represents the entire province and is Chair of all committee meetings. All members serve a two-year term before the positions are up for renewal in 2009 at the Biennial Convention.

During our first meeting, a number of issues were discussed and prioritized. The committee spent time planning an online petition in support of Delaram Ali, an Iranian Women's Rights Activist sentenced to 34 months imprisonment and 10 lashes for participation in a peaceful protest in 2006. Ms. Ali was charged with participation in an illegal gathering, propaganda against the system, and disturbing the public order. Our president, Sister Carol Furlong, wrote the federal minister responsible for Foreign Affairs, Peter McKay. Sister Furlong asked the Minister to intervene in the sentence of Ms. Ali and have the inhumane and barbaric sentence overturned. A letter was also drafted to the Newfoundland MP's highlighting this atrocity and asking for their support in our campaign. Since our meeting, Mr. McKay has written Ms. Furlong and agreed to look into the case.

Several committee members took part in the annual "*Take Back the Night*" March. The march is held annually on the third Friday of September throughout the province. *Take Back the Night* is an event geared toward empowering women to confront fears about rape and assault by reclaiming the evening streets en masse. The event calls for safety and equality for women in all places, at all times. It is a chance to publicly celebrate women's solidarity: the march is women-only to symbolically underline that women will not be passive and accept the violence against them but will instead speak out and take action together for change.

The next meeting of the Women's Committee is scheduled for November 22, 2007. This will be an orientation meeting sponsored by NAPE's Education Committee. The focus of the committee during this time will be on the planning and developing of NAPE's Women's Conference. The conference is scheduled for September 2008.

Over the next few months the committee will also be partnering with the NLFL (Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour) on two initiatives they are planning. Firstly, on November 30 the Women's Committee will be participating in a weekend workshop designed to bring together all women's committees from the various unions in the province. This networking session will provide an opportunity for the various committees to meet and discuss best practices. Some of the goals of this workshop include finding out how to network with each other instead of working in isolation, how to do a concentrated lobby once a year, identification of obstacles (funding, authority, clerical support, etc.). Secondly, the Women's Committee will be participating in a NLFL Conference February-March 2008. The committee is also hoping to sponsor approximately 25 first time women activists from across the province to attend this conference.

General Issues

Correctional Facility

NAPE is calling on the Minister of Justice to investigate conditions at the Penitentiary in St. John's. The union says conditions at the correctional facility are deplorable. Eight women were confined to three cells, 6' x10'. These cells are designed to hold two persons per cell. This meant that two of the women were forced to sleep on the floor. NAPE is extremely concerned for the female staff who work at this facility when overcrowding occurs. There are no provisions currently in place to address the need for additional female staff to deal with the overcrowding of female inmates. There is a policy that additional male staff must be called in when a similar situation takes place with respect to male inmates.

Skilled Tradespersons

NAPE is putting the provincial government on notice and demanding that they address the recruitment and retention problems of skilled tradespersons in the public sector. Currently, in the provincial health care sector, trades people who have highly specialized skills are leaving for higher wages in other provinces. For years, within the public service, salary deficiencies related to market factors were dealt with by way of an occupational review. While that system had some problems, they could easily be addressed; however, that review process has been eliminated. As a result, there is no workable method for recognizing and solving problems with retention and recruitment of individual classifications. Skilled trade workers have told the union they are no longer prepared to work for substandard wages. Certain areas of the public sector are headed for a crisis if the government does not move more quickly to reverse the movement of skilled trades people to other jurisdictions in Canada and the private sector. NAPE continues to pressure government to work with the union to develop a strategy that will solve the problem in both the short and long terms.

Home Care Workers

During the recent provincial election campaign NAPE asked all three provincial parties to outline their plans to deal with the abysmally low wages of home care workers. Current government policy relegates pay for home care workers to little more than minimum wage. Home care workers provide a valuable and essential service yet government undervalues the services they provide. The unacceptably low wages have resulted in problems with recruiting and retaining home care providers. Home care providers can find greater benefits working in the fast food industry than they receive from caring for the sick, elderly, and disabled.

NAPE continues to push for short and long-term solutions to this problem. It is NAPE's position that a program of wage adjustments that will fairly reward those in the home care industry and attract new people to the profession is essential.

Ex Gratia Payment Update

The five public sector unions (NAPE, CUPE, NLNU, AAHP, and IBEW) have been working vigorously to finalize the payout of monies. NAPE has the largest group of people who are affected by this ex gratia payment and who are entitled to this payout.

The biggest stumbling block is in receiving verification of income and employment from Revenue Canada for the years in question (1988 to 1991). To date the five unions have received less than half of the information required from Revenue Canada.

Bargaining Issues/Updates

The union is currently in the process of holding component conventions for all bargaining units. Collective Agreements for over 18,000 plus members will expire on March 31, 2008.

PEI UPSE/NUPGE

Sister Nancy Reeves reported:

This report is intended to update and to promote discussion on the issues facing my union, UPSE.

Since the last meeting in Fredericton, I have been asked to represent the equality committee on two issues.

The first situation occurred at a union social event where the social behaviour or the "Code of conduct" of the members and their guests lead to a preliminary harassment investigation. As a result of the members and guests behaviour further development and awareness of the harassment free policy needs to be initiated.

The first issue is how the policy is announced or made aware of before a social function when there is no initial or structured start time and secondly, how we deal with guests understanding that the policy adheres to them.

The words "code of conduct" for the members came up numerous times in the discussions around this incident, especially since it was a social event and there was a general feeling that there was a lapse in conduct by some at this event and it could happen at other more social events as well.

In November 2006, an updated Harassment Free Policy was released for the civil service. I was asked in September to assist the civil service in their presentations, 10 over five days, at the provincial correctional institute. It was a learning experience for us all and certainly an area that needed to be addressed. Each session leads to new areas of discussion but continually the "workplace culture" or "dark humour" slogans were used as a way to justify or deem acceptable harassing behaviours at their workplace. Over and over again the line "it is the impact not the intent" was repeated.

Technology and the use of the internet regarding the harassment issue and how the members could access the collective agreement on line away from the worksite seemed to be of great interest.

It was also a timely topic since one of our senior deputy ministers was charged with harassment by his minister.

The diversity survey is being launched and our president, Sister Shelley Ward, is strongly encouraging members to respond.

Negotiations continue to take time.

At this year's annual convention the theme is green and the guest speaker is part of Al Gore's team. A strong educational component is being developed.

International Projects Update

Masai Centre and Bracelets of Hope Campaign

Sister Hildahl pointed out the letter included in the binders showing the 2007 National Union annual grant of \$3,000 to the Masai Centre. This grant, along with grants to the other three women's projects, is a result of a resolution passed at the NUPGE Triennial Convention to continue support of the women's projects through the National Union Social Justice Solidarity Fund.

A copy of the Bracelet of Hope Campaign leaflet was also contained in the binders. Chair Hildahl informed the committee that copies of the leaflet are available for components to order through the NUPGE office. Since the Convention in June (including component commitments from the Convention floor), 5,070 Bracelets of Hope have been sold, totaling \$25,437.00. The National Union has received an update from the Masai Centre stating it has officially raised \$685,000 with pledges that will bring them over the \$700,000 mark.

Since the Building International Sisterhood Conference, components fund raising have included:

- BCGEU raised \$3,500 from the sale of bracelets;
- MGEU raised over \$1,000 as part of donations received for their Run for Rights; and
- NSGEU raised approximately \$5,000 through bracelet sales, cookbook sales, raffle tickets and a resolution for a donation of 10¢ per member.

Sister Brown reported that CUPW and Oxfam will also be selling the red and white bracelets for Masai.

Sisters in Spirit (SIS)

A letter was included in the binder for the 2007 grant. An update on the Sisters in Spirit campaign was also included in the binder. Sister Hildahl told the sisters that the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) has revamped their website and merchandize

can now be viewed on line. Contact at NWAC for purchasing SIS merchandise is Laura Florez.

TESDA Micro Lending Program

The binders contained a report from the TESDA on the Lending Program and a copy of their orientation material. The National Union is in the process of preparing the \$3,000 donation to TESDA.

A question was raised by the sisters regarding the amount of money NUPGE donated to the TESDA Women's Center Alumni Association in November 2006. In the status report contained in the binders, it was noted that \$3,000 US dollars was given to the organization. Chair Hildahl verified that the amount contributed to TESDA was \$3,000 Canadian which converted to US \$2,628.43.

Casa de la Mujer

A letter was included in the binders for the 2007 grant. The National Union has not received an update from Casa de la Mujer (House of the Women) but should receive a report shortly. Sister Hildahl advised the sisters that she will forward the update as soon as it is received.

Status of Women Canada Update

Chair Hildahl noted that September 2007 marked the one-year anniversary of anti-equality measures initiated by the Harper government through changes to the Status of Women Canada which included funding, office closures and the mandate. A sad outcome was the closing of the National Association of Women and the Law (NAWL) office and Sister Hildahl referenced the website story from National Union regarding the closure.

Also included in the binder was a CLC briefing paper that shows what these measures were along with the effect on some of the other women's organizations, a response from Minister Bev Oda to Brother George Heyman's (BCGEU) letter to Harper regarding the cuts, an article from the Director of the Yukon Status of Women about how the cuts affect women of the North and an article on Tom Flanagan, one of Harper's closest advisors, interview on CBC Radio's The House.

Sister Ivory reported cuts to the UN Platform Action Committee (UNPAC) in Manitoba. Sister Hildahl asked for any stories regarding cuts to women's projects be forwarded to her by email and she will post the stories online.

NUPGE Website

Sister Hildahl informed the sisters that NUPGE is in the process of updating its website. The updated site will be more accessible for the visually impaired, the search engine will be improved and the site will be more interactive giving the National Union the ability to

post polls and petitions quickly. She reported the addition of a full time computer person on staff.

The committee's attention was drawn to a new section of the NUPGE website called Strike Alert. An online submission form allows components to submit details of strikes, which will contain contact information as to where messages of solidarity can be sent.

Chair Hildahl requested that the Committee forward information on their component's activities pertaining to women's issues. She stated that this enables more articles to be posted on the NUPGE website that are specific to women.

FYI

Sister Hildahl directed the committee to the FYI section of the binder which contained a report from Sister Gay Pagan of MGEU/NUPGE on the Child Care Human Resources Sector Council (CCHRSC).

The committee was advised that LabourStart, which is a online trade union news website, has developed a specific section for women entitled Working Women: Daily News. Sister Hildahl noted that in this section, LabourStart has posted the National Union poster "Equality: not til every piece is in place".

A copy of the latest World March of Women Newsletter was contained in the binder. The next international actions by the World March of Women are planned for 2010.

A document entitled "Financing for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment" was included in the binder. This is a statement to the United General Assembly regarding high-level dialogue on financing for development done by Women's Environment & Development Organization (WEDO).

A UN Report on Canada and adequate housing was included in the binder. Sister Hildahl noted that contained in the report is the statistic that 1.5 million Canadian households are officially classified as being in "housing core need" which puts them at risk of homelessness. United Nations Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, Miloon Kothari, comments in the report on the cuts and modification of the mandate of the Status of Women Canada by stating, "I am concerned that some women's organizations have been defunded for their service provision to women, research and advocacy activities."

Two documents by WEDO were contained in the binder entitled "Changing the Climate: Why Women's Perspectives Matter" and a "Report of a High-level Roundtable on How a Changing Climate Impacts Women". The documents lay out why women need to be at the centre of the climate change debate and policymaking table. An example of why climate change impacts women is the fact that 70% of the deaths during the 2003 European heat wave were women.

Meeting adjourned at 4:30 PM.

Chair Hildahl reconvened the meeting at 9:30 AM on November 6, 2007.

President Clancy addressed the committee regarding Bill C-303, the Early Learning and Child Care Act. He stated the Bill will be before the House within the next five weeks. All indications are that Harper will block the Bill proving once again that the government's agenda is very anti-women.

Brother Clancy stated the National Union will renew its pressure on the government. He said NUPGE will create a template letter addressed to the Prime Minister stressing that Canadians want a universal early childhood education and child care program. A copy of the letter will be sent to Component Presidents and to the Advisory Committee on Women's Issues.

Quality of Life – Work/Balance

The committee held a lengthy discussion on the project introduced by President Clancy on the quality of women's lives.

Chair Hildahl stated that studies show that work stress is now twice as prevalent in Canada as it was a decade ago, while absenteeism is high, and commitment to employers lower. Compared to Europeans, Canadians work longer hours, have fewer vacations, fewer public holidays, put in more overtime, work more hours late at night and on weekends and have less time with families. In Canada, women perform almost two thirds of the unpaid household work, including meal preparation, childcare, etc.

As more demands are placed on women they have less time to engage in other activities. Volunteerism is affected as well as women's willingness to get involved in their unions. Many union women report that they would be more active in their locals or run for office if they had more time. This factor is no doubt a major reason why women are less inclined to aspire to union leadership positions.

The committee discussed ways and means that women can achieve a balance in work and family. This balance and lack of time is often a problem for sisters who want to run for office within unions or within municipal, provincial or federal government. It was noted that there is a lack of material on this issue from a women's perspective.

The fact that women find it more difficult to take 'down time' was discussed. A concern was raised that young women believe that their unions expect too much of their time. It was felt that the youth committees should be canvassed to establish what is needed for their members (especially women) to become involved in union activities and leadership. It was also felt that it is very important to develop language in collective agreements that address this issue.

Chair Hildahl requested that the committee forward any information done by their Components regarding this issue to NUPGE. She also asked the committee take the project back to their women's committees for input.

Other Business

Sister Brown reported that the added item to the agenda regarding the direction of the Committee did not need to be discussed with the introduction of the Quality of Women's Lives Project.

Regarding upcoming commemorations for December 6th, MGEU and HSAA will be hosting a luncheon.

Sister Kelly-Ann Ivory announced that this was her last meeting and she wished all the sisters well in the future. The sisters passed along their best wishes to her. Chair Hildahl extended a warm thank you to Sister Ivory for her dedicated work on the committee over many years and as liaison to the committee.

Sister Brown agreed to act as the liaison for the committee replacing Sister Ivory.

The next ACWI meeting was tentatively scheduled for February 7 & 8, 2008.

The meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.