

NUPGE Advisory Committee on Women's Issues
October 9 & 10, 2008
Ottawa, Ontario



In attendance:

National Union	Brenda Hildahl Lisa Bullee
BCGEU/NUPGE	Colleen Jones
HSA/NUPGE	Louise Yarrow
SGEU/NUPGE	Marina Matlock
MGEU/NUPGE	Gay Pagan
MGEU/NUPGE	Michelle Gawronsky
OPSEU/NUPGE	Cindy Haynes
NBUPPE/NUPGE	Susie Proulx-Daigle
NSGEU/NUPGE	Martha Brown
NAPE/NUPGE	Arlene Sedlickas

Regrets:

HSABC/NUPGE	Suzanne Bennett
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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 Michelle Gawronsky and a welcome back to Sister Cindy Haynes. Sister Suzanne Bennett forwarded her regrets to the sisters. Sister Nancy Reeves from UPSE had to resign her member position on the UPSE Equality Committee and therefore from ACWI. UPSE has not selected a replacement to date. A contact sheet was circulated to the sisters to update any information. The Mandate of the Committee / Terms of Reference was provided in the binders for information.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

The Committee was asked to review the agenda. Sister Proulx-Daigle moved and Sister Jones seconded that the agenda be adopted. Carried.

ADOPTION OF MINUTES – APRIL 7 & 8, 2008

Sister Marina Matlock moved and Sister Martha Brown seconded that the April 7 & 8, 2008 minutes be adopted. Carried.

NATIONAL UNION REPORT

Brother James Clancy, National President of the National Union of Public and General Employees, welcomed the sisters. Introductions were made around the table and he welcomed Sister Gawronsky and welcomed back Sister Haynes.

President Clancy began the National Union Report by discussing the upcoming federal election on October 14, 2008. He advised the sisters that a new President's Commentary has been posted on the NUPGE website entitled "Harper is out of touch and has no plan for Canada". The commentary reveals the litany of failed actions by the government including Harper's elimination of the early learning and child care agreements that would have provided \$5 billion dollars as a first step to building a national child care program. It also draws attention to Harper's dangerous policies including his "do nothing" economic policies, allowing for-profit health clinics, and his lack of action regarding climate change.

Brother Clancy stated that the Canadian economy, which is market driven, has a heavy reliance on the public sector. Therefore, public expenditures are critical to the survival of the Canadian economy. He stated that the Canadian economy is based on a twin engine model – private sector as one engine and the public sector as the other. It is obvious that Harper does not have a plan to address the current economic crisis. Harper's absurd assurance that "the fundamentals of the economy are sound" does not reassure Canadians who are worried about keeping their jobs, paying their bills and ensuring their retirements are secure.

President Clancy drew the sisters' attention to a newly released American survey by the American Psychological Association entitled "2008 Stress in America". The survey found that the U.S. economy is taking a physical and emotional toll on Americans. It found that women bear the brunt of the financial stress in the economic downturn. Brother Clancy noted that the stress levels for Canadian women will be similar as Canada heads for a possible recession. He stated that it affects us both personally and professionally and that it will have an impact on our work. He also stated that the economic crisis will impact on our ability to bargain over the years.

President Clancy then spoke about the Quality of Women's Lives Conference and Survey. He stated that both the survey and the conference will give a real opportunity to analyze and address the issue of work/life balance and its effects on women's lives. The survey will provide the National Union with research that is unique by polling its members and the general public. He stated that the intention is to have the survey posted on the National Union website by late December or early January. He also discussed the possibility of timing the conference for early 2010 before the National Union Convention in June 2010.

INTERNATIONAL SISTERHOOD PROJECTS

Sisters in Spirit Initiative – Theresa Ducharme, Native Women's Assoc. of Canada
Chair Hildahl introduced Sister Ducharme who is a Community Development Coordinator with the Sisters in Spirit Initiative. Sister Ducharme thanked the ACWI for inviting her and then provided a PowerPoint presentation, which explained the formation and structure of the Sisters in Spirit Initiative.

In 2004 the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) launched the Sisters in Spirit (SIS) campaign after the shocking realization that, over the past 20 years, hundreds of Aboriginal women have gone missing in communities across Canada. That same year Amnesty International Canada released a pivotal report entitled "Stolen Sisters", which documented the shocking discrimination and violence against Indigenous women in

Canada. Following the release of the report, NWAC received approval from the federal government for a 5 year research, education and policy initiative entitled Sisters in Spirit.

The initiative focuses on four key areas of community-based research, communication, education and awareness, and policy assessment and analysis. The process involves the collection of life stories and statistical information to understand the circumstances, root causes and trends surrounding missing and murdered Aboriginal women and to successfully relay the findings to the public, Aboriginal communities and provincial and federal governments.

Sister Ducharme reported that as of October 2008, 509 cases are included in the SIS database of which 66% involve women and girls 30 years of age or younger. Of the 509 cases, 25% are classified as missing and 66% are classified as murdered. Only 40% of the murder cases have been cleared (someone has been charged in connection with the crime).

Sister Ducharme indicated that the preliminary policy areas for SIS are:

- Reducing violence that leads to the displacement or further marginalization of Aboriginal women and girls.
- Reducing poverty through measures that include education and employment gains.
- Reduction of homelessness and increased access to safe, appropriate housing.
- Greater access to justice for Aboriginal women and girls, and their families.

Since its creation, SIS's accomplishments include the creation of the database, workshops held worldwide, the creation of four community education tool kits and annual international vigils.

Sister Ducharme advised that recommendations will be made from the Initiative in March 2009, which is the last year of funding from the government. If the initiative's funding is not renewed, NWAC will engage in a letter writing campaign. As well, she informed the ACWI that SIS raises funds through the selling of SIS merchandise.

Masai for Africa Campaign

Chair Hildahl referred to the update included in the binders. As of September 28, the campaign was just \$17,000 dollars short of the \$1 million mark. With the annual direct mail appeal, they expect to reach \$1 million by October 4, 2008. In anticipation of this, they held a celebration at the University of Guelph. A visual event was planned where all attendees, clad in red, stood in the shape of a map of Canada and raised their wrists to show their bracelets.

TWCAA Micro Lending Program for Women

Chair Hildahl brought the 2008 third quarter report from TWCAA, which was contained in the binders, to the participants' attention. From November 2004 to September 2008 the total number of loan recipients was 186.

Casa de la Mujer House of the Woman of the Union

Chair Hildahl advised the sisters that the National Union has not received an update from the House of Woman, possibly because of the volatile situation in Colombia. Included in the binders were items describing the situation in Colombia. Since the beginning of 2008,

32 trade unionists have been assassinated. The average rate over the last 20 years of trade unionists being murdered is one every three days.

From July 18 to 25, 2008, Brother George Heyman, past president of BCGEU/NUPGE, participated in a labour tour of Colombia on NUPGE's behalf. A report of the labour tour was included in the binders entitled "Frontlines".

Also included was an article regarding the detention and deportation of a German human rights activist – a trend by the Uribe government against members of the international community working to verify the serious human rights violations occurring in the country. As well, there were two articles on the murders of indigenous leaders who were working to reclaim their lands that had been taken by the government to benefit transnational companies wanting to expand agricultural production, mining and other business interests.

COMPONENT REPORTS

BCGEU/NUPGE

Sister Colleen Jones reported:

BCGEU Women's Committee

At our last meeting I reported that the BCGEU Provincial Executive Women's Committee held its first regional conference for the year – and it was a huge success. We just completed our second regional conference for the year and it, again, was a huge success. Our agenda and workshops were the same as our first conference so it made the planning, facilitating, etc. easier and less time consuming.

BCGEU 47th Triennial Constitutional Convention, June 6 – 8, 2008

Our Convention in the early summer was very exciting as we elected a new president, Darryl Walker, and also a new vice-president, Anthony Dodds.

Our new executive is as follows:

President – Darryl Walker (newly elected)
Treasurer – Judi Fillion (re-elected)
Vice-President – Anthony Dodds (newly elected)
Vice-President – Mike Clark (re-elected)
Vice-President – Colleen Jones (re-elected)
Vice- President – Lorene Oikawa (re-elected)

We are looking forward to having Darryl as our President and are excited about working with him at this level. Many of the resolutions that we dealt with at convention covered human rights issues, bargaining strategies for 2010, bullying in the workplace, health and safety issues, global warming, and child care issues. On the morning that the bullying resolution was to come to the floor, the entire convention was given pink t-shirts wearing the "Stop Bullying" message. It was very effective to see all the shirts in the hall and to hear personal stories from convention delegates. Not surprisingly, the resolution passed unanimously.

Federal Elections 2008

The BCGEU has many members who have stepped up to run for some federal positions in the elections on October 14th.

Seeking election are long-time BCGEU activist and community health worker, Ann Chambers, former BCGEU provincial vice-president Catherine Bell, (now Member of Parliament seeking re-election), and long-time BCGEU activist and social worker, Helen Kormendy. It is exciting that our members want to make a change and difference in peoples' lives, and their communities across Canada.

Day of Remembrance & Action on Violence against Women – December 6

This date is fast approaching and again this year our Treasurer, Judi Filion, will be sending out a message to the members, plus posting to our website, in recognition of this day. We will also be posting a calendar of events on the website so that our members can support events in their areas.

HSAANUPGE

Sister Louise Yarrow reported:

HSAA has had a busy spring and summer dealing with negotiations for the provincial agreement, which represents over 11,000 paramedical professional and technical members (over 150 disciplines). The contract, which was ratified in July, is a three-year agreement and includes: a 5% salary increase in the first year, 5% in the second year, and 4.5% or the Alberta Average Weekly Earnings, (whichever is highest) in the third year. Members will also receive \$2,500.00 for the Flexible Health Spending Account on January 1, 2009 and \$2,750.00 on January 1, 2010.

The Flexible Health Spending Account can be used for professional development, health and wellness expenditures, RRSP contributions as well as elder and child care. This benefit is pro-rated for part-time employees.

A new benefit members will receive this year is the Retention Incentive Payment (RIP) in the amount of \$4,750.00 for full-time employees over the three-year period of the contract. This is also pro-rated for part-time employees.

You can find the provincial collective agreement on the HSAA website, www.hsa.ca, under the heading "Agreements and Bargaining" – provincial bargaining.

HSAA had a difficult round of bargaining for the Calgary Lab Services (CLS). CLS has approximately 1,300 members consisting of two groups: Laboratory Technologists and Medical Laboratory Assistants (MLA). The MLAs were looking for an additional increment on the salary scale as well as a decrease in the difference between the Technologists and MLAs starting salary. HSAA also achieved a \$200.00 wellness account as well as a \$400.00 Professional Development Account for CLS casual members. The HSAA bargaining committee negotiated a contract for CLS employees comparable to the provincial agreement in most areas. The CLS contract was ratified by a 54% "Yes" vote.

The Alberta Council of Women's Shelters (ACWS) had a successful 1st International Women's Shelters Conference. Over 50 countries were represented by over 800 delegates. The plenary speakers and sessions covered various topics such as Breakfast With the Guys, a session to help get men more involved and become more responsible for helping to break the chain of violence against women. I did note that many of the men who attended the Breakfast with the Guys did not attend any of the sessions after the breakfast was concluded.

The following issues were addressed during the weeklong event: Partnerships with Government, Supporting Seniors, Online Counseling, Aboriginal Children, Caring for Children: Shelter response with Creativity and Love, and Implementing the Rights of the Child.

On Thursday the Plenary entitled "It's in their culture" addressed issues within various cultures, the Differences and Violence against Women within Shelters followed by the Nordic Way of Workers, Shelters and their Pursuit of Human Rights, Forgotten Sisters, Access for Women with Disabilities and much more.

The conference ended with a volunteer teen theatre group performing a play they produced entitled "Domestic Violence". This volunteer teen theatre group did all of the research on the social issues leading up to the production of this play. It was a powerful and moving play that brought tears to many in the audience.

There will be a 2nd International Women's Shelters Conference as some delegates indicated that they would be taking the information back to their various countries in hopes of hosting the next one.

The Alberta Council of Women's Shelters accomplished its goal and this conference has set in motion a new avenue for women, and men, from around the world to become more educated on violence against women.

The Alberta Federation of Labour's Women's committee, of which I am a member, has been very busy over the past year. Currently, this committee has planned a workshop on Saturday, December 6th entitled "Violence Against Women: Let's Talk About It. Looking at our Role in Society, Our Role in the Community, Our Role in Our Unions and Workplace." There is room for 90 participants and we expect to fill that quota. I will have a brochure available at the meeting.

As well, the Women's Committee has had a head start on developing some new guidelines for the International Women's Day award which will be sent out to the affiliates in the near future.

In recognition of the International Day for the Elimination of Poverty, the Women's Committee will host a luncheon in Calgary, October 17, at the Calgary Urban Project Society (CUPS). CUPS is a not-for-profit community health centre in Calgary's downtown core offering collaborative and holistic services in the areas of health care, education, and social services. Founded on the principle that all people have an inherent right to lead a life of dignity, equality and respect, CUPS helps people make the transition from poverty to stability.

As I am a member of HSAA's Human Rights and Equality Committee, I report to this committee as well. The Human Rights & Equality Committee will be working with Meaghan McNeil, HSAA Education Consultant, to offer assistance in preparing a workshop on human rights education for the 2009 Labour Relations Conference.

Last, but not least, I would like to mention HSAA's second attempt at organizing employees at Dynalife DX Diagnostic Laboratory Services. HSAA started planning this campaign in the fall of 2005. By the spring of 2006 the campaign was underway. However, by September 2006 it was evident that HSAA was not going to be successful this time around.

In the spring of 2008, employees of Dynalife were unhappy and approached HSAA to join. This went to the Alberta Labour Relations Board for a vote and, this time, HSAA was successful. This means approximately 800 new members have joined HSAA.

HSABC/NUPGE

Sister Bennett submitted (via e mail):

Background

The Health Sciences Association of BC represents 16,000 health care and social services workers in British Columbia. Eighty-five percent of HSA members are women. The union has a standing Committee on Equality and Social Action. This committee was formed in 2000-2001, when the previous Equality of Rights and Solidarity Committees were merged. In addition to the work of the Committee on Equality and Social Action, the union promotes women's equality, participation, and health issues through a number of venues.

Objectives

The objectives of the Committee on Equality and Social Action are to:

- Distribute donation funds within HSA policy.
- Make recommendations to the Board of Directors with regard to the budget.
- Provide a report to Convention on an annual basis.
- Raise member awareness of equality and social justice initiatives by using the guiding principles of United Nations Conventions.
- Seek opportunities that are practicable to raise funds for solidarity and equality projects.
- Collaborate with other HSA committees (e.g., political action, education) for the purposes of working together on issues of common interest.
- Identify policies and procedures that require review by the Constitution & Organizational Policy Committee.
- Contribute articles to the HSA Report.
- Promote and raise awareness of equality and social action initiatives, such as International Women's Day (March 8th).
- Review and revise processes and forms used by the Committee.

- The Committee will identify and recommend educational opportunities for the members of HSA to the Education Committee.

Activities

The union has a standing funding formula to distribute grants to organizations that meet the committee's objectives. Each year, .45% of the union's total budgeted revenue is devoted to the Committee on Equality and Social Action funding program. For 2008, the grant funding budget was \$50,241, distributed to the following organizations:

- South Okanagan Victim Assistance Society
- Penticton and Area Women's Centre
- CoDevelopment Canada
- Habitat for Humanity
- Global Youth Network Society
- BC Coalition of People with Disabilities
- BC Labour Against War
- Check your Head
- Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC
- Haiti Union Solidarity Fund
- NUPGE Solidarity Fund
- Vancouver Committee for Domestic Workers and Caregiver Rights
- We Can Coalition of BC
- West Coast LEAF
- World Peace Forum

In addition to the work of the Committee on Equality and Social Action, HSA promotes women's participation in politics through an annual campaign school for HSA members interested in getting or increasing their involvement in the political arena. As well as the annual in-house campaign school, HSA has for several years sponsored women to participate in the highly regarded Canadian Women Voters' Congress campaign school.

In the area of women's health, HSA is a gold-level sponsor of the CIBC Run for the Cure, the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation's most important fundraising event. HSA has been involved with the BC Run for the Cure since 1997, and this year increased its participation to the "gold" level, ensuring HSA's involvement at each of the 10 run locations in BC, and acknowledgement of the work of HSA and health science professionals in the fight against breast cancer.

A supporter of women's equality issues, HSA sponsors the annual West Coast LEAF (Legal Education and Action Fund) fundraising breakfast in British Columbia, as well as a host of other events organized by equity-seeking groups.

Education materials are produced and distributed throughout the year, including around International Women's Day and December 6. Through the union's membership magazine, The Report, HSA continues to promote issues important to women and their families. The

September issue of The Report distributed to all members, for example, included a copy of the Canadian Labour Congress' Women's Economic Equality Campaign booklet.

SGEU/NUPGE

Sister Marina Matlock reported:

The SGEU Convention for October has been cancelled by Provincial Council. All elections and matters to go to Convention will be held over to April 2009 at the regularly scheduled annual convention. Provincial Council shall govern between conventions on all matters not requiring Constitutional change.

The Women's Committee has continued to work through many challenges. We conducted a review of the Silent Witness Project and it was decided that we would continue with this worthy project. We made preparations for the unveiling of the Silent Witness Project at Convention in October which will fail to move forward for the third time. We also made preparations for a Women's Forum and Women's Luncheon at Convention which will not proceed. A meeting was proposed to be held in October in conjunction with Convention to conserve the budget for the Women's Conference in November. This too will not proceed.

The Committee met April 28, 2008 at the Eco Centre in Craik, June 23 at Davidson and October 2 in Saskatoon where we planned for our biennial Women's Conference. It will take place November 13 – 14, 2008 at the Radisson Hotel, Saskatoon. The theme is The Changing Face of the Union. We are hoping for 50 participants if budget permits. The following will be some of the sessions:

1. Parliamentary Procedure
2. Lady Beware
3. Identity Theft
4. Speaking Up
5. ULD 5

Challenges:

1. Lack of staff assigned.
2. Resolutions to Convention have been worked on three times and are working on round 4.

MGEU/NUPGE

Sister Michelle Gawronsky reported:

The MGEU Convention is continuing on course, date of Convention is October 24 & 25. As always we will be electing the President and the four (4) Provincial Officers. The past month has been a flurry of activity for both Board and staff as every local across the

province has held a meeting to elect delegates for the Convention and to bring forward Emergency Resolutions.

The biennial Women's Conference held from April 30 – May 2 was a fantastic success. The theme for the Conference was "A Woman's Place IS in her Union". The Conference consisted of seven (7) workshops geared toward providing information to women within their Union as well as work places. The guest speaker, Jan Malanowich, gave an excellent account of the challenges of being a wife, mother, worker, Union Activist as well as Union staff Representative. The most common request for the next conference is to have an extra day.

The MGEU Women's Committee has been putting the finishing touches on their Convention Report. Along with ensuring the Women's Breakfast Forum planned for the morning of October 24 is held without a hitch.

The MGEU has just completed a campaign for our highway workers throughout the province. The intent of the campaign was to educate the public on the need to slow down when driving in areas where and when our members are working on the highways. The TV and radio ads were extremely well received and have definitely provided good information to the public.

The MGEU is presently in the midst of another campaign on the provincial mileage. All members are requested to sign a "post card" as well as request other signatures. This has been a great way of educating not only our own members but also the public on the fact that workers required to use their own vehicles for work are actually subsidizing with their wages to pay the cost of fuel. The "post cards" are requesting the Provincial Government to recognize the need to review and improve the mileage rate presently being paid.

Numerous MGEU Components/locals have either entered into bargaining or are preparing to enter into talks in the spring.

The Manitoba Federation of Labour (MFL) Women's Committee is preparing for the Women's Conference being held on December 4, 5 & 6. The Committee is also continuing their work in creating a memorial site for the December 6th Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women.

OPSEU/NUPGE

Sister Cindy Haynes reported:

OPSEU must be ready to support more than 90,000 members who are in bargaining over the next year, OPSEU President Warren (Smokey) Thomas told a meeting of about 80 OPSEU leaders on April 9.

"We call this the Perfect Storm because it is unprecedented in the history of our union to have so many large contracts in play at the same time," Thomas said. "It represents both a challenge to us, but it's also a perfect opportunity to do what we do best."

The “Perfect Storm” information meeting was one of a series of regional meetings intended to bolster union-wide solidarity as negotiations get underway over the next few months.

Contracts for community colleges support staff (reached tentative agreement in September), the Ontario Public Service, hospital professionals and liquor board employees – covering about 75,000 members in total – are due to expire within the next year. In addition, more than 130 of OPSEU’s contracts for smaller agencies in the Broader Public Service will be in negotiations over the coming months, covering another 15,000 members.

Representatives from the various provincial divisions in bargaining outlined the timelines and objectives in their upcoming bargaining.

Sister Vanda Klumper, chair of the Liquor Board Employees Division (LBED), noted that for the first time next month, LCBO members will be electing their bargaining team. Prior to the merger with OPSEU in 2005, the bargaining representatives were appointed. The LBED aims to begin to change some historic inequities in their collective agreement.

Brother Yves Shank, chair of the Hospital Professionals Division, said his team aims to reach a central agreement with the Ontario Hospital Association without resorting to arbitration, a bargaining feat that has been accomplished only once in the past 20 years.

Brother Eric Morin, chair of the Central Enforcement and Renewal Committee for the OPS, said OPS demand-setting questionnaires are now being distributed to all locals and negotiations will begin in November. He said it is crucial that all OPS locals appoint “information stewards” to provide one-on-one contact with members.

Brother Dan Sidsworth, chair of the Corrections Division ministry team, said that the issues of overcrowding in the province’s jails will loom large over upcoming negotiations.

Brother Roger Couvrette, representing part-time college workers, announced that OPSEU would be filing a certification application at the Ontario Labour Relations Board next week for up to 12,000 college part-timers. If successful, bargaining for these members could begin soon for a first contract.

President Thomas summed up the meeting with a pitch for union-wide solidarity. “It’s essential that all OPSEU members support each other as we head into these negotiations. If we do that, we can’t lose.”

The support staff at the colleges bargaining team was able to negotiate substantial wage and benefit improvements. In a three-year agreement, taking effect September 1, 2008, support staff at the 24 colleges will receive a deal that means nearly 4% in the first year, and 3% in each of the next two, a big gain from what members were offered before the vote! What’s more, they agreed on groundbreaking language on bullying and harassment. This language is vital and will deal with behaviour that could be regarded as intimidating, offensive, degrading or humiliating. Having this language will also help prevent behaviour that affects the dignity and psychological and physical integrity of members and harmful work environments.

Developmental Services Proposed Bill 77 on developmental services misses the mark. Changes to the legislation governing developmental services in Ontario are coming, and they're not all good. With the Standing Committee hearings on the new legislation set for Toronto, London, Timmins and Ottawa this week, OPSEU and the Canadian Union of Public Employees will be presenting at the Standing Committee on Social Policy on the changes proposed to developmental services legislation in Bill 77. The new bill, as structured, will lead to destabilized funding for developmental service agencies, loss of services for some people, and the creation of a privatized, competitive bidding system similar to the one that has been so disastrous in home care.

At Convention 2008, OPSEU banned Coca-Cola products from union meetings and regional educationals. The company has been implicated in actions against trade unionists in Colombia. Products banned include Dasani and Nestle water, Fanta, Minute Maid, Nestea, Odwalla, PowerAde and Sprite brands. We are requesting that locals contact their employers and request that Coca-Cola products be kept out of the workplaces and work meetings. OPSEU is also joining its allies in opposing a free trade agreement with Colombia until that country sanctions Coca-Cola for its violence against labour activists.

The newly elected chair of the Ontario Public Service Central and Unified bargaining team is gearing up to negotiate a contract for 42,000 Ontario workers. Ontario is losing its manufacturing base; well-paying full time jobs are being replaced with lower-paid part-time jobs in the service and retail sectors. This is a worldwide trend as manufacturing is being shifted to low-wage countries. We will be watching closely, and considering the issues of part-time workers in upcoming bargaining. Members often hold two or three jobs to make ends meet.

NBUPPE/NUPGE

Sister Susie Proulx-Daigle reported:

The New Brunswick Union Biennial Convention will be held October 17 – 19 and will mark an important next step in our organization. Key decisions will be made for Leadership and in Resolutions. Two special motions will also be put forth to the membership – Building Expansion and NB Fed Affiliation.

NBU remains committed on two issues – Health Care and Pensions, as mentioned in my last report. The Minister of Health still intends to bring forth major changes to how health care is delivered in our province and we are very much aware that the private sector will certainly influence where they want our public health system to go. Another issue in health care that we are hard at work on is the Retiree Health and Dental Plan as there are significant issues with the Retiree Health and Dental Plan of former public sector employees. The Plan continues to struggle financially. This past year 0.88¢ of every dollar went to fund the costs of prescription drugs. This has been a continuing problem, resulting in an inability to enhance the benefit or even keep up with the existing benefits. For example, we have been unable to maintain the current dental fee guide under the program.

The fear is that the plan will become so expensive that retirees will no longer be able to afford to keep it. It's a major issue and we have put forth two viable options to the

government. One is to have a blended rate with the active participants and the other would be to have the government cost share the rate of the plan. The government has received a report on a study they have done on the issue but they are not sharing the results. As for pensions, we have made some gains as the government is now examining the issue of governance of this plan. Some of the other changes we are looking for are an age/service index and no pension reduction at age 65. We recently released a video titled "Pension Tension" to help us in our quest for improvements to the pension plan. In addition, a rally is planned in front of the Legislative Assembly on October 18.

Negotiations

We are currently in negotiations with two of our bargaining components – Moosehead Brewery workers and ANBPE. For the Moosehead Brewery workers, they have made application for conciliation and ANBPE are in the first phase of the negotiations process having recently completed their sixth day at the table. In my previous report I had mentioned that we were planning a session for all bargaining committees in order to review our process and gain more insight on what we're doing right and where our challenges lie. A date has yet to be determined.

Women's Committee

Our committee has met twice since my last report, in May and in September. The Committee is finalizing the preparations for Convention as the committee hosts the annual breakfast. This year a very special guest will be addressing the membership: Dr. Anne-Marie Zajdlik from Guelph, Ontario. We will be launching our Bracelet of Hope Campaign during the weekend and presenting Dr. Zajdlik with the collected proceeds. Another topic of discussion is the development of a Women's Conference. We are in the preliminary stages of organizing such a conference.

NSGEU/NUPGE

Sister Martha Brown reported:

Following are some of the highlights of NSGEU's activities since our last meeting.

General Issues

NSGEU 50th Anniversary

For 50 years the NSGEU has been making a difference in the lives of its members, their communities and the labour conditions of workers in Nova Scotia. NSGEU celebrated its 50th Anniversary on April 18 & 19, 2008, where we spent time celebrating all of our successes together.

To commemorate this momentous event, the NSGEU Board of Directors approved several events including an Open House at the NSGEU office, a daytime reception and gala dinner and dance, 50th Anniversary events for every region, and a family picnic to conclude the anniversary celebrations.

We were fortunate to have the grandson of Alex MacRae, (the only surviving founding member), bring greetings on his behalf at our Gala Dinner. Also Evelyn Burnham, the wife of the first president of the NSGEA (Gordon Burnham), along with James Clancy (National

Union President) and Ken Georgetti (CLC President) joined in celebration with NSGEU at our anniversary events on April 18 & 19.

April 13 – 19, 2008 was proclaimed as NSGEU Week by HRM (Halifax Regional Municipality) Mayor Peter Kelly.

A history video has been produced to highlight the struggles and victories over the past 50 years, entitled “*Side by Side Together During 50 Years of Golden Solidarity*”.

Blow the Whistle on Workplace Violence

This year NSGEU marked Nurses’ Week by distributing whistles on lanyards to nurses throughout the CDHA (Capital District Health Authority). The lanyards were inscribed with “Blow the Whistle on Workplace Violence”. The whistles symbolically remind nurses to identify and end any and all forms of violence in the workplace, including harassment and bullying. This initiative was very well received, and although this initiative was launched for Nurses’ Week, the campaign can be transferred to other locals.

Health Care Coalition

Five of Nova Scotia’s major health care unions continued to work together this past year to raise concerns about recruitment and retention of health and community care workers in this province.

The province of Nova Scotia has entered into an arrangement to have a private clinic perform orthopedic surgeries. They also have plans to consider building future hospitals using public-private partnership arrangements (P3), as well, the province still has legislation taking the right to strike away from health and continuing care workers on its order papers.

The house adjourned both in November 2007 and in May 2008 without Bill 1 being called to a vote. The NSGEU is committed to continue to take whatever steps are necessary to prevent this bill from becoming law up to and including a campaign if this becomes one of the conservative government’s platform items when an election is called.

Bullying in the Workplace

NSGEU has trained 12 NSGEU members to facilitate workshops to address bullying in the workplace. We have a training modular that can be offered as two, four or six hour versions, with the two hour version being appropriate for presentation to large groups (not as interactive) and the six hour version including more inter-activity and more on information/tools for employers/managers/supervisors. This is an education program and will not include investigation or mediation of grievances.

Week Long Labour School – St. F.X. University, Antigonish, NS

There was a successful week-long labour school for the National Union Atlantic components (NS, PEI & NB) held at the St. F.X. University, June 8 – 13, 2008. This year there were five courses: Leadership, Political Action, Advanced Steward, Communications and Train the Trainer. There were 60 participants from NSGEU, eight from PEI and 13 from NB. Again this year, the school was well received with a lot of commitment and enthusiasm to promoting the union in the workplace.

Public Service Superannuation Plan

On June 30, 2008, the Minister of Finance announced the funded ratio of assets to liabilities in the Public Service Superannuation Pension Plan (PSSP) was down to 79.6%.

NSGEU represents almost 74% of the active members of this plan or almost 12,000 of the almost 16,000 members. Even though the Minister (the principal trustee of the plan) has said he does not think anything has to be done right now to address the funding of the plan, NSGEU wants to make sure our members are aware of what is at stake.

A series of meetings has been organized across the province to educate the membership about the PSSP Plan should we need to get politically mobilized to actively defend the plan. We need to ensure there is enough pressure on the government to consult with us before making any changes. Although the Minister of Finance has sole trusteeship of the plan, any changes made to the benefits and contributions must go through a legislative process before being approved.

Administrative Professionals Conference

Plans are underway for an Administrative Professional Conference to be held November 28 & 29, 2008. The theme of the conference is "The Heart of Public Service" which celebrates the important role administrative professionals play in their organizations. A stone, a tree and a heart will be the three images that pervade the conference reinforcing this theme. The goal of the conference is to shift the mindset of the profession – to take "I'm or you're just a clerical" out of our vocabulary and workplaces."

NSGEU Biennial Convention

Plans are currently underway for NSGEU's Biennial Convention to be held May 6 – 9, 2009.

NSGEU Website

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

Bargaining Issues / Updates

Bargaining

This year continues to be a busy period of negotiations for NSGEU.

Continuing Care Transfer

The government is continuing with their plans to transfer our Continuing Care Services members from the Civil Service to the District Health Authorities. An agreement was reached that all continuing care employees who will be devolved to the DHAs will remain NSGEU members and will continue to participate in the Public Service Superannuation Plan.

Civil Service Casuals

In light of the BC Supreme Court decision, NSGEU and the Public Service Commission reached an agreement to appoint former casuals who meet the eligibility requirements, to the Civil Service as either temporary, term or permanent employees. There remain a few issues to be addressed.

Organizing – Local 470, NSLC (Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation) Casuals

Meetings have been held to organize the NSLC Casuals. The meetings have been well attended. The campaign is going well and the response is positive from the majority of casuals. The plan is to make application for certification this October.

Women's Issues

NSGEU Women's Committee

The next meeting is scheduled for October 17 & 18, 2008.

Annual Women's Conference

NSGEU's Annual Conference was held April 25 – 27, 2008 at the Debert Hospitality Centre, Debert, NS. Theme of the Conference was "Women's Spiritual, Emotional and Physical Journey".

Highlights of the conference were:

- Web of Sisterhood exercise.
- Heart & Stroke presentation – recognizing the symptoms as more and more women are being diagnosed with heart disease and the age groups for women are getting younger.
- Therapeutic Touch session – process of energy exchange where practitioners use their hands to promote healing, relaxation and bringing the body to balance and health. Relieves anxiety, stress and helps with healing time, promotes well-being.
- Laughter Yoga – breathing and movement exercises designed to remind the body to laugh without jokes, humor or comedy. Stress levels are reduced by 75% or more and our bodies become more stress resistant. Self confidence is boosted and communication skills and creativity flows.
- Aboriginal Drum Circle – explanation of the native drum circle and engagement of participants in a session of drumming.

Future Plans

- Annual Purple Ribbon Campaign for December 6th – Day of Remembrance
- Plans are underway for the Women's Conference – Spring 2009

NAPE/NUPGE

Sister Arlene Sedlickas reported:

NAPE's Women's Committee Highlights

NAPE's Provincial Executive Women's Committee held its annual conference of the year on September 12 – 14. It was hosted on the West Coast of the province in Corner Brook, NL. More than 150 women from across Newfoundland and Labrador submitted an application to attend; however, final count at the conference was actually 110 participants.

The conference began on the Friday night with an opening prayer and dance by our Aboriginal Sisters from the nearby community. The sisters were outfitted in traditional

dress and provided a truly inspirational start to the conference. The President and Secretary-Treasurer also addressed the conference.

On Saturday and Sunday the conference provided participants an opportunity to learn about issues affecting women not only in their province but also in developing countries. Each participant received a Bracelet of Hope from the Masai for Africa Campaign endorsed by the June 2007 NUPGE Convention. Each participant was encouraged to take this project on and begin selling these bracelets at local meetings. The committee intends to follow up on this project.

Workshops included such topics as:

1. Gender Challenge – Women in Developing Countries
2. CLC Equality Once and For All
3. Underpaid and Overworked Child Care and Elder Care: The Challenges and The Solutions
4. Financial Planning for Women
5. Life/Work Balance.

On Saturday night the Women's Committee organized a Silent Auction. Items were donated from various businesses across the province. The auction raised \$1,220. At each NAPE Women's Conference, the committee makes a point of donating to the women's shelter in the host community. The money raised at the auction was donated to the Corner Brook Women's Centre which operates the women's shelter. As well each participant to the conference was asked to bring a toiletry item to donate to the shelter. The response was overwhelming with over \$400 of toiletries donated to the shelter. As the centre is a not-for-profit organization, it welcomes donations that will assist in helping women who seek shelter.

Take Back the Night

NAPE's women's committee also took part in the annual violence prevention initiative of Take Back the Night which takes place the third Friday in September. The march and candlelight vigil is designed to raise awareness of safety issues for women and children and to protest against harassment, assault, and sexual abuse. As in previous years various regions of the province took part in this activity. Each year NAPE's women's committee encourages its members' participation in this event.

Updates from NAPE/NUPGE – General Information

Labour School

NAPE hosted its 21st annual week-long Labour School from July 27 – August 1. Courses offered at the school included:

- Pensions
- Advanced shop steward training
- Building an effective local
- Occupational health and safety and
- Women's social and economic well-being

NAPE's Labour School is part of our ongoing commitment to provide education to our members to equip them to be effective leaders within their union. It is a wonderful opportunity for up-and-coming NAPE activists to network with each other and to learn from long-time activists.

Public Sector Bargaining

Since March 31, 2008 NAPE has been engaged in collective bargaining with the provincial government on behalf of 16,000 members. Our sister union, CUPE, reached an agreement with government prior to budget day which saw a pay increase of 20% over four years. While government is saying this agreement is a template for all other bargaining unions, NAPE is continuing negotiations to try to get improvements in many contract areas. Some of these issues include:

- Improvements to the Classification System agreed to in 2001 which still does not contain a retroactivity clause
- Addressing current market factor issues to ensure retention and recruitment
- Improvements to the current health and insurance package
- Temporary employees
- Increases to per diem and mileage allowance

NAPE will continue to negotiate for as long as possible to obtain the best possible contract for its members.

Home Care Update

On July 10, 2008 NAPE called a press conference to bring awareness to the chronic problems within the home care industry. President Carol Furlong presented a brief to the media stating the current home care system is in a state of disarray as it is under-funded, undervalued, and over-stressed. Sister Furlong pointed out that home care is an essential component of the viability of the health system and much of the funding comes from government, yet government is not the administrator of the system. Home care agencies receive funding from government but the distribution of the funding is left entirely to the agency which results in a disparity in the wages and benefits paid to home care workers. This results in a system that lacks leadership and direction. The current system of home care administration is clearly inefficient and ineffective. NAPE represents more than 1,700 home care workers employed by home care agencies.

Labour Relations Board orders Votes in Health Care

Since early July, NAPE has been embroiled in runoff votes between various unions within several health boards across the province.

On July 16, 2008, NAPE and AAHP (Association of Allied Health Professionals) were engaged in a runoff vote. NAPE won the vote and now represents all 225 health professionals employed by the Western Regional Integrated Health Authority.

As NAPE represented all laboratory and x-ray workers employed by Eastern Health similar applications for a single lab and x-ray bargaining agent were made by Western, Central, and Labrador-Grenfell Health authorities to have one bargaining agent, who had previously been represented by both NAPE and CUPE. As of August 11, 2008 NAPE has been

declared the sole bargaining agent for all laboratory and x-ray workers throughout the province.

On September 18, 2008 the Labour Relations Board ordered a vote for a single bargaining agent to represent all Hospital Support workers employed by the Western Regional Integrated Health Authority currently represented by both NAPE and CUPE. The vote takes place September 29 – October 3. Similar applications are being made in all the health boards within the province.

ELECTION 2008

Sister Hildahl brought the sisters' attention to NUPGE's Election 2008 leaflet, "In Our Hands is Placed a Power – Vote". The leaflet is non partisan and deals with the issue that Canadians need to move past the general feeling of apathy and vote.

Also in the binders was the "October is Women's History Month" website story. The theme selected by the Status of Women Canada (SWC) for 2008 is "Women in the Lead". This theme was tied into the federal election in the fact that women are not in political leadership roles in Canada. Women comprise over 50% of the population of Canada but to date Canada has not elected more than 22% women to the House of Commons. Canada currently ranks 51st in international ranking of women in political office. It is estimated that we need 30% of women in the legislature to effect change and have women's issues be addressed in this country.

An article was also included on France Gélinas', rookie Ontario NDP from Ontario, address on the night of her victory party regarding Women's History Month. Instead of the normal list of famous women her list of women deserving acknowledgement was "mothers working multiple jobs on minimum wage to create a better life for their children; women in aboriginal communities taking the lead to improve their communities; disabled women challenging stereotypes, etc."

The Ad-hoc Coalition for Women's Equality and Human Rights has produced a series of fact sheets for the federal election which were included in the binders. The fact sheets indicate where the parties stand on issues, a brief description of the issues and key questions to ask candidates on the issues.

An article was also included in the binder on "Why Women Should Vote" containing a brief description of the "Night of Terror" on November 14, 1917 when 33 women were beaten and arrested in the U.S. for picketing Woodrow Wilson's government outside the White House for the right to vote.

Also included in the binders was an article by Gloria Steinem on Sarah Palin running in the U.S. election.

CHILD CARE

Sister Gay Pagan is the Child Care Worker Organizer for MGEU/NUPGE on the Child Care Human Resources Sector Council (CCHRSC) Board of Directors. CCHRSC includes a number of sector councils in Canada that bring together stakeholders. They work on human resources issues. They are funded by the federal government (HRSDC). CCHRSC

cannot be political and they are kept at arm's length from the federal government. The role of the 19 sector councils is to generate new knowledge.

Sister Pagan reported that the CCHRSC currently has five projects/objectives:

- Supporting Employers Project – obtaining employers perspectives on how to address priority human resources issues such as recruitment, training, retention, leadership and integration of foreign trained workers. There is a need to determine what innovative practices or tools already exist and determine what tools could be developed subsequently to address prioritized human resources issues.
- Pathways to Early Childhood Education (ECE) credentialing – identify, document and analyze existing provincial certification/registration practices in ECE.
- Labour Market Information Research Agenda – obtaining regularly collected, pan-Canadian data on ECE workforce is a well documented challenge. This project is designed to examine how data is collected and how improvements to the quality and availability of data can be made through primary research and consultation with panel/stakeholders with relevant expertise. This information will then be used to create a long-term labour market research agenda for the sector.
- Occupational standards for ECEs – represent core role in the ECE sector updated due to evolution of sector.
- Understanding and addressing workforce shortages – define and understand existing workforce shortages in ECE based on current supply and demand and to explore the feasibility of developing a forecasting model for future workforce shortages.

Sister Hildahl advised that included in the binders was a poster by Code Blue for Child Care and a news release from Code Blue which shows poll results indicating that 77% of Canadians feel the lack of affordable child care is a serious issue. Supporters of all political parties see an important role for governments in helping parents meet their child care needs.

FYI

Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Sister Hildahl stated that contained in the binder was the NUPGE website story on October as Breast Cancer Awareness Month in Canada. She stated that the statistics for 2008 indicate an estimated 22,400 will be diagnosed with breast cancer and 5,400 will die from it. The website story discusses the “2008 Breast Cancer Wait Times in Canada Report Card” produced by the Canadian Breast Cancer Network. The report shows that while many jurisdictions are working on solutions to shorten wait times for breast cancer treatment, significant gaps in the current standards of care continue across Canada. Only half of the jurisdictions reporting achieved or bettered the national benchmark of four weeks wait time for radiation therapy.

World March of Women

Sister Hildahl turned the sisters' attention to the September 2008 World March of Women Newsletter in the binders. The 7th International Meeting will be held October 14 – 21 where decisions will be made regarding the Global Action 2010. Sister Hildahl will do an analysis of the structure of the World March of Women for the next meeting.

Women's Environment & Development Organization (WEDO)

Sister Hildahl pointed out the April 2008 newsletter from WEDO included in the binders. The newsletter reports that women make only 25% of the global income and own only 1% of the land. In most of the world, unpaid family and household care still rests with women – this unremunerated, invisible work amounts to 10-30% of the world GDP.

ILO: Gender Equality at the Heart of Decent Work

The International Labour Organization has launched a year-long global campaign on gender equality and the world of work. It will run from June 2008 to June 2009. The campaign is called "Remove the Obstacles! On the right track to equality". The objective of the campaign is to increase general awareness and understanding of gender equality issues in the world of work. One of the areas the campaign looks at is reconciling work and family.

Also contained in the binder was the October 7th World Day for Decent Work website story. In 2007, the number of unemployed women rose to almost 82 million and global trends show that women have a higher likelihood of being unemployed than men.

Global Call to Action Against Poverty

From October 17 – 19, in an unprecedented mobilization, more than 1% of the world's population (67 million people) are expected to "Stand Up and Take Action" to demand that their leaders end poverty and meet and exceed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Actions range from immediate practical actions people can take in their communities to presenting political demands to governments and e-actions.

QUALITY OF WOMEN'S LIVES – WORK/LIFE BALANCE

Sister Hildahl pointed out news stories in the binder related to work/life balance. The "Students want Stability on the Job" indicates that a report recently released shows that one of the top three factors that students look at when considering full-time employment with an organization after graduation is work/life balance. The story entitled "All Work and No Play this Labour Day" shows the results of an Everest College Labour Day Poll underscore the importance Canadians place on flexibility with 91% of the respondents saying work/life balance should be a bigger priority for employers. There were also a European Commission story discussing new proposals in the EU to improve work/life balance and an article on the changing dynamics in the Canadian workforce.

Survey

Chair Hildahl brought the sisters' attention to the survey on Work/Life Balance included in the binders. The survey has been formatted to obtain optimal sampling results. The survey includes 30 questions and will be open to both NUPGE members and non-members. The plan is to launch the survey on the NUPGE website. NUPGE will compose a template website story on the survey for the components to use with the goal of having the components link to the survey on the NUPGE site. The website template and the

survey will be taken to the December 2008 NEB meeting where James will encourage the NEB to link to the survey from their website. The goal for respondents will be 500. The results of the survey will be compiled by a research firm. These results will help with the outline for the research document and as well enable the ACWI to begin working on the draft agenda at the spring meeting.

A lively discussion ensued with suggestions for altering the 30 questions. The updated survey incorporating the sisters' suggestions will be distributed in the near future.

OTHER BUSINESS

Sisterhood is a Powerful Thing

President Clancy had asked the sisters to review this paper which states what unions do for women. The sisters offered no suggestions or changes.

Mandate / Terms of Reference

Sister Brown enquired about revising the ACWI Mandate / Terms of Reference.

Orientation Package

With the departure of four members of the ACWI, it was suggested by the sisters that an orientation package be made available for new members. Some of the items to include are Rules of Reference, templates for reports, hotel booking arrangements, etc. It should also specify Component reports need to be standardized and that there is no need to print the Component reports beforehand as they are included in the binders.

Sister Gawronsky will supply a copy of their orientation package as an example. Sister Hildahl will send a copy by email to the sisters. A finalized version will be in place for the next meeting.

Grandmothers for Africa

It was requested that the ACWI invite a representative to speak at the next meeting from the Grandmothers for Africa.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the ACWI will tentatively take place March 26 & 27 at the National Union office.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 12:00 p.m.