

NUPGE Advisory Committee on Women's Issues
March 26 & 27, 2009
Ottawa, Ontario

In attendance:

National Union

Brenda Hildahl
Lisa Bullée

BCGEU/NUPGE
HSABC/NUPGE
HSAA/NUPGE
SGEU/NUPGE
OPSEU/NUPGE
NBUPPE/NUPGE
NSGEU/NUPGE
NAPE/NUPGE

Colleen Jones
Suzanne Bennett
Mariana Burstyn
Marina Matlock
Cindy Haynes
Linda Richardson
Martha Brown
Arlene Sedlickas



Regrets:

HSAA/NUPGE
MGEU/NUPGE
PEIUPSE/NUPGE

Louise Yarrow
Michelle Gawronsky
Nancy Keough-Baglolle

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 9:25 a.m. by Chair Brenda Hildahl. Sister Hildahl welcomed everyone and introductions were made around the table. A special welcome was extended to new committee members Suzanne Bennett from HSABC, Mariana Burstyn from HSAA and Linda Richardson from NBUPPE. Sister Michelle Gawronsky from MGEU forwarded her regrets.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

The Committee was asked to review the agenda. Sister Bennett moved and Sister Sedlickas seconded that the agenda be adopted. Carried.

ADOPTION OF MINUTES – OCTOBER 9 & 10, 2008

Sister Cindy Haynes asked that her name be corrected in the Component Report for OPSEU/NUPGE. Sister Jones moved and Sister Brown seconded that the October 9 & 10, 2008 minutes be adopted with the above-noted amendment. Carried.

NATIONAL UNION REPORT

President Clancy, brought greetings to the meeting. Introductions were made around the table and he welcomed the new committee members. Brother Clancy also expressed his best wishes to Sister Louise Yarrow from HSAA who was unable to attend as her grandchild is very ill.

President Clancy began the National Union Report by discussing the economic crisis. The effects of the global recession have been huge both internationally and in Canada. He noted that in New Brunswick, Ontario, Quebec and in B.C. people are being laid off and services are being lost. He stated that the gap between those 'who have' and those 'who do not' has grown.

Brother Clancy noted that after World War II governments went into debt in order to restart the economy and a period of growth began. It was between 1945 and 1980 when many of today's programs such as Medicare were established. However, starting in 1980, with the Thatcher and Reagan governments, the politicians began preaching that regulations stood in the way of economic growth.

It was during this time that governments began choosing business over workers with examples such as the firing of over 11,000 striking air traffic controllers by the U.S. government in the early 1980s and Thatcher's destruction of the miners' union in England. Since then the ability of workers to organize has diminished.

Since the 1980s governments have maintained the policy of 'trickle down economics' in which the belief is that by providing tax cuts or other benefits to businesses and rich individuals, the broad population will indirectly benefit. Brother Clancy stated that the current economic crisis recognizes that worldwide this policy has failed and has produced less equality.

He stated that we have a responsibility as trade unionists to help clean up the mistakes of the past and ensure they do not happen again. It is time to move forward for the common good. He noted that those bearing the biggest brunt of the economic crisis are women and that the government is not addressing this issue. He stressed that if the government can put \$40 to \$50 billion in economic stimulus into physical infrastructure projects and construction programs, which are male dominated industries, they can put money into social infrastructures such as child care, health care and community-based social services, which are female dominated services.

Brother Clancy informed the sisters that Canada is one of the last nations that does not have a national Early Childhood Education and Child Care program. Not only would this program benefit parents and children, there would be more jobs created as well.

Regarding retirement security, Brother Clancy reported that most people with pension plans have Defined Benefit Plans (18% of the country). However, the majority of workers have no pension plan and are forced to rely on CPP and GIC. He noted that

women are less likely to have pension and health and welfare benefits upon retirement. He stated that we need women to talk about these issues.

President Clancy then spoke about the Quality of Women's Lives project. He is very pleased with the number of survey responses received to date. He stated that the results received from the survey will help with collective bargaining and public education.

Brother Clancy then awarded a plaque to Sister Martha Brown and thanked her for 10 years of dedicated work on the ACWI and her many years of dedication to the labour movement.

COMPONENT REPORTS

BCGEU/NUPGE

Sister Colleen Jones reported:

On behalf of the Provincial Executive Women's Committee, a donation was made to the *Sista'hood Celebration 2009* and the "*A Woman's Place is Everywhere!*" art project. Members of the Provincial Executive Women's Committee attended an International Women's Day opening reception on March 8th, 2009 of this national collection of visual artworks by contemporary Canadian artists produced by Workers Arts and Heritage Centre. The Provincial Executive Women's Committee met on March 9th for a full committee meeting so that as many women could attend the art show as possible. The reception and art show was well attended and enjoyed by all.

Our Political Activism Subcommittee members are planning to meet via conference call to discuss ways to highlight women's issues to members in advance of the May 12th provincial election. Many of our members are very engaged in the election at this time as we are working hard to change our government and elect a woman as Premier.

We are planning two regional women's conferences again this year. We will be following the same format as our regional conferences of last year – focusing on women's health and wellness issues.

Many of the sisters of the BCGEU will be attending the Summer Institute for Union Women in Los Angeles, California, August 11th – 15th, 2009.

Our Community Social Services component has been very busy with presentations to municipalities around the province to have municipalities make a formal declaration that March is *Community Social Services Month*. Town Hall meetings have been planned to showcase what Community Social Services are, and how important the work that they do is to our communities. The component also continues to be actively involved with the *Child Care – Let's Make It Happen* campaign. They have attended meetings with ministers and with our Special Associate Member leaders to discuss how not having

quality, affordable child care has impacted not only the child care workers, but all our working families. They have also expressed their concern that the Manitoba Government Employees Union has made a decision to discontinue their child care organizing. The more than 1,000, mostly women, workers in this field will not have the ability to belong to a union – something that we all, especially as women, believe is a human right and a worker's right.

Many of our components are very busy and focused on the bargaining that will begin in early 2010. There have been planning sessions and preparations are underway for our bargaining conferences which will be held in the fall of this year. There has been conflicting information from the government on public service cuts from 0 – 30%. Our members, and those that represent them, will be well prepared going into this round of bargaining.

The NUPGE survey on the *Quality of Women's Lives* has been forwarded to many of the BCGEU committees, members and our affiliates. I am looking forward to seeing the results of this survey.

HSABC/NUPGE

Sister Suzanne Bennett reported:

Background

The Health Sciences Association of BC represents 16,000 health care and social services workers in British Columbia. Women constitute 85% of HSA's membership. We work in acute care, long- term care, child development centres, transition houses, and community counselling.

The union's Standing Committee on Equality and Social Action helps educate members about women's equality, and disburses funds to support community organizations active in various women's outreach initiatives. In addition, the union promotes women's equality, participation and health issues through many other venues – including proactive political action and gold-level sponsorship of the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation's annual Run for the Cure.

Supporting Social Action Groups

Each year, 0.45% 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 (for a workshop on shared accommodation)
- Vancouver Committee for Domestic Workers and Caregiver Rights (for workshops on elderly care and child care, and coping with stress, loneliness, depression and other mental health issues)
- We Can Coalition of BC (to help organize a series of public events during the 16 days of action in December to end violence against women)

- CoDevelopment Canada
- Habitat for Humanity
- Global Youth Education Network Society
- BC Coalition of People with Disabilities
- BC Labour Against War
- Canadian Association of Food Banks
- Check your Head
- Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC
- Haiti Union Solidarity Fund
- NUPGE Solidarity Fund
- Project Somos
- West Coast LEAF
- World Peace Forum

Promoting Women’s Participation in the Political Process

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. This campaign school emphasizes the need for more women to run for elected office, what women need to consider in making the decision to run, as well as strategies for winning nominations and election campaigns.

This workshop has a proven track record in helping HSA women attain elected office. Most recently, in November 2008, HSA supported a record number of members running in the municipal and school board elections held across the province. Four HSA women were elected to office: two city councillors and two school trustees.

In addition to 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. We again sponsored HSA women at this year’s school, held in March 2009.

The union is providing paid union leave for several HSA women to take on senior lead positions in election campaigns in the May 2009 provincial election. In addition, HSA is supporting the campaign of the union’s first-ever woman candidate (for one of the two major provincial parties) to be elected as a Member of the Legislative Assembly.

Promoting Women’s Health & Awareness

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 last year increased our 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.

Supporting Women's Equality

At the union's annual convention last April, delegates supported two resolutions on child care: one advocating for continuing campaigns for a national child care program, and another supporting child care providers and parents of young children. As a result, the union has posted information on CLC Women's Economic Equality campaign on our website, included funding for a child care campaign in the union's budget for the upcoming year, and will be holding a workshop prior to this year's convention based on the CLC Women's Economic Equality campaign. In addition, HSA's board of directors last year endorsed the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC (CCCABC) position on working families. Following a meeting with a spokesperson from the coalition, the union is directly supporting CCCABC's efforts through a \$2,500 donation from the equality and social action fund.

Delegates to this year's HSA convention next month will debate resolutions calling on the union to take action on cuts to legal aid – which have a disproportionate impact on low income women – and to work with the provincial government to improve child care subsidies. Another resolution calls on the union to endorse NUPGE's five-point plan for a strong economy and a fair society, which supports pay equity and a new investment in public services such as child care and elder care.

HSA convention delegates will also receive in their kits information encouraging them (and other women) to participate in NUPGE's online women's survey. A link to this survey is being promoted on HSA's website at www.hsabc.org.

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 Report* printed a Women's Day spread in the January / February issue. The feature article, "International Women's Day March 8: stand up for working women," describes women's past and present struggles in trying to reach our goal of equality. A sidebar, "Improving women's lives through electoral politics", explains why more women are needed in elected positions to achieve solutions to the challenges women face every day. The editors invite members to nominate outstanding women to be featured in the magazine.

HSA supports women's equality through various other venues, including sponsorships. For example, the union sponsored 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.

HSA supported the *Sista'hood Celebration 2009*, whose March events included "A woman's place is everywhere! A century of women & work" labour art exhibit which opened on International Women's Day in Vancouver.

Also for IWD, the union sponsored a table at the BC Federation of Labour's annual International Women's Day breakfast, featuring a report from the University of British

Columbia's Centre for Women's and Gender Studies, entitled *Still waiting for justice: update 2009 – provincial policies and gender inequality in BC*.

HSAANUPGE

Sister Mariana Burstyn reported:

General Political Climate and the Economy

Another oil boom has come and gone, and Alberta has little to show for it. Over 30,000 jobs have been lost since the beginning of the year. Our government continues to beat the “no deficit” drum, rather than taking steps to stimulate the economy. So hiring freezes are the norm, senior's pharmacare benefits are being attacked, temporary foreign workers are shipped home without so much as a “thank you”, and the premier is musing about sitting down with public sector unions to ask us to help balance the budget.

As always we continue to support our social partners, the Friends of Medicare (FOM), Public Interest Alberta (PIA) and the Parkland Institute. FOM and PIA are direct advocacy groups, and the Parkland Institute, situated at the University of Alberta, is Alberta's progressive response to the Fraser Institute, providing us the research to back our advocacy efforts.

Health Care Restructuring

Health care restructuring is again a huge issue. As of April 1, 2009, Alberta will have one “health region”, under the name of Alberta Health Services (AHS).

The new structure will amalgamate all current health regions, and will transfer the Alberta Drug and Alcohol Abuse Commission (ADAAC) and the Alberta Cancer Board, as well as responsibility for ground ambulance services, to AHS.

To date the most controversial part has been the transfer of EMS services. The two largest, in the cities of Edmonton and Calgary, are currently represented by CUPE. On March 18 the Alberta government passed regulations that places EMS workers who are employees of AHS into the paramedical professional or technical functional bargaining unit. The Calgary, Edmonton and several other services will transfer employees to AHS, while in other areas AHS will enter into contracts with service providers.

In total, HSAA will gain between 1,500 and 2,000 new members through the transfers of EMS and ADAAC. CUPE has vowed to fight the decision to the Supreme Court. Another significant aspect of the restructuring is the question of payroll administration. Currently each region and authority has its own system, and the expectation is that a single “platform” will be established. Our greatest fear is that AHS will select Telus Sourcing Solutions Inc. (TSSI) as the contractor for the province. TSSI is currently contracted to provide this service in the Calgary region, and in the four plus years they have had the contract, it has been a nightmare, with continuous errors and a great deal

of difficulty getting them resolved. We participated with other unions in a petition to AHS to not select TSSI, and to ensure that it is provided as an “in house” service.

Collective Bargaining / Organizing

We are currently in testy bargaining for a first collective agreement for DynaLIFEDx, the unit of over 800 that we recently organized. They have been engaging in typical union busting behaviour, delaying tactics, proposing completely offensive provisions, etc. Since the last meeting of the committee, a number of our smaller agreements, which we refer to as “flow-through” from our provincial contract, have been concluded. We have also finalized a number of EMS agreements, including organizing and achieving a first collective agreement for a new unit in Crowsnest Pass.

We have also been actively bringing in professionals who had previously been unorganized. In total, our organization has enjoyed more than 15% growth in the past year, and with the expected influx resulting from the health care restructuring, we anticipate that the next 12 months will easily match that number.

Human Rights and Equality / Women’s Issues

Our project with the Alberta Council of Women’s Shelters (ACWS) is progressing well. The Council’s researcher has left the organization, so there may be a slight delay in having the toolkit for dealing with domestic violence as a workplace issue ready for testing. The original goal date was June / July; that has been revised to September / October. The ACWS and HSAA have made numerous presentations about the project to a variety of audiences, including an international conference in Amsterdam. Almost universally, the audience understands the connection to the workplace, and then asks when the toolkit will be ready. Ideally they’d like it yesterday, but the ACWS wants to ensure that the interventions that are recommended are well researched, to ensure that they are both effective and safe.

HSAA participated in the planning of the Alberta Federation of Labour’s Women’s Conference on December 6. The conference attracted about 60 union women, and was very well received.

Member Education

The 2009 HSAA Labour Relations Conference, to be held in October, will focus on the theme of human rights and equality, under the leadership of our Human Rights and Equality Committee.

On April 30 and May 1 we will hold a two-day conference for our local unit chairs in Banff, to enhance their capacity and skills. We hope that the location will be at least as big a draw as the scintillating topics.

The 2009 AGM will be held in May, with the theme of “Growing Green”. A two-day Emergency Medical Services conference will be held in June, with a particular focus on the transition to the health system.

SGEU/NUPGE

Sister Marina Matlock reported:

Women's Committee held their Biennial Conference November 13th & 14th at the Raddison Hotel in Saskatoon. We accepted 54 participants. Unfortunately, due to inclement weather, including freezing rain, our numbers were significantly lower. November 13th brought greetings from the President and NUPGE VP, along with a session on Parliamentary Procedure, facilitated by Adriane Paavo and chaired by Norma Sheldon. The participants really got into the spirit of the session and received some valuable information about parliamentary procedure in a fun and relaxed atmosphere.

On November 13th, there were sessions on: Women Speaking Up, with Michele Sereda of Curtain Razors, Regina; Women Beware, with Constable Rolanda McAvoy, Saskatoon City Police; Identity Theft with Constable Holly Chappell, RCMP; and Stress is Not the Enemy, with Deborah Bryson-Saurer from Family Services Saskatoon.

A quick look at the evaluations confirmed that the choice of accommodations, food, topics and presenters was well received.

This brief report is all I can deliver at this time as we have not met since November. We will be meeting just prior to our Committee meeting in Ottawa so I will be able to update my report at that time.

OPSEU/NUPGE

Sister Cindy Haynes reported:

Ontario Court Reporters have gained support from the Law Society, judges, and crown attorneys in their recent backlash at their employer, the Ministry of Attorney General for their response to a recent Settlement Board decision. The slashing of hours that will result will, in fact, reduce the hours worked by a court reporter to as much as 50%. They are attempting to implement a centralized "typing pool" in eight locations across the province, made up of clerk typists who will type all court transcripts. Presently all court reporters supplement their in-court work by typing their own transcripts, used for legal purposes. This, at times, doubles their wage, and it may be at risk, if the province carries through on its intent. Ninety-five percent of those court reporters are women. They hope to get a positive decision by returning to the arbitrator this spring.

Almost 1/3 of OPSEU, the Ontario Public Service, has ratified a new four-year collective agreement. Minimal wage increases and benefit improvements have been gained for those 50,000 public services. The Correctional component has been negotiating hard, and has announced a tentative offer March 1, which was ratified by 84% in favor, after turning down the first offer.

The union representing Ontario correctional workers has called for an immediate and thorough examination of what's happening in the overcrowded provincial correctional system and its effects on the health and safety of correctional service workers.

OPSEU held a press conference in Windsor, Ontario to bring attention to the layoffs of 27 members at St. Clair College. Nine of those positions were staff at the on-site day care facility operated by the college. This, in fact, relates to also displacement of almost 50 children – whose parents either work, or are students at the school. The bumping of employees may result in more layoffs, possibly up to 90 employees. The students themselves have held meetings to fight this move.

OPSEU and the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation have signed a Pay Equity Plan that will give union members a payout of close to \$3.3 million by the end of 2009. Some 3,500 college part-time employees from across the province braved some of the worst winter weather to cast ballots on whether they wanted OPSEU to represent them. It was a historic vote for people who had only recently won the right to form a union. Their 30-year battle for union rights was taken up by the International Labour Organization. It was eventually decided by the Supreme Court in a decision that now guarantees union rights. But, unfortunately, their struggle isn't over. College part-timers cast ballots, but college management doesn't want their votes counted.

The colleges have gone so far as to ask the Ontario Labour Relations Board to destroy the ballots – destroy the evidence – as if the vote had never happened. College lawyers are using every technical argument available to thwart the democratic wishes of these workers. Part of the reason is the provincial labour board is still hampered by rules enacted by the Mike Harris regime that make it very difficult to certify a union in Ontario. These anti-union rules were not repealed by the McGuinty Liberals. In fact, they carried them into the new Colleges Collective Bargaining Act. Even more sinister, managers of the 24 colleges have always abused part-time employees and they want to continue their regime of no job security, low wages and terrible working conditions. For people who are supposedly committed to progressive education for Ontarians, college administrators show a truly regressive attitude toward basic democratic rights.

On March 28, all seven regions will be electing our 21 Board members, and the president and vice-presidential elections will take place at the annual convention in April from among the elected Board members.

An arbitrator will decide the wages, benefits, and working conditions for more than 7,000 health care professionals at 40 Ontario hospitals as the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU) and the participating hospitals, represented by the Ontario Hospital Association, were unable to reach an agreement. Hospital Professionals encompass the professions that provide diagnostic, therapeutic and rehabilitative services. They include the medical laboratory technologists and medical radiation technologists who perform tests that doctors need to diagnose and treat. They are the pharmacists and pharmacy technicians who ensure that the right medications in the proper dosages are being administered. They are the physiotherapists, dietitians,

occupational therapists, social workers and other treatment and rehabilitation professionals who help ensure that patients are well enough to be sent home.

NBUPPE/NUPGE

Sister Linda Richardson reported:

Current Issues – General Information

We have a new President Susie Proulx-Daigle.

The New Brunswick Union had a Biennial Convention October 17 – 19, 2008. Key decisions were made in our organization for Leadership and Resolutions. The two special motions that were put forth for acceptance were passed by our membership – Building Expansion and NBFed Affiliation.

NBU still remains committed on two issues – Health Care and Pensions, as mentioned in Susie's last report to the Women's Committee in October 2008.

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 the direction on public health.

Retiree and Dental Plan is another health issue where there is still ongoing effort to be made. There continues to be significant issues in this area for our former public sector employees. The plan continues to struggle financially with 88¢ of every dollar going to the funding of prescription drugs. The benefit continues to stay inferior with no enhancements. We continue to be unable to maintain even the current dental fee guide under this current program.

There is continued fear this plan will become financially beyond the reach of the retirees. We have put two viable options to the government:

1. A blended rate with the active participants of the plan.
2. Government to cost share the rate of the plan.

To date the government has done a study and has completed a report. We are still waiting to hear the results.

Pension gains have been made and there is still a process of examination of issues of governance of this plan.

In early March, NBU signed documents with the government of NB to allow for a premium increase to the participating members of the CBE to cover the cost of the economic affect on the pension funds. This will also allows the current pensioners to continue to receive their benefits with no complications.

Negotiations

On March 17th, 2009 the Graham Government presented the 2009 - 2010 Budget. The following is a result of cost saving measures to reduce spending, to cut the recent rapidly growing \$800 M deficit. All of this has affected our current and future negotiations.

A “**Wage Freeze**” has been implemented for NB in a Wage Restraint Policy effective March 19, 2009.

This was established by the Cabinet by way of “Cabinet Policy”. This will be for a period of two years for all negotiated contracts affecting all unionized and non-unionized employees of Parts I, III, and IV of the public service, and employees of nursing homes.

All current collective agreements will be honored. The government will attempt to negotiate two-year contracts as existing contracts expire for two years. Under this new negotiating mandate, the monetary increase will be **zero** for two years.

Five components of NBU were in the middle of negotiations at the time of this policy implementation. They were given a couple of days to sort out the details of their ongoing contract negotiations or they would be automatically be given a two-year contract with zero.

All components managed to get their contract ratified in an accelerated amount of time though someone made the comment they felt they had a knife to their throat during this exercise.

Non instructional and two nursing home components worked through the adversity and achieved their ratification with their member votes. The Resource Services and PSPS approached the NBU Board of Directors to exercise the Board’s function to represent the union’s members to ratify their contracts before the deadline passed as they were almost out of time. This was another unprecedented event for our union and Board of Directors.

A “**Hiring Freeze**” has been effective as of March 17, 2009. This affects Part 1 on all open postings for permanent positions. This is in effect for an indefinite period. Exceptions will be made for vacancies critical to the services to the public and that cannot be filled from within the government or redeployment.

“**Layoffs**” are ordered for achievement of budget reduction. Government programs are expected to be eliminated or reduced and as a result eliminating 700 positions in Parts I, II, III, of the Public Service. As many as 400 employees will lose their job. Efforts will be made for redeployment. There are no early retirements being offered for this situation.

Women’s Committee

Our Women’s Committee will be meeting possibly sometime in May; the date is not yet established officially. The Women’s Committee hosted the breakfast at the October 2008 Convention and had a very special guest, Dr. Anne-Marie Zajdlik. She was

introduced by Susie Proulx-Daigle. Dr. Zajdlik had a profound affect on those listening to her story and her “Bracelet of Hope” campaign. The Women’s Committee participated in this campaign at our convention which was very well received.

We are hoping to utilize the liaison training for a women’s convention / conference this spring. Details are still being worked out for this.

NSGEU/NUPGE

Sister Martha Brown reported:

Following are some of the highlights of NSGEU’S activities since our last meeting.

General Issues

NSGEU Biennial Convention

Plans are currently underway for NSGEU’s Biennial Convention to be held May 6 – 9, 2009. The theme of this year’s convention is “Your Voices, Your Rights, Our Strength”. Key note speaker on Labour Rights are Human Rights is Larry Brown, NUPGE.

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

Week-long Labour School for the National Union Atlantic components (NS, PEI & NB) is scheduled to be held at the St. F.X. University, June 7 – 12, 2008. This year there were four courses: Leadership, Advanced Steward Training, Communications and Organizing & Mobilizing.

Administrative Professionals Conference

A very successful Administrative Professional Conference was held November 28 & 29, 2008. The theme of the conference revolved around recognizing each other’s contribution to the workplace and the value of your work – to shift the mindset of our profession and take "I'm or you're just a clerical" out of our vocabulary and workplaces. It was decided to design a pin and poster to commemorate “Administrative Professionals’ Week”. Depicted on the pin are three symbols – a stone, a tree and a heart.

Big Box Daycares

“Big Box Daycares” are making their way to the east coast. (Please see attached newspaper article.)

NSGEU, CUPE, Dalhousie Student Union, the Dalhousie Women's Centre, NDP, Dalhousie's child care centre and Dalhousie Faculty Association met on March 16, 2009 regarding the notice that the IWK and Dalhousie University signed a contract with *Kids and Company*, a for-profit, big box child care company, new to Nova Scotia. Megan Leslie MP organized the meeting.

Many concerns were addressed at the meeting. There was discussion over strategies and it was agreed another meeting would be held.

Branding

As a result of our strategic planning we have just completed a branding exercise and our new logo is to be revealed at this year's Biennial Convention.

NSGEU'S Website

Be sure to check it out at www.nsg.eu.ca. Newly designed website to be launched at this year's Biennial Convention.

Privatization of the Sale of Alcohol

Privatization of the sale of alcohol has once again raised its ugly head with talk by the Independent Food Stores Association wanting to sell beer and wine in corner stores.

Provincial Election

There is a lot of speculation that Premier Rodney MacDonald will call a provincial election in the spring. Right now the NDP, with leader Darrell Dexter, are leading in the polls.

Staffing Changes

- Linda Power, Executive Director retires effective April 1, 2009, after close to 20 years on staff.
- Keiren Tompkins (former Director of Negotiations & Servicing) will take over as Executive Director effective April 1st, 2009.
- Robin MacLean (former Coordinator Health Care) will take over as Director Negotiations & Servicing effective April 1st, 2009.
- Neil MacNeil (former Employee Relations Officer) will take over as Coordinator Health Care effective April 1st, 2009.
- Corinne Carey was hired as our new Pensions & Benefits Officer, January 2009
- Lori Smith has been hired as our new Organizing Officer, February 2009.

Bargaining Issues / Updates

Bargaining

Two thousand and nine is gearing up to be a busy period of negotiations for NSGEU as many of our major collective agreements will expire during this year.

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. The transfer was to take place by April 1, 2009 but now it will take place some time between May 1 and July 1, 2009. Provincial meetings are being held with our members who are affected by this transfer.

Corrections – Interest Arbitration Award

Wages – increase of 2.9% in each of three years. Improvements in shift premiums, part time benefits, vacation and overtime were also achieved.

The Hyde Inquiry

The Minister of Justice announced an inquiry will be held into the death of an inmate at a correctional facility. NSGEU has obtained legal standing at the inquiry to represent the interests of our correctional facility members, sheriff's department members and nursing (CDHA) members.

Local 78B – Stock Transportation

After 19 hours of talks, a deal was reached for the members of Local 78B Stock Transportation school bus drivers, averting a strike by hours. By standing together the bargaining team more than tripled the employer's initial offer. A ratification vote was held on Sunday, January 25, 2009 at 2:00 pm. Members voted 85% in favour of accepting the tentative agreement.

Rates are retroactive to July 1, 2008:

	July 1, 2008	July 1, 2009	July 1, 2010
Adjustment	20%	2.9 %	2.9 %
Start	13.97	14.37	14.90
Step 1	14.30	14.72	15.26
Step 2	14.65	15.08	15.63
Step 3	15.00	15.44	16.01
Monitor	12.49	12.85	13.33

Women's Issues

Quality of Women's Lives Survey

A link for the National Union's "Quality of Women's Lives Survey" is on the NSGEU website and sisters have been encouraged to complete the survey.

Nova Scotia Federation of Labour – Women's Conference

Some sisters on our committee and board members attended the Nova Scotia Federation of Labour – Women's Conference for new and experienced sisters held March 6 – 8, 2009. The theme of the conference was "Bridging the Connection". I participated on a panel discussion on "Women in Leadership" Herstory along with Megan Leslie – NDP MP Halifax and Geri LeBlanc, PSAC member.

Annual Women's Conference

NSGEU's Annual Women's Conference is scheduled to be held April 24 – 26, 2008 at the Debert Hospitality Centre, Debert, NS. Theme of the Conference is "Women's Place, in her Union, Work and Home". The purpose of the conference is to provide sisters with the knowledge and skills to take a more active and assertive role in their union, their workplaces and their lives.

Future Plans

Plans are underway for the Women's Breakfast at this year's Biennial Convention in May 2009.

I regret to inform you, sisters, that this will be my last ACWI meeting as I am not reoffering for an executive position at convention. My plans are to retire April 1, 2010 after 34½ years service. I have been blessed to have met such wonderful sisters during my 10 years on this committee who have become my friends. I will miss you all.

NAPE/NUPGE

Sister Arlene Sedlickas reported:

Highlights from NAPE's Women's Committee

Since the last advisory committee meeting, NAPE's Provincial Executive Women's Committee has not formally met; however, the committee has attended several planned events throughout the province.

National Day of Remembrance

On December 6, ceremonies took place to commemorate the **National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women**. The NAPE's Women's Committee took part in activities that were planned in their communities to remember the 14 women who were killed during the Montreal massacre of 1989. As this was a province-wide event, each member on the committee was able to attend the ceremony in the region they represented.

International Women's Day Celebrations

On March 8, ceremonies highlighting International Women's Day took place. The committee purchased tickets to the luncheon or dinners that were taking place in the various regions of the province. It was a chance for the committee members to network with sisters from all unions as well as all bargaining units within NAPE. The response from rank and file members who attended the event was overwhelmingly enthusiastic. The guest speakers, entertainment and the food were highly praised. Numbers attending these events continue to grow each year.

NUPGE Women's Committee Survey

The "Quality of Women's Lives" survey has been posted on NAPE's website. A special link on the main webpage takes a person immediately to the survey. The women's committee, in their report to the NAPE Board of Directors on February 13 & 14, highlighted this survey and encouraged all directors to take the information back to the membership.

The committee is endeavoring to make as many people as possible aware of the importance of this survey. To that end, the survey was also sent to the provincial list, which consists of female union and non-union activists who frequently share information. The response to the survey has been quite positive.

Masai Project

During the Biennial Convention taking place June 24 – 27 the Women's Committee is planning to sell the red & white "Bracelets for Hope" in an effort to raise both funds and awareness of the plight of AIDS in Africa.

Updates from NAPE – General Information

Public Sector Bargaining

Since March 31, 2008, NAPE has been engaged in collective bargaining with the provincial government on behalf of 16,000 members. On February 11, 2009 members in 11 of 14 public sector bargaining units voted to accept the offer made by government which saw a pay increase of 20% over four years. College of the North Atlantic Faculty, Correctional Officers, and Workplace Health and Safety Compensation Commission are still at the bargaining table.

Home Care Update

On July 10, 2008 NAPE called a press conference to bring awareness to the chronic problems within the home care industry. At that time 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. 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.

NAPE represents more than 1,700 home care workers employed by home care agencies. 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.

A conference for Home Care Workers is scheduled for March 27, 2009.

Labour Relations Board Orders Third Vote in Health Care

The Labour Relations Board has once again ordered a vote to determine which union will represent hospital support staff employed by the Central Regional Health Authority. NAPE and CUPE are currently embroiled in runoff votes in this region. NAPE represents approximately 1,100 hospital support staff in this health authority. Voting is scheduled to begin March 23, 2009.

A vote has yet to be ordered for Eastern Health, where NAPE represents 5,200 members.

Ex Gratia Update

After an extensive process, *ex gratia* payments were sent out in early December 2008 to health care workers who worked in female-dominated classifications during the years 1988-91. The five public sector unions (NAPE, NLNU, AAHP, CUPE and IBEW) worked tirelessly to finalize the payout of monies since the provincial government awarded the \$24 million settlement in March 2006.

Province-Wide Election of Officers

NAPE is now in the process of calling for nominations for the positions of President and Secretary-Treasurer. Members have until March 24, 2009 to declare whether they intend to run for either of the two positions. A province-wide election of the membership will take place on close of nominations.

During NAPE's Biennial Convention scheduled for June 24 – 27, 2009, the newly elected president and secretary-treasurer will take office.

CLC WOMEN'S COMMITTEE REPORT

Chair Hildahl provided a verbal report of the CLC National Women's Committee Meeting she attended on March 12 & 13, 2009.

Sister Hildahl stated that the CLC's "Equality – Once and For All!" year-long campaign was very successful. The campaign was developed to raise awareness about the growing economic inequality of women. The campaign focused on solutions which include belonging to a union, affordable child care, and improving EI. Part of the campaign was called "Gap-zilla" where students from the Canadian Federation of Students held bake sales on 21 campuses where they sold baked good for \$1 to men and 68¢ to women. The CLC plans to keep the campaign ongoing.

Chair Hildahl briefed the sisters on the activities of the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIA), the Feminist Alliance for International Action (FAFIA), the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada (CCAAC) and the Ad Hoc Coalition for Women's Equality. The CCAAC is alarmed at the growing movement of private child care companies in Canada, such as *Kids and Company*. The Ad Hoc Coalition for Women's Equality continues to sell cookbooks as a fund raiser.

Sister Hildahl noted that the CLC's focus has been on the economic crisis. The CLC is arranging demonstrations across the country. The effects of the economic crisis were discussed in detail including the need to improve the maternity/parental leave within EI. The Conservatives have been stressing that they have added an additional five weeks to EI eligibility; however, this does not address the issue that a large portion of Canadians are not eligible, particularly women. The need for pay equity in Canada was discussed. The "30% Off Women's Labour" coupon produced by the CLC was very popular and the CLC is looking at it becoming an annual event.

The CLC is involved in a "Women in Non-Traditional Occupations" project and are looking for solutions to increase women's participation in non-traditional occupations and technology. Seven percent of people working in trades and in construction are women, 22% of engineers are female and 31% of those working in manufacturing are women.

Other issues that were discussed at the meeting were the 40th Anniversary of the Omnibus Bill on Abortion and Gay Rights (passed May 14, 1969), the 20th Anniversary of the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women and the World Women's March 2010.

INTERNATIONAL SISTERHOOD PROJECTS

Sisters in Spirit (SIS) Initiative

Chair Hildahl directed the committee to the Sisters in Spirit update and a policy report entitled "Voices of Our Sisters in Spirit" contained in the binders. A copy of NUPGE's letter with the 2009 contribution to the Sisters in Spirit Initiative was also included in the binder.

As of November 2008, a total of 510 cases of missing or murdered Aboriginal women and girls have been entered into the NWAC database. Sixty-seven percent or 340 women / girls have been identified as murdered. The percentage of cases entered in the database that are youth is staggering – 53% of the women and girls are youth under the age of 30. Sadly 44.1% of the identified cases are women or girls that have disappeared since 2000.

Sister Hildahl distributed to the sisters the SIS community education tool kits on planning vigils on October 4th and a booklet entitled "Safety Measures for Aboriginal Women".

Masai for Africa Campaign

Chair Hildahl referred to the update included in the binders. A copy of the letter of NUPGE's 2009 contribution to the Masai Centre was also included in the binder. The Tsepong Clinic in Leribe is now treating over 15,000 patients and is in the process of constructing a second clinic in the town of Butha Buthe. Dr. Anne-Marie Zajdlik will be travelling to the Tsepong Clinic in August of this year.

TWCAA Micro Lending Program for Women

Chair Hildahl advised the committee that the 2008 annual report from TWCAA as well as a copy of NUPGE's 2009 contribution letter was contained in the binders. NUPGE's annual grants have been used to increase the number of clients able to obtain a first cycle loan. To date, a total of 538 members of the micro lending program have acquired loans.

Casa de la Mujer (House of the Woman of the Union)

Sister Hildahl pointed out that a copy of NUPGE's 2009 contribution letter was contained in the binders. NUPGE received an acknowledgment of receipt of funds. Obtaining information from Colombia continues to be a struggle due to the volatility in that country.

QUALITY OF WOMEN'S LIVES – WORK/LIFE BALANCE

The survey on women and work/life balance was launched on the NUPGE website at the end of January. The response to date has been highly successful with a total of 787

surveys submitted as of March 25th. The website story that serves as the introduction to the survey has had 4,045 hits to date. Because of the successful response to the survey, it has been decided that the survey will remain posted until September.

NUPGE issued a poster for International Women's Day (IWD) which promoted the survey and the NUPGE website story for IWD also encouraged women to complete the survey. Sister Hildahl noted that both items were contained in the binder. She also distributed copies of Our Times (women's issue) magazine with NUPGE's full-page ad on the back cover promoting the survey. Several Components posted stories on their websites with links to the survey. The story and survey were also picked up by other websites, such as womenmakenews.com and labourstart.org.

Chair Hildahl advised the committee that the subject of work/life balance is a key topic right now and NUPGE is encouraging its Components as well as the committee members to continue promoting the survey and the project.

WOMEN AND THE ECONOMIC CRISIS

Sister Hildahl brought the sisters' attention to the President's Commentary on the stimulus package. In his commentary President Clancy stresses the need for pay equity rights and child care.

Employment Insurance (EI)

Women are more likely to work part-time (nearly 70% of the part-time workforce), non-standard hours and have extended periods of time out of the workforce to handle family responsibilities. It is harder for women to accumulate the number of hours to qualify for EI. In fact, less than 33% of unemployed women qualify. For those who do qualify, the low weekly benefit often means they and their children are driven into poverty.

The NUPGE website story calling for improvements to EI was contained in the binders. Also included was the statement by the CLC to the House of Commons Standing Committee regarding the consequences and effects the current EI programs have on women in Canada.

Pay Equity

A Canadian woman earns 71¢ for every dollar a Canadian male earns. The gap is even larger for women with a post-secondary degree – 68¢ for every dollar earned by a post graduate male.

As part of the 2009 budget, the Conservatives introduced legislation which prohibits female public sector workers from filing a pay equity complaint with the Canadian Human Rights Commission. The *Public Sector Equitable Compensation Act* (PSECA) imposes a \$50,000 fine on any union that encourages or assists members in filing a pay equity complaint.

Contained in the binders was the NUPGE website story on the PSECA and the CLC analysis of the PSECA.

Child Care

In 2004, the OECD ranked Canada last among developed countries in terms of access to early learning and child care spaces and last in terms of public investment. For those able to find spaces, the child care fees are among the highest in the world.

Early childhood education and child care promotes economic stimulus through job creation, labour force participation, and increased local economic activity – research indicates that for every \$1 spent on child care, there is a ripple effect of \$1.58 in the local economy.

Contained in the binders was the NUPGE website story on the effects of Harper's misguided plan for child care. It is estimated that as many as 15,000 child care spaces will be lost in Ontario when the federal funding runs out in 2010.

CLC Women's Economic Campaign

The evaluation report of the CLC women's economic equality campaign was included in the binders. The campaign focused on the solutions to solving the economic gap including belonging to a union, affordable child care and improving EI.

Ad Hoc Coalition for Women's Equality and Human Rights

Sister Hildahl directed the sisters to the copy in the binders of the letter sent to the Ad Hoc Coalition with a \$1,000 donation from NUPGE. The coalition is currently lobbying MPs regarding pay equity. Also included in the binder was an update on several women's groups that have been affected by the Status of Women funding cuts.

International Response

Contained in the binders was a press release from the United Nations regarding their concerns about the impact of the financial crisis on the rights of women. It states that in both developed and developing countries women will be particularly effected by the social and economic consequences such as unemployment, increased responsibilities at home and at work, decrease of income and the potential increase in violence.

Also included was the Public Service International's IWD statement urging vigilance to ensure measures designed to promote gender equality are not cast aside under the excuse that "we can no longer afford them". It points to Canada as an example citing the pay equity legislation that was passed in the federal budget.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) issued a press release warning that the economic crisis could mean 22 million more unemployed women in 2009. Issues such as women's lower employment rates, lower earnings and vulnerable forms of employment place women in a weaker position than men to weather crises. Women may cope by engaging in working longer hours or by taking multiple low-income jobs but still having to maintain unpaid care commitments.

The International Trade Union Confederation released a report that reveals the pay gap between men and women worldwide may be much higher than official government figures at 22%.

FYI

Rise in HIV-positive cases in Saskatchewan

Contained in the binders was information concerning the alarming increase in the number of HIV-positive cases in Saskatchewan – 174 new cases last year. This is a 40% jump from 2007; the steepest increase is among young Aboriginal women. The chief Medical Health Officer, Dr. McKinnon, said she would not be surprised if 200 – 300 new infections are found by the end of 2009. In 2007, the federal government began cutting funding for the fight against AIDS by a total of 30% in the last two years.

United Nations – Commission on the Status of Women March 2 – 13, 2009

Included in the binders was the Agreed Conclusions reached at the Commission on the Status of Women which was held in New York in March of 2009. The priority theme was “the equal sharing of responsibilities between men and women, including care-giving in the context of HIV/AIDS”.

United Nations – Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women October 20 – November 7, 2008

Chair Hildahl directed the sisters to the concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women regarding Canada’s sixth and seventh periodic reports to CEDAW contained in their binders. The Committee noted the large delegation that was sent by Canada but noted with regret that no high-level representatives with decision-making power were included in the delegation. The committee notes with concern that the Court Challenges Programme was cancelled and it regrets the absence of concrete reasons in the budget review and assessment that led to that cancellation. It also expressed concerns regarding the closure of the Status of Women offices and the new guidelines which prohibit women’s NGOs from accessing funds if they do domestic advocacy activities, lobbying or research.

World March of Women

The World March of Women is planning the third International Action from March 8th to October 17th, 2010. This marks the 10th Anniversary of the March. At the CLC women’s committee meeting it was noted that there is no discussion of activities within English speaking Canada.

A leaflet describing activities was included in the binders. Also contained in the binder was a brief description of the structure of the World March of Women and a list of participating groups from Canada including NUPGE.

Women and Campaign Finance – The High Price of Politics (WEDO)

Included in the binders was a document produced by the Women's Environment & Development Organizations (WEDO) entitled "Women and Campaign Finance – The High Price of Politics". It looks at the issue of lack of financial resources as one of the biggest obstacles preventing women from participating in politics in larger numbers.

OTHER BUSINESS

Bullying and Mobbing in the Workplace

Sister Haynes provided the sisters with copies of the bullying language contained in the OPSEU Colleges Agreements as requested at the last meeting. As well she provided an OPSEU research paper "Bullying and Mobbing in the Workplace".

Violence Tool Kits

Sister Mariana Burstyn told the sisters HSAA is creating violence tool kits which should be ready by September / October. She will forward the tool kit to NUPGE for the next ACWI meeting.

Equality Posters

NUPGE has developed a series of equality posters which will be launched throughout the year. The first in the series was IWD, African Heritage Month and the Elimination of Racial Discrimination Day. Next to be launched is Equality Day, Administrative Services Recognition Day and the Day of Mourning. A poster has also been developed for Women's History Month. There is a plan to develop a poster for the 20th Anniversary of the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women.

Trans-Canada Homelessness Highway

The National Working Group on Women and Housing has produced a map entitled "Trans-Canada Homelessness Highway: A Women's Route Map". It stresses the numerous issues that cause women to end up homeless. Copies of the map were distributed to the sisters.

Orientation Document

Sister Hildahl distributed a draft of the orientation document and discussion by the sisters followed which included minor changes to the document. Once the changes are complete, Sister Hildahl will send an electronic version via e mail to the committee. It was determined with the departure of Sister Martha Brown, the new liaison for the ACWI will be Sister Colleen Jones.

Grandmothers for Africa

Sister Hildahl reported that there were no available speakers at this time from the Grandmothers for Africa. She will continue to request a speaker for a future date.

"Gordon Campbell's Bill 42 gag law stinks!" and "The Girl Effect" Videos

The sisters were shown a You Tube video created in British Columbia depicting various people silenced with duct tape over their mouths who are protesting Bill 42. Bill 42, the

Election Amendment Act, places extreme limits on public interest advertising and communication in BC from February of this year until the May 2009 provincial election.

As well, the sisters viewed a video entitled “The Girl Effect” that shows the powerful social and economic change that can be brought about when girls have the opportunity to participate in their society.

Farewell

Sister Hildahl extended a heartfelt thank you to Sister Martha Brown who has been on the ACWI for 10 years. Sister Marina Matlock also announced this would also be her last meeting. The committee members passed on their best wishes to the sisters.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the ACWI will tentatively take place October 22 & 23, 2009 at the National Union office.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 12:00 p.m.