

NUPGE Advisory Committee on Women's Issues

October 22 & 23, 2009
Ottawa, Ontario

In attendance:

National Union

Brenda Hildahl
Lisa Bullee

BCGEU/NUPGE
HSABC/NUPGE
HSAANUPGE
SGEU/NUPGE
MGEU/NUPGE
OPSEU/NUPGE
NBUPPE/NUPGE
NSGEU/NUPGE
NAPE/NUPGE

Colleen Jones (*Thur. only*)
Suzanne Bennett
Mariana Burstyn
Joyce Hobday
Lee Edwards
Cindy Haynes
Linda Richardson
Dawn Ferris
Arlene Sedlickas



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 new ACWI members Dawn Ferris from NSGEU, Joyce Hobday from SGEU/NUPGE and Lee Edwards from MGEU/NUPGE (attending for Michelle Gawronsky).

Sister Edwards conveyed regrets and greetings from Michelle Gawronsky who could not attend due to family commitments. Sister Hobday announced that although she was on the committee for this meeting, there will be a new representative from SGEU/NUPGE at the next meeting.

A contact sheet was circulated to the sisters to update any information.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

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

ADOPTION OF MINUTES – MARCH 26 & 27, 2009

Sister Burstyn moved and Sister Richardson seconded that the March 26 & 27, 2009 minutes be adopted. Carried.

NATIONAL UNION REPORT

President Clancy brought greetings to the meeting. Introductions were made around the table and he welcomed new Sisters Ferris, Hobday and Edwards.

President Clancy began the National Union Report by discussing NUPGE's recent Bread and Butter tour. In response to the economic crisis the National Union and its Components held town hall forums in 26 communities across the country during the months of May, June and July 2009. The forums gave Canadians an opportunity to voice their concerns about the crisis, how it was affecting them and ideas on what needs to happen to remake the Canadian economy.

President Clancy informed the committee that the National Union will soon be releasing a publication entitled "The Next Economy – Findings from the cross-Canada public sessions of Cut Me A Slice: A People's Response to the Economic Crisis." The publication describes the six clear themes and priorities that emerged from the tour. He advised the committee that the publication will be distributed in mid-November. He also directed the sisters to a website that the National Union has developed, www.peoplesresponse.ca.

"The Next Economy" is Part One of three reports. Part Two will be a report dispelling popular myths people spin about the economy and what caused the recession. Part Three will be a blueprint about what the Canadian economy should look like. President Clancy noted that in order to ensure a secure economy in 25 years, governments must make investments and those should include such items as green technology and clean water technology.

Brother Clancy noted that as federal and provincial debts and deficits grow, the public sector will once again be under attack. As in the 1990's, governments will cut public services and their employees as well as reduce wages and working conditions. In the upcoming months, the National Union will be working on developing common messages that support public services and the benefits that public sector workers bring to their communities.

Brother Clancy also spoke about the need for fair taxation in Canada. Ontario is currently in the process of implementing HST (Harmonized Sales Tax) which has been put in place in BC, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. He stated that the HST is a flat tax which negatively effect many small and medium-sized firms that provide services. President Clancy stated that over the past years, corporate taxes have dropped in half and personal taxes have either stayed the same or increased. What is needed in Canada is a fair taxation system in which corporations, large business and the wealthy pay their share.

President Clancy stated the planning for the Quality of Women's Lives Conference is progressing well.

COMPONENT REPORTS

NAPE/NUPGE

Sister Arlene Sedlickas reported:

HIGHLIGHTS FROM NAPE'S WOMEN'S COMMITTEE

Since the last advisory committee meeting NAPE's Provincial Women's Committee has gone through another election. After voting ended at convention, the same committee was elected for another two year term. The committee has not had a face to face meeting but has had a brainstorming session via teleconference on planned activities for the next two years. Some of these activities include:

National Day of Mourning

On December 6, ceremonies will take place to commemorate the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. As this is the 20th Anniversary marking the event, NAPE's Women's Committee will be participating in the Canadian Labour of Congress postcard campaign, *20 days 20 ways to End Violence Against Women*. Each member on the committee will distribute the cards to various parts of the province to ensure full participation of the members.

International Women's Day Celebrations

On March 8 ceremonies highlighting International Women's Day will take place. This year the Women's Committee plans to host a dinner to celebrate the women in our union. The list of speakers and special events for the dinner are still in the preliminary stages and will be worked on in the months leading up to the event.

In addition, the committee still intends to purchase tickets to luncheons or dinners taking place in the rural regions of the province to support the efforts of our sisters who in the past have hosted their own celebrations.

Women's Conference

Plans are underway to host a NAPE province-wide Women's Conference in March 2010. The committee is working diligently on a theme for the conference. The topics to be covered are still in the preliminary stages and will be worked on in the upcoming months. It is hoped that the conference will take place during the weekend leading up to the International Women's Day Celebrations. The committee will be focusing much of their time on the logistics in the months leading up to conference.

UPDATES FROM NAPE – GENERAL INFORMATION

Province Wide Election of Officers

At the close of nominations for the president and secretary-treasurer, the candidates were elected by acclamation. Sister Carol Furlong was elected as President and Brother Bert Blundon was elected as Secretary-Treasurer. Delegates during the recent convention voted to amend NAPE's Constitution to increase the term of office for both of these positions from two to three years.

Biennial Convention

From June 25-27, 2009 NAPE held its 18th biennial convention. The theme of this year's convention was *Pride in Our Members – Pride in our Union*. In keeping with this theme, the convention paid special tribute and expressed appreciation to its members.

The convention honored those members killed on the job with a special ceremony. After reading a tribute to each of the six individuals, delegates lit candles in their memory. NAPE plans to erect a permanent memorial to honor NAPE members who have been killed on the job.

Delegates to convention were also surprised with the unveiling of a specially commissioned musical composition entitled, *The Anthem of NAPE*. The Anthem, which played to the backdrop of a slideshow on the struggles and victories of NAPE over the years, clearly showed members' pride in our union. Delegates were visibly moved by the presentation, which can be viewed on NAPE's website www.nape.nf.ca.

International Award

NAPE is proud to recognize and congratulate a former activist and one of the country's most prominent labour leaders, Nancy Riche, who will receive the Elijah Barayi Award, the highest honor bestowed by the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). Nancy was recognized for her outstanding contribution to human rights and to the building of the Congress of South African Trade Union at the height of the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa in the 1990s.

Labour School

NAPE held its yearly labour school at the Terra Nova Resort and Golf Community in Port Blandford, NL from September 17-20. As a pilot project, the length of the school was changed from seven to four days. Judging from the number of applications (170 plus) the change was positive. A total of 90 participants were selected. This year five courses were offered:

- Advanced Steward
- Leadership for Women
- Occupational Health and Safety
- Building an Effective Local

→ Popular Economics

The new four day format was well received with increased commitment and enthusiasm to promoting the union in the workplace. The Women's Committee was pleased to offer a course for the female members and a total of 18 women activists took part in the Leadership for Women course.

Arbitration Award

NAPE has won a significant victory on behalf of the highway workers it represents. The Supreme Court of Newfoundland and Labrador Trial Division made a major decision in favour of the highway workers NAPE represents. The court supported the arbitrator's decision to rescind layoff notices and restore all wages, seniority, and benefits lost since the dispute in June 2005. The award is estimated to be worth approximately \$5 to \$6 million. Unfortunately, the fight is not over as the Provincial Government is now challenging the decision in the Court of Appeal.

Health Care Issues

The Labour Relations Board has yet to order a vote to determine which union will represent hospital support staff employed by Eastern Health, where NAPE represents approximately 5,200 members. All other votes in Labrador Grenfell, Western Health, and Central Health have been concluded.

Ex Gratia Update

After an extensive process, the *ex gratia* payments have finally been paid out to the 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.

NSGEU/NUPGE

Sister Dawn Ferris reported:

Highlights from NSGEU since the March Meeting:

GENERAL ISSUES

Biennial Convention

The Biennial Convention was held May 6-9th, 2009. Joan Jessome was acclaimed as President for her 6th term; this is the second longest serving President in the history of the NSGEU. Martha Brown did not reoffer as she is planning on retiring in the spring of 2010 and Larry Stewart also chose not to reoffer. With the First and Second Vice

President position being wide open there was a lot of activity around the election. I am pleased to report that Jason MacLean, former 3rd VP was elected as 1st VP. Board Member Don Goss was elected as 2nd VP and after four run off votes, I was elected as 3rd VP. It was a very exciting afternoon. Martha Brown and Linda Power were honoured (roasted) at the Banquet during convention and they were both pleased and sufficiently embarrassed with the results.

This year's convention theme was "Your Voices, Your Rights, Our Strength" and our new NSGEU branded logo and website were introduced to great reviews. The key-note speaker was Larry Brown and his talk was so inspiring that a request was made to have a transcript of his speech sent out to delegates.

Week Long Labour School

The annual school was held in Antigonish at St. Francis Xavier University again this year from June 7-12th, 2009. The school is open to members of the National Union Atlantic components (NS, NB, PEI, NL). Classes were held for Communications, Leadership, Advanced Steward, and Organizing & Mobilizing. There was also a session held for a group of members in the Anti-Bullying Workshop; these people will be able to facilitate sessions in the future to stop bullying in the workplace and subsequently in the homes and community at large.

Board of Directors

The NSGEU Education Officer and the Executive spent the majority of September hosting the Regional and Occupational Councilors training sessions. These sessions included the voting in of our Board of Directors. In accordance with our Constitution and By-laws, we were able to increase our Board to 32 members, an increase of 2 additional Board Members for the Civil Service. This is the biggest Board we have ever had and for the first time ever, we have more females than males on the Board. Currently there are 21 women and 11 men serving the NSGEU in elected positions.

Education

The rest of September and the majority of October has been dedicated to training our Local Executive Members on their new (or returning) roles in the NSGEU and the structure of our Union. I was asked to create a workshop to assist the Secretaries and was happy to do this and have really enjoyed facilitating these workshops (I have found a new passion!!).

Staffing Changes

- Shawn Fuller, ERO, has resigned from his position and now works full-time for the new government.

- Shawn Fuller has been replaced by Neil McNeil on the LTD Advisory Committee and by Rosemarie DeVillers as ERO. Rosemarie's hiring leaves an opening for a term position for an ERO.
- Andy Pedersen has been hired as the graphic artist / communications person.

Political Landscape in Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia has its first majority government in 12 years and has made history in Atlantic Canada by voting in its first NDP government. The NSGEU is hoping that the NDP promise of not interfering in the bargaining process is kept. Joan Jessome was able to build up a congenial and cooperative working relationship with Darrell Dexter (leader of the NDP) and the NDP while they were the opposition party of NS, of course realizing that a new relationship will need to be created now as we move forward.

BARGAINING

Under the new government and with the concerns for the economy, the provincial deficit and the NDP promise to balance the budget; we enter this round of bargaining with much concern and anticipation. Starting the end of this October 2009, we enter the beginning of several of our larger Bargaining Units heading to the table. By the end of March 2010, roughly 90% of our membership will be in negotiations. The decision has been made by our Board to request that the Civil Service open early to be our "lead table" in this round of bargaining. The Civil Service contract does not end until March 2010; but we feel that the best option is to move forward with the members whose employer is the Government. The NDP have hinted that they've set their benchmark at 1% for wage increases, and have promised no lay-offs or rollbacks. We anticipate that this is the time to get better language in our Collective Agreements and we'll leave it up to the membership to decide on whether 1% wage increases will be acceptable. We are in agreement that whatever we get this round will have to be fought for and we are prepared to do this.

Continuing Care Transfer

The transfer did occur in June and our affected members were able to participate in their new Locals in time to participate in the elections. Monika Harvey is back on the Board at the NSGEU but this time representing her new Local in her new Region of Cumberland/Colchester County.

WOMEN'S ISSUES

Local Members take on Abusive Executive Director

One of our Home Care Locals (Local 33) in Richmond County has decided they have had enough abuse by the Executive Director and have mobilized to make changes (and perhaps make history in the NSGEU). To make a long story short, I'll summarize by saying that almost two years ago the Richmond County Home Care Agency's Board of

Directors hired an outside company to do an audit on the office management due to complaints by the Executive Director that she needed more staff to help her in the office. The audit was done and the Agency was given a Fail; with two recommendations, either fire the Executive Director (ED) or remove the government's funding and find another Agency to provide home care to the residents of the area. The staff was not allowed access to this audit and a meeting was called by the ED and the women were told they were to blame for the failing mark. That's when they called Joan Jessome. The NSGEU then FOIPOPed the audit and the real results were revealed, the ED was found to be incompetent, the culture of the workplace was a culture of blame and harassment. These members of Local 33, and there are 43 of them, have banded together and decided that if the audit has recommended that after 18 years in the role of ED, the woman doesn't know her job and is recommended that she be let go, why isn't that happening? The Government is tied with the only option of removing funding from this Agency as the only body that has the ability to fire is the Board of Directors. In the past two years, this Board has lost at least three Chairs and many volunteers and still the ED remains. The NSGEU will fight to have this resolved and meetings have been underway, the Union is demanding that the ED be removed and 35 members have signed resignation letters and given them to Joan Jessome. I will keep you posted as to the resolve of this issue. This is truly an inspiring story of solidarity by a group of women who have had enough and are making changes in their workplace.

Nova Scotia Federation of Labour Conference – Women's Breakfast

The NSFL is hosting their annual convention October 25 – 28th, 2009. There will be a Women's Breakfast held on Tuesday, October 27th.

Future Plans

As this is my first term on the Executive and on the Board, I look forward to my role on this Committee at the NUPGE level and I'm hoping to glean information at this meeting to bring back to my new role as the Liaison to the Women's Committee of the NSGEU. Katherine Hiltz is the new Chair of the Women's Committee and we look forward to planning the focus of the annual Women's Conference in the spring. We want to focus on empowering women to become more active in the Union and therefore in their communities and lives. We want to incorporate the poverty issue into this conference in a way that will be meaningful and come up with ways that we can all help to take this issue on.

NBUPPE/NUPGE

Sister Linda Richardson reported:

A meeting of N.B. Union's Women's committee was held on September 26, 2009 to discuss upcoming events and activities for 2009-2010.

Our Union over this past year has been busy preparing for upcoming negotiations in the face of provincial wage restraint policy of 0% for two years. We are currently examining our options and our rights under the codes of Labour in preparation for a challenging round of bargaining.

Our union hired a Labour Relation Officer to specifically handle member education and issues related to pensions. This is proving to be of major importance to our members. Over the past year a province-wide pension seminar tour reached hundreds of our members. Information and questions on pension options and education on various plans proved invaluable.

NB Union has won a prestigious award from Conservation Council of New Brunswick – the Milton F. Gregg Award as the most Outstanding Organization for Championing Climate Change – by producing a book called “Cool Comforts” co-authored by Tom Mann, Executive Director of NB Union, and Peter Corbyn which integrates environmental strategies into the collective bargaining process.

Our Union continues to be involved in promoting conservation of energy and the reduction of our carbon foot print. Our building renovation integrates new green technologies, and recently we hosted several screenings of the film “Age of Stupid” – a fictional account of our current times as seen from 2055.

The Women’s Committee is preparing in the fall of 2010 to have a first ever Women’s Conference in Fredericton following a Liaison Training Session. We are considering a “mock convention” during this conference as well. The NB Union Women’s Committee is seeking your assistance to suggest courses or topics for speakers for our conference or suggestions for the “mock convention”.

OPSEU/NUPGE

Sister Cindy Haynes reported:

Final arrangements are being made towards our Provincial Women’s Conference, scheduled for Nov. 6, 7, & 8th, 2009, in Toronto. The theme is “Empowering Women in this Difficult Economy”. We plan on having a panel of International, Labour, and Community Women who will share the challenges and the activities that surround their efforts in encouraging women to be empowered, and address the strains they face due to the economic situation. We intend to come out with local and regional action plans that make a difference! This is also a celebration of our Women’s Committees 25 years in existence, and we plan on having some original members as speakers, an open reception, as well as an exciting diva night event for conference participants.

The Women’s Committee is also playing a role in our new project on Social Mapping, along with all the equity groups. We are entering Phase 1, in which a detailed Census will be embarked upon in the month of November, with results expected early in the New Year. The intent is to take a snapshot of our union members, as well as our staff

with OPSEU, in terms of gender/region/age/ethnic origin/among other groupings. Phase 2 will involve an employment systems review of both union and staff systems, with an effort to eliminate barriers to union participation. It is believed to be a 'first' for any union to embark on such a large project, and we anticipate many members to complete the survey.

On Sept. 2, 2009, the Ontario Labour Relations Board ordered a union certification vote be held to determine if the majority of part-time support staff at Ontario's community colleges want the Ontario Public Service Employees Union to be their agent in collective bargaining with the colleges. Up to 10,000 part-time support staff at Ontario community colleges are eligible to cast ballots in a union representation vote to be held in October.

Colombia is a country where trade unionists and human rights defenders are killed on a daily basis – just for performing what we would consider normal activities. OPSEU recently sent a delegation to Colombia <http://opseu-colombia.blogspot.com/> to examine the situation and to provide support to those who are fighting for social justice in that country. While there we met with unions, indigenous groups, women's groups, progressive Senators, human rights groups, and mothers whose innocent sons had been deliberately killed and dressed up as guerrillas by the army. OPSEU now stands by its decision to stop the Canada Colombia Free Trade Agreement – a position supported by the Canadian Labour Congress and its affiliates as well as many other Canadian non-governmental organizations.

We also applaud the hard-nosed bargaining demonstrated by members of the Liquor Board Employees Division (LBED), who ratified their first collective agreement as members of OPSEU in July. The bargaining team managed to negotiate important gains, including a first-time benefits package for casual employees, the majority of whom are women. Ontario celebrates community based social service workers; November 6 has been designated as a day to celebrate the people who provide the social services we need to make our communities strong. These dedicated workers include the people who work in child treatment, developmental services, child care, children's aid societies, supportive housing and many other community based agencies. We are joining other unions for various activities across the province.

MGEU/NUPGE

Sister Lee Edwards reported:

Regrets were extended from Sister Michelle Gawronsky.

The MGEU Women's Committee met on Friday, October 16. Due to numerous conferences, conventions and bargaining, the Committee has cancelled our conference scheduled for April 2010. The new date for our conference has been set for May 5 – 7th, 2011.

The various important events we looked at were the NUPGE Women's Conference in April 2010, our conference scheduled for April 30, May 1 & 2, 2009, the MFL Women's Conference scheduled for fall 2010, all of which were complicated by negotiations for the Master Agreement.

We distributed the cards for December 6th among the committee. The cards were sent by the National office and we are excited with that project. We were pleased with the French versions and have selected certain areas for distribution.

For International Women's Day, our committee meets again. We will attend the MFL luncheon in conjunction with our meeting. The committee also attends the annual Grassroots Dinner held each year. After our meeting we were excited to hear that Kelly-Ann Stevenson of MGEU is one of this year's honorees. We are proud that one of our sisters has received this recognition. We also have plans for a wine and cheese so the day will be action packed and busy!

Our committee is excited about focusing our efforts to roll out a new initiative which we hope to play a role in our conference and our committee. It is an issue which impacts all of our membership – respectful workplace, harassment and discrimination. As a union we face member to member issues, management to member issues – all of which have a negative impact on our membership. It is our hope we can raise the awareness with a goal to develop a workshop.

We are in the process of developing our newsletter for posting on the web page. We are one of several standing committees and want to ensure that the membership is aware of the Women's Committee and their mandate, but also to pay tribute to other committees who do the good work of the union. We feel that by working together we can build strength and solidarity.

Bargaining

September has been a busy month for all components who met to put forward membership proposals, with most components having more membership participation than previously, as well as more bargaining proposals.

Because of the economy, things have changed in terms of the mandates we are seeing now compared to a few short months ago. As a result, there was a two week strike when Hydro negotiations broke down. Close to follow were CUPE and other associated unions. The mandate was increased and CUPE ratified, and we are waiting to hear the results of IBEU.

Manitoba has held its ground in terms of the recession. We haven't had the ups and downs and remained relatively stable. The impact on the private sector has been much more significant where a number of businesses have laid off workers or participate in work share agreements under HRDC.

I have been in negotiations with MLCC since March 2009. Over 50 sessions and we faced many concessionary proposals from management. That, on top of the mandate which was even less than the mandate given to Hydro resulted in an 84% strike vote.

The attack on seniority, full-time jobs, part-time scheduling, a management training program which negatively impacts current members, and retiree benefits are the major issues. We have several dates booked in November and hope for a positive resolution.

Of significance in Manitoba, our Premier, Gary Doer is now the Canadian Ambassador to the U.S. The new premier is Greg Selinger.

SGEU/NUPGE

Sister Joyce Hobday reported:

Convention 2009

The Women's Committee had a Women's luncheon at convention. Harassment in the workplace was the focus of table discussions.

A major topic at convention was preserving public services, in particular anti-privatization campaigns and opposing P-3s. Carol Adams from BCGEU, Dave Peters from NSGEU, and George Heyman, former president of BCGEU, shared experiences from their provinces.

The SGEU Anti-privatization committee has been running a series of television ads on the importance of public services remaining public. Some ads have focused on the many aspects of public services (education, health care, water, etc.) while others have focused on keeping liquor stores public. Two of SGEU's television ads, "Privatization Experiments" and "Innocents", received recognition at the 2009 Summit Creative Awards.

Silent Witness Project

The Silent Witness Project is a traveling exhibit of life-size red wooden silhouettes, each representing a woman who was killed by a husband, partner or acquaintance. It began in the United States in 1990, as a national initiative, and there are now active Silent Witness projects in many countries and many provinces of Canada. The SGEU women's committee learned about this project through the NUPGE women's committee and brought it to Saskatchewan.

The project has four goals: Remembering and honoring women who were murdered in acts of domestic violence; Awareness in our communities about the extent of domestic violence; Advocating and helping people connect with local resources for ending the

violence in their lives; Legislative action – encouraging community and legislative action to end violence in our society.

The SGEU women's committee has been working on the Silent Witness project for some time, preparing a brochure and having two silhouettes made. Our plan is to share this project first with SGEU members and then with the larger community. The launch of the project was scheduled to occur at our convention in 2007, but due to the 2007 convention being shortened and the 2008 convention being cancelled (twice!), we were not able to make this presentation until the April 2009 convention. We made a 30-minute presentation and distributed our brochure about the project. On May 29, we presented it at the PS/GE proposals conference, and we have requested to present at each of the other sector AGMs this year. After this, the Silent Witness project will be shared with the larger community through media interviews and participation at other community events.

SFL

The SFL has operated the Prairie School for Union Women every year since its inception in 1997. The goals of this four-day school are to provide a supportive environment to develop women's personal and leadership skills and to build solidarity among women workers. This year, the school was cancelled due to low enrollment by the early bird registration date. The SGEU women's committee has sponsored women to attend, but in recent years, the number of scholarships has declined. In 2004, there were 14 women sponsored by SGEU Women's Committee, but in 2009, due to cuts to the women's committee budget, only seven women were sponsored.

The SFL held a Revitalization meeting on Sept. 9 with 22 women in attendance. Out of that, a steering committee was established to move forward with the ideas generated at the meeting.

The SFL women's committee is holding a "Union Goddess" breakfast at the SFL convention October 22 for women to network and discuss resolutions of particular concern to women. The SFL Equity Conference is being planned for February 2010. The proposed format is that each of the five equity groups (women, Aboriginal, solidarity and pride, human rights, and youth) will present concurrent, repeated workshops for delegates to choose from.

Bargaining

Many bargaining units are now in their first round of bargaining since the government amended the Saskatchewan Trade Union Act to include Essential Services Legislation. Some bargaining units have received agreement with their employer that no positions are essential (in Education), while others, Health sector, in particular, have a large number of positions declared essential. SGEU, CUPE, and SEIUWEST, representing 25,000 health care providers in Saskatchewan at a common bargaining table with the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations, are disappointed in the SAHO mid-

Sept. monetary offer of less than 10% over four years. Bargaining is set to resume in mid-Oct.

In the Education Sector, several units are currently at the table. PS/GE, the largest SGEU sector with 12,000 members, had their contract expire Sept. 30 and are preparing to go to the bargaining table.

HSAANUPGE

Sister Mariana Burstyn reported:

The Alberta government has begun a new round of health care cutbacks.

Major announcements on closure of Alberta Hospital Edmonton (AHE), 246 beds in total. This is coupled with proposed severance program. Initial offer of one week per year's service to a maximum of 26 was improved to 1.5 weeks to a maximum of 52.

In recent months, the government has announced a series of cutbacks to crucial health services including:

- A hiring freeze leaving thousands of desperately needed health care jobs vacant
- A cap on overtime hours, leading to increased stress and exhausted staff
- Cancelled and delayed surgeries, including postponing cancer surgeries for weeks
- Ending universality for seniors' prescription drugs
- Downloading nursing home costs onto seniors and their families
- Cutbacks to essential services like MRIs

Friends of Medicare have launched an aggressive campaign to urge the government to cease and desist from further dismantling of our public health structure in this province. The campaign includes rallies, community action teams, public meetings, signs, a petition, ads and many other pieces.

"Voluntary Exit Program" package was introduced by Alberta Health Services. The program would be available to regular full-time and part-time employees. Equivalent of one week regular salary for each full year of employment has been offered.

HSAA has rejected this initial offer and asked AHS to return to the table with an improved voluntary exit plan proposal. Alberta Health Services' "Voluntary Exit Program" package is an "insult to this province's health professionals," says HSAA President, Elisabeth Ballermann.

HSAA is likely to be very busy as the health care system looks as if it may go the way of the 90's, with massive lay-offs.

Members represented by HSAA and employed in the former Calgary Health Region filed a \$50M Class Action Lawsuit against TSSI on May 21, 2009, for years of being subjected to a litany of errors by TSSI in the administration of their payroll and benefits.

DynaLife_{DX} approached HSAA asking for union representation back in April 2008, and was legally certified as a bargaining unit by the Alberta Labour Relations Board in August of the same year. Negotiations with the employer commenced in January 2009. DynaLife_{DX} members overwhelmingly ratified their first tentative collective agreement on October 2, 2009, with 84% of the votes being in favor.

Alberta Health Services – provincial transition negotiations ongoing because of the change to one employer. HSAA is dealing with several stand alone employers. There is a huge wage difference to be negotiated as part of the roll over into one province wide employer.

HSAA LRC October 16-17, 2009 theme is DIVERSITY.

HSAA has a number of education workshops that are being held in Calgary, Edmonton and Lethbridge.

AFL Women's Committee is planning a fundraising brunch in Edmonton on December 6, 2009 to mark the 20th anniversary of the International Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women.

Alberta Council of Women's Shelters' web site has been launched, domestic violence policy has been developed and the tool kit is in final preparation stage.

Premier's address – 2 year wage freeze for public sector managers, asking all public sector employees to agree. Current HSAA position is that we are not interested.

HSABC/NUPGE

Sister Suzanne Bennett reported:

Background

The Health Sciences Association of BC represents more than 16,000 health care and community 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 platinum-level regional sponsorship of the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation's annual Run for the Cure.

Supporting social action groups

In past years 0.45% of the union's total budgeted revenue has been devoted to the union's Equality and Social Action Fund, overseen by the Committee on Equality and Social Action. At HSA's last annual general convention in April, delegates voted to increase the amount to 0.50% of the union's revenue.

Therefore, for 2009, the grant funding budget was increased to approximately \$59,000 – an increase of approximately \$8,000 from 2008.

The fund invites applicants from groups and individuals working to promote equality, social justice, and international solidarity. This year's recipients include the following organizations:

- Penticton & Area Women's Centre
- South Okanagan Victim Assistance Society
- "We Can" BC Campaign (We Can End All Violence Against Women)
- Big V Pictures (documentary about women in recovery in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside)
- West Coast Women's Legal Education and Action Fund
- BC Coalition of People with Disabilities
- Check Your Head: The Youth Global Education Network
- Co-Development Canada (one major project works with women in maquilas)
- Partners in the Horn of Africa (supporting women in their communities is a major focus)
- Sierra Club of Canada, BC Chapter
- Vancouver Co-op Radio (project to develop podcasts for specific programs, including feminist analysis)
- World Peace Forum Society
- The Global Youth Education Network Society
- Camp Jubilee
- Homelessness Connect
- Shelterbox
- Protein for People

Developing a network of activists

At the most recent HSA Board of Directors meeting (October 2009), the Board endorsed a recommendation from the union's Committee on Equality and Social Action to develop a way for members to become more active in their areas of interest in social change.

Now, members who self-identify as being interested in news or participation regarding action topics of interest can be marked in the union's database. Inclusive, self-identified

news and action groups of HSA members can be among the first for consideration for invitations, action packages (such as NUPGE's 20-postcard campaign on women's issues), breaking news, rallies, media/speaking opportunities, and other events.

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 the May 2009 provincial election, the union provided union leave for several HSA women to take on senior lead positions in election campaigns. In addition, HSA supported the campaign of a first-ever woman candidate/HSA member (for one of the two major provincial parties) who ran for office as a Member of the Legislative Assembly. Although that union member was not ultimately elected, she raised the profile of the union in almost every media interview and spoke out about the importance of women getting involved in electoral politics.

Also, 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.

Promoting women's health & awareness

In the area of women's health, HSA is a platinum-level regional 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 recently increased our participation to the regional 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 in 2008, 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's 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 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 debated 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. Delegates passed another resolution called 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.

Convention delegates also took part in a lunchtime panel about the health and social costs of poverty. Recognizing that women bear the brunt of poverty, four union women working in a range of areas – social work in urban long term care, support work for urban HIV positive women, social work in northern rural acute care, support work for older women – described the challenges and rewards of working with BC's most vulnerable. The fifth participant on the panel was Seth Klein, director of the BC office of the Centre for Policy Alternatives, who told delegates that poverty is not inevitable in BC. He invited delegates to take part in the CCPA's poverty reduction plan. (See yellow flagged article in *The Report* magazine July/Aug issue.)

HSA convention delegates also received in their kits information encouraging them (and other women) to participate in NUPGE's online women's survey. A link to this survey was 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 featured 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. (See green flagged articles in *The Report* magazine Jan/Feb issue.)

HSA supports women's equality through various other venues, including sponsorships. For example, the union sponsored the annual West Coast LEAF Association (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*.

BCGEU/NUPGE

Sister Colleen Jones reported:

The Provincial Executive Women’s Committee held its second Regional Women’s conference in October. The conference coincided with National Breast Cancer Awareness month and our conference focused on women’s health and wellness. It was very well attended and we actually had a waiting list of sisters wanting to participate in the conference.

This spring many of our members were involved in the Provincial Elections. I am sure that you have heard the Liberal party has been re-elected for its third term and we are just beginning the struggle of dealing with the layoffs and cut backs to funding that have happened due to the new Provincial budget that has been tabled.

Many of our components have seen layoffs and cutbacks to funding of programs. One of the issues that has created some interest is the report by the Provincial Government on Full day Kindergarten which found the concept of full-day kindergarten for four and five year olds to be very popular but also stated that there was no funding for the program at this time. Our members in the Ministry of Housing and Social Development are dealing with extreme caseload issues as the staff assigned to the income assistance program will see a 22% increase in caseload while full-time positions are cut by 70 full-time. Some issues have risen in the Children and Family Development Ministry. Child protection workloads have increased as well.

BCGEU, HEU and UFCW activists and staff worked together at the Canadian Federation of Nurses Union Conference this June to bring attention to its members the BCNU raid on LPN members. This union has been very vocal about not respecting solidarity and continuing on with the raid at any expense. We will continue to fight their raiding efforts.

At this time the Provincial Executive is very busy getting ready for our very first Regional Conference. This will be a totally new approach to reaching out to our members in different regions around the province. This concept came from our constitutional convention where members voted to do regional educational conferences rather than bi-annual policy conventions. The conference will be held in Kamloops.

We are also preparing for our Bargaining Conference which will be held at the end of November. This is where all of our public components and private sector components will get together and prioritize bargaining proposals for our bargaining session that begins in January of 2010. This is a very important bargaining session for us and we will be well prepared and ready to get the best contracts for our members.

GRANDMOTHERS TO GRANDMOTHERS CAMPAIGN
SPEAKER SUE COUSINEAU

Chair Hildahl introduced Sue Cousineau from the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign. Sue Cousineau is the past chair and founding member of the Grassroot Grannies, a local granny group formed in 2006. She was a member of the 2007 organizing committee for the Grandparents Solidarity March in Ottawa and in 2008 and again this year. Sue chairs a committee to organize the Granny Fest, a one-day workshop and market place conference of the Ottawa – Gatineau Regional Grandmothers Network, which is held every fall.

Sue was chosen by the Stephen Lewis Foundation (SLF) as one of 12 grandmothers to represent the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign on an educational trip to sub-Saharan Africa. Sue told the sisters about her two-and-a-half week to Africa – visiting projects in Uganda, South Africa and Swaziland for the International Women’s Day Grandmothers Rally and Celebration. The issues they were concerned with are poverty, gender inequality, government policies and HIV AIDS.

She talked about a Public Service Announcement by the Stephen Lewis Foundation in which it was reported there were 13 million orphans in Africa in 2007 and it is projected there will be 20 million orphans in Africa in 2010. There are 2.5 million children infected with HIV in South Africa.

Sue told the sisters about Swaziland, where polygamy was prevalent, and explained the class structure there. A king has 14 wives and each wife has her own palace. It is a striking contrast to the “padicake” housing most people live in with no toilet facilities. She spoke of one situation where 3 grandmothers were looking after 84 orphaned children.

Sue showed a fascinating video about her trip. She also had the sisters participate in a “question and answer game” involving pictures and stories she passed around. She pointed out an interesting website: www.stephenlewisfoundation.org/whatwedo.htm

The sisters were extremely enthused with Sue’s presentation. Sister Hildahl presented her with a \$500 cheque from NUPGE and the ACWI for the Grandmothers to Grandmothers campaign.

QUALITY OF WOMEN'S LIVES PROJECT

Sister Hildahl noted that a copy of the project overview was contained in the binder for the new sisters on the committee. As well, a copy of the NEB memo with announcement of the conference was also included.

The committee was directed to the highlights of the survey that were contained in the binder. These highlights will serve as the outline for the research document which will be launched at the Conference. Chair Hildahl drew attention to the logo which has been designed for the project.

A draft agenda was included in the binder. Sister Hildahl advised that the Conference will not have workshops but instead will have a panel and plenary. This gives participants an opportunity to interact collectively especially in the plenary rather than being divided into groups.

NUPGE members will not be charged a registration fee for the conference. Registration will be on the NUPGE website with Components registering their participants. There are 100 hotel rooms available to participants for \$139/night.

The ACWI will meet for a one-day briefing on Sunday, April 11th, before the start of the conference.

Two website stories were included in the binder relating to work/life balance. The first looks at the disturbing fact that girls at a very young age are doing more household chores than boys. The study conducted in the US found that kids are not only learning that girls do the housework, they are learning that is fair! It also found that the more parents stress about work/life balance, the more housework children do. The 2nd article is a news release from Trades Union Congress – UK (TUC) showing that work/life balance is the most requested equality issue with the TUC.

DECEMBER 6TH DAY OF ACTION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The CLC Women's Committee's December 6th (National Day to End Violence against Women) postcard campaign has been distributed to the sisters. The intention is to begin sending a postcard a day starting on November 16th. The CLC plans to launch the campaign on Monday, November 16 with cross-country press conferences featuring leaders of the labour movement, in alliance with spokeswomen from the anti-violence and women's movement. The CLC is also looking at producing a poster for December 6th which will incorporate the 20 postcards. If they proceed, NUPGE will order 100 copies for distribution.

The Alberta Council of Women's Shelters (ACWS) is developing a toolkit for businesses to train managers and staff how to address family violence in the workplace. This toolkit is funded by the Health Sciences Association of Alberta (HSAA). The Alberta Council of

Women's Shelters represents 42 emergency and second stage shelters for women and children fleeing violence and abuse across the province. Copies of the toolkit were distributed to the sisters, which were well received. Sister Burstyn provided an overview of the toolkits.

Sister Hildahl pointed out in the binders is a section of Statistics Canada's The Daily which provides an overview on family violence and shelters for abused women, as of 2007. It indicates that family violence accounted for about 23% of all police-reported violent crime in Canada in 2007. Of the nearly 75,800 incidents of police-reported family violence 53% were perpetrated by a current or former spouse or common-law partner. The sisters discussed how domestic violence affects the workplace and how it is important to raise awareness.

THE GIRL EFFECT

The sisters were shown a dynamic video, www.girleffect.org which gave a strong message about eliminating poverty and suffering.

CLC WOMEN'S COMMITTEE

Chair Hildahl provided a verbal report of the CLC National Women's Committee Meeting she attended on September 22nd & 23rd, 2009.

Women and Pensions

Darcie Beggs from CUPE did a presentation on the Pension Checklist for Equality-Seeking Groups Workplace Pension Plans. The following are some of the findings:

- Part-time workers were less likely to participate in a pension plan (less than 50% part-time versus more than 85% full-time workers).
- For those who did not have a pension plan, 100% were women.
- Most pension plans were structured wherein pension plan members must go through their employer for information, questions or to change the plan. This can be a problem for equity-seeking groups, i.e. an LGBT member who is applying for same sex benefits would have to "out" themselves to their employer in order to get benefits.

Women and Federal Elections

CLC is updating the fact sheets they created for the last federal election. As well, they are looking at producing a YouTube clip.

Women and the Economy – CLC Fall Campaign & Women’s EI & Pensions

The proposed changes by the Conservative government to the EI program will affect one out of six full-time workers. Statistics reveal that more women than men are working. (However, the statistics are based on the fact that if you work one hour a week you are considered working.)

December 6, 2009 Campaign

Ninety thousand postcards have been ordered by CLC affiliates. Additional sets of cards will be \$1.00 per set. The CLC women’s committee is hoping to distribute the cards to community women’s organizations and transition houses as well. The CLC will also have electronic versions of the postcards on their website. The target date for the launch of the campaign is November 16th. The CLC is also exploring the idea of creating a poster which would show the 20 postcards in a collage – if they proceed, the delivery date for the poster will possibly be in late October.

Women in Non-Traditional Occupations Project

The CLC is continuing work on the Women in Non-Traditional Occupations Project. Working with the Resources for Results and Work and Learning Knowledge Centre, the project is entitled “Promising Practices: Attracting and Retaining Women in Trades, Technology and Science Occupations”. A website has been completed and will be launched this fall. The intention is to have the website as a living document to provide information for women looking into non-traditional occupations and as a tool for employers to recruit women into these occupations.

ILO International Standards and Gender Equality

The CLC International Department and the Women’s Human Rights Department did a workshop on ILO instruments on Gender Equality: Implications for trade unionists in Canada. The workshop provided an overview of what the International Labour Organization is and how it is structured. As well, it provided an overview of Conventions that have been ratified by Canada and more notably the ones Canada has not ratified. As well, discussions were held regarding how trade unions can campaign to promote awareness and more effective use of international labour standards.

INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS

Sisters in Spirit

Sister Hildahl directed the committee to the National Union website story on the Sisters in Spirit Vigil which is held annually in October. This year there were 72 communities that hosted Vigils; in 2006 there were only 11. This year’s Vigil included a joint statement calling for a national action plan on the issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls.

Also contained in the binders was a news story on two Manitoba MPs' statements at an Amnesty symposium on the subject. The Minister for the Status of Women, Helena Guergis, stated at the symposium that she is prepared to keep the funding for the initiative alive. Liberal MP Neville stated she isn't sure that Guergis' actions demonstrate she truly understands or cares about the issue as Guergis breezed in for a 20-minute cameo appearance rather than staying for the panel discussion.

Sister Beverly Jacobs did not re-offer as the president of the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC). Jeannette Corbiere-Lavell was elected as the new president.

When attempting to obtain ordering information on Sisters in Spirit pins, Chair Hildahl found out that NWAC is no longer selling any of the fund raising material for the Sisters in Spirit Initiative. They are, however, looking at selling the material to raise funds for the victims' families.

Masai Campaign

An update from the Masai Campaign and the Bracelet of Hope Campaign was contained in the binders. In September, Anne-Marie Zajdlik, Andy MacDougall, the Mayor of Waterloo, and a Guelph Mercury journalist were in Lesotho for three weeks. The Tsepong Clinic is still treating 120 patients a day. The country's population has slipped from 2.2 million to under 2 million in the last five years. Life expectancy has been lowered to just over 40 for males and just under 40 for females. Funding beyond 2010 is a key challenge as the Change Foundation's funding drops off significantly.

In response to this need for funding, NUPGE is launching a "Fill your Christmas stocking with hope" campaign. We will post a website story beginning on November 1st encouraging Canadians to purchase a Bracelet of Hope as a stocking stuffer. NUPGE is encouraging its Components to link to the story and hopes that the sisters will take this back to their own women's committee to promote. The bracelets can be purchased from NUPGE for \$5.00 each. Orders can be sent to Sister Hildahl. Sister Hildahl will check into the gift cards to accompany the red and white bracelets which explain the significance of the bracelets.

An interview with Anne-Marie Zajdlik was included in the binders. The interview provides a background on how the campaign began and how the Masai Centre got its name.

TWCAA Micro Lending Program for Women

Included in the binders were two reports from TWCAA on the Micro Lending Program – dated April and October. As of September 2009, there were 404 regular members in the Micro Lending Program for women and 131 members with active loans.

Casa de la Mujer House of the Woman of the Union

NUPGE has not received an update from the House of the Woman. We believe this is due to the ongoing upheaval within the country.

WOMEN AND THE ECONOMIC CRISIS

Included in the binders was Canada's section from Social Watch's Report 2009 – Making Finances Work: People First. This document includes 60 reports from civil society organizations around the world that show that the only way out of the current ecological and economic crisis is to invest in people.

Included in the binders was the recently released Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) report "Women's Poverty and the Recession".

Among the study's findings:

- Women raising children on their own are almost five times more likely to be poor than two-parent families with children.
- The poverty rate of older women on their own is almost 13 times higher than seniors living in families.
- Women who work full-time, year round earn only 71 cents for every dollar earned by men.
- About 40% of employed women work in precarious jobs that are generally poorly paid with little or no job security and no benefits such as pensions.
- Only 39% of unemployed women compared with 45% of unemployed men are receiving EI benefits.
- Women account for 60% of minimum wage workers, but minimum wages in all provinces are less than \$10 an hour.

The study is critical of recent federal government policies that have helped contribute to women's poverty. A key objective of policies to deal with the recession must surely be to protect those who are most vulnerable. That's why the issue of women's equality must be put back on the policy agenda. We can't use the current economic recession as an excuse to postpone taking action on the continuing poverty in which many women find themselves.

The Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) is an international, multi-generational, feminist, creative, future-orientated membership organization committed to achieving gender equality, sustainable development and women's human rights. The AWID has launched a special area of their website which provides the latest information

on the current global crisis from a women's rights perspective. It is a great resource for information.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE

Contained in the binders was National Union website story regarding a report that was released confirming that child care provides one of the largest boosts to economic activity of any sector.

Chair Hildahl provided a verbal report on the Child Care Human Resources Sector Council (CCHRSC) which was provided by Stephanie Seaman who represents NUPGE on the Sector Council. Also contained in the binder was the CCHRSC Annual Report 2008-2009 as well as Executive Summaries of 3 CCHRSC documents: Literature Review of Socioeconomic Effects, Estimates of Workforce Shortages and Recruitment and Retention Challenges and Strategies.

The Childcare Resource and Research Unit released its 8th edition of Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada (2008). The quick facts from the trends and analysis 2008 were included in the binder. Chair Hildahl advised the sisters to let her know if they required the complete report.

FYI

World March of Women (WMW)

As noted at the March meeting, 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 March meeting it was noted that there is no discussion of activities within English speaking Canada. There was very limited discussion of the March at the September CLC meeting.

Included in the binder was the WMW July 2009 newsletter. On page 6 is a section on Quebec's planned actions for 2010 International Action. Quebec is planning regional marches from the 12th to the 17th with all groups meeting in Rimouski for a national meeting on Oct. 17th. They are working on a possible solidarity-dress project.

Also included in the binders was the WMW October 2009 newsletter which contains more details on the 2010 International Action.

The WMW has created four action areas: violence against women, peace and demilitarization, women's work and the common good and public services. The idea is that the text can be adapted to regional and national levels in accordance with local realities and contexts. The text of the four action areas is included in the binder. Of note in the women's economic autonomy is that it speaks to the struggle of women globally to balance care giving responsibilities with their availability to work.

An important message of the Violence against Women action is the stressing that actions are needed to prevent and inhibit acts of violence before they occur. They also stress the need for financial support of women's movements that are at the forefront of supporting survivors of discrimination, abuse and violence.

United Nations Creation of Agency for Women

In September, the UN adopted a resolution to create a separate powerful body to deal exclusively with gender-related activities. The resolution strongly supports the consolidation of the four bodies currently dealing with women into a composite entity. Included in the binders was a press release announcing the new women's agency.

Also included in the binders was a document entitled "Women's Rights and Gender at the United Nations: The Case for a New Gender Equality Architecture". This provides a good overview for the reasons that a separate women's agency needs to be created and provides descriptions of the four existing bodies that currently deal with women's issues.

Rise in HIV-positive cases in Saskatchewan

In March, information was contained in the committee meeting binders regarding 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, is saying that she would not be surprised if 200–300 new infections are found by the end of 2009. The strain of HIV seems to be more virulent and is not responding well to treatment.

The binder contained two follow up news releases regarding an increase in HIV within the Aboriginal population. The first news article reports on the fact that the NWT is concerned about the alarming increase of HIV within the Saskatchewan Aboriginal community. Across Canada, Aboriginals compose just over 3% of the population but account for 25% of the new HIV cases – as reported in 2006 by Public Health Canada. The second news item is from Prince Albert, SK, where the medical officer for the region is drawing a comparison between Canadian native reserves and areas of Sub-Saharan Africa and is warning that HIV could kill up to 30% (approximately 42,500 people) of the province's Aboriginal population over the next five to 10 years. Stephen Lewis is quoted in the story: "It's just inexcusable that Aboriginal babies should be born HIV-positive when it's not necessary". The story notes that the issue is not exclusive to Saskatchewan, and the disease is spreading, mostly among youth in every province who are moving into the cities from their rural communities.

In 2007, the federal government began cutting funding for the fight against AIDS by a total of 30% in the last two years.

Getting the Balance Right in National Parliaments

This document was produced by the Women's Environment & Development Organization (WEDO) and is part of their 50/50 campaign. It notes that the type of electoral system, used in combination with a quota system of female representation, is the most reliable predictor that a country will have a higher than average number of women in parliament. Currently, women's representation in parliaments globally is 18.2% which is the highest it has ever been.

Two Upcoming Conferences in Canada in 2011

All Our Sisters National Conference on Women and Homelessness

National Conference on Women and Homelessness to be held May 9-12, 2011 at the Convention Center, London, Ontario. The conference will be co-hosted by WMHAARC, My Sisters' Place and WOTCH.

Women's Worlds 2011 - Inclusions, Exclusions, and Seclusions: Living in a Globalized World

This conference is an international conference being held in Ottawa/Gatineau and is the largest women's conference in Canadian history. The date for the conference is July 3-7, 2011. An overview of the conference was provided in the binders.

OTHER BUSINESS

The next posters in the NUPGE series of equality posters after the October Women's History month is UN International Day for Disabled People, December 3rd and UN Human Rights Day December 10th. Also of note is the fact that NUPGE Women's History Month was posted on a website entitled "heroines.ca" which is a guide to women in Canadian history – www.heroines.ca.

Sister Hildahl asked the sisters to let her know if they required any copies of documents that were referred to in the meeting. She passed around the postcards from the Equal Opportunity for Women Agency of the Australian government.

NEXT MEETING

It was decided that the next meeting of the ACWI will be a one-day briefing which will take place on April 11, 2009, before the Women's Conference.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 12:25 p.m.