

JUSTICE

◆ Are women under-represented in leadership positions in the union?

If you answered yes to one or more of these questions, your women's committee could be an effective way to reach your goals.

When you think about a women's committee:

**Think about SOLIDARITY:** celebrating diversity among women and supporting women by linking them to each other, to the union and to the community. Women speaking for women with a strong, common voice advocating policies that promote women's rights.

**Think about EMPOWERMENT:** empowering women with the knowledge and skills they need to reach their full potential as leaders and activists.

**Think about RECOGNITION:** highlighting inequalities and injustices experienced by women thus giving recognition and credibility to women's rights as an important concern of the union.

**Think about SISTERHOOD:** enabling working women to identify with unique political, economic and workplace issues that affect them and organize for change through their union.

**Think about BARGAINING:** advancing equality by providing a vehicle for women to put forward collective bargaining issues that may not be considered conventional workplace issues. Shifting the boundaries of what constitutes a legitimate union issue, changing what is seen to be relevant to the workplace.

**Think about DEMOCRACY:** working towards the creation of a different form of union democracy based on full and direct participation of all members rather than simply by representation.

**Think about LEADERSHIP:** promoting women in leadership within unions makes unions stronger!

FARNESSE



SISTERHOOD IS A POWERFUL THING  
Why every union needs an active women's committee.

## What's it all about?

### Equality-Solidarity-Justice-Fairness

These principles are the guiding stars of our union and our movement. They represent our collective history and our collective purpose. They give us a sense of common identity and common action.

But there's also a more universal aspiration at the centre of our principles: the realization of individual potential; empowering people to develop their potential to the fullest.

In short, our principles are about the power of all contributing to the good of each: a strong union, acting positively as a community, empowering individuals and the development of their potential.

As individuals, a union and a movement, our shared principles mean that we are connected by a simple and powerful hope: to do better and to be better.

Honouring our principles, fostering this hope and strengthening the connection between all of us was the driving force behind the National Union's decision to change our constitution and mandate the creation of a women's committee.

We knew we could do better and we did. We knew we could be better and we are.

That's because women's committees are our principles made real. There are two things at the heart of what a women's committee does: empower individual women on a practical level while building solidarity and a stronger union – helping us grow as individuals and as a collective. Women's committees confirm that women's issues are union issues and union issues are women's issues.

A women's committee is about:

- ◆ strengthening a union's capacity to organize and grow; increasing a union's collective power to resist economic and political changes which hurt all of its members;



- ◆ enabling women to exercise in full their energy and intelligence, wisdom and skill; making it possible for women to give to their union the gift of their energy, their ideas and their talents;

- ◆ creating space for women to share their experiences, support each other in their activism, mobilize on equality issues and take action on union priorities to the benefit of all its members; and

- ◆ spreading the word, sister to sister; women speaking out for themselves and against the entrenched interests that hold them back, saying what they mean, what they stand by, what they stand for;

- ◆ providing an avenue for women to mentor and be mentored as they develop their leadership skills.

By supporting active women's committees we are adding the work of our hands to the inheritance of our union's pioneers – and leaving this union and movement greater than we found it.

That's what it's all about.

### Is a women's committee important?

Here are some questions to consider:

- ◆ Do you want to mobilize more women to be active in the union and take action on union priorities?

- ◆ Do you want to reach out to women and work with them to advance equality?

- ◆ Are you trying to increase union membership among women workers? Are you planning organizing drives where many of the workers are women?

- ◆ Do you want to build alliances and coalitions across unions and with social movements?

- ◆ Are there particular issues, such as pay equity or sexual harassment, in which women members want the union to be more involved?

