

Women's Committee Report

June 5, 2018

Women's Committee members are:

Mary Ann, Harrison (Chair) – PSGE
Theresa, Evans – Health
Sherry, Sproule - R&R
Muna, De Ciman – PSGE

Jacqueline, Currah - Crown
Lynne, Guick - CSS
Tanya, Turner - Education
Marie, Amor - SGEU Staff

Bread and Roses Recipients for 2018 were:

Maleyamu Dukuly, Community Service
Michele Kozak, Crown
Teresa Wale, Education
Bente Sabiston, Public Service

Jocelyn Hargreaves, Crown
Debbie Zawada-Wiebe, Education
Angela Andersen, Health
Deborah Mooney, Public Service

The Women's Committee raised \$1,526.50 for the Saskatoon Interval House at the SGEU 2018 Convention by taking donations at the Women's lunch, passing the hat and the purchase by delegates of the roses for the Silent Witness Tribute.

We held our Women's Conference on May 9 and 10, 2018 in the Regina SGEU office. At our Conference we had very knowledgeable presenters. Our training session on Domestic Violence and the workplace, given by Brenda Beaudry, was so educational and gave the delegates tools to help fellow workers who are victims or family of victims dealing with domestic violence. We held a Reconciliation Walk around a lake that is close to the SGEU office, led by Norma-Jean Bird, Elder. During that walk we took the petals, collected from the Roses from the Silent Witness Tribute at Convention, and be spread in the water. Our evening ended with the Women's Dinner, our very special speaker, Sister Barb Byers, reminded us or how far we have come and how we need to keep up the pressure to have women truly equal in the workplace. There were other very interesting topics giving us tools for relieving pressure and topics for discussion around where to go from here. All around the conference give the women a voice within SGEU and tools to help them become better advocates and hopefully inspiration to become future leaders within SGEU.

SGEU Women's Committee is hoping to revive the Silent Witness Project. This projected should be used at more SGEU functions (AGMs, BGMs, Conferences, etc). Saskatchewan has one of the highest rates of spousal homicides among Canadian provinces. The abuser is typically the partner or ex-partner or an acquaintance who is trying to have a relationship with the woman. The abuse can be physical, sexual, emotional or financial in nature. Sadly, only 28 per cent of spouses report cases of family violence and a woman will be abused an average of 30 times before contacting the police. The Silent Witness brings awareness and is a reminder to women who suffer from domestic violence that they have a voice and that SGEU is here to help our members be heard and safe. The traveling exhibit of life-sized wooden silhouettes are made in honor of victimized women. SGEU's Women's Committee would like people

organizing meetings or functions to be aware that the committee would will be available to do a 15 minute presentation and hold a vigil (much like the one at convention) if they send in a request.

Provincially

SFL Prairie School for Union Women is being held the week of June 10th, 2018. This years training topics include:

- Union Women on Turtle Island
- Domestic Violence in the Workplace: Starting the Conversation
- Women Speaking Up
- Igniting the Spark: Women as Leaders
- First Steps – Union Basics for Women
- Becoming an Ally for Equality
- Health and Safety Activism & Your Mental and Physical Health
- Building Confidence and Celebrating Who You Are
- A Journey to Empower Union Women

Nationally

The B.C. Government and Service Employees' Union (BCGEU/NUPGE) applauds the provincial government's announcement that it will build 1,500 new supportive housing units throughout the province for women and children fleeing violence. Over the next 10 years, the government will invest \$734 million to build this much-needed housing, which includes transition houses, safe homes, second-stage and long-term housing.

PEIUPSE was pleased that after 3 years of lobbying the government a private members bill was unanimously endorsed. The private members bill, introduced by Steven Myers, MLA, amends the *Employment Standards Act* to include 3 paid and 7 unpaid days leave for Islanders who are experiencing domestic violence, intimate partner violence, or sexual violence in their personal relationships.

Canada Celebrate Equality Day! The 33rd anniversary of the Charter's equality provisions. On April 17, 2018, the National Union of Public and General Employees joined allies across Canada to celebrate the 36th anniversary of the coming into force of the equality provisions of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Charter is one of Canada's most important legal documents and has profoundly transformed human rights in Canada over the past generation. The Charter was signed 36 years ago, but implementation of Section 15 on equality rights was delayed for 3 years because federal, provincial and territorial governments needed to amend their own laws to include equality provisions.

Unfortunately, it seems to take a long time for society to catch up to laws that are adopted. Decades after this great breakthrough, Canadian women still face major income inequality. Research shows there is a growing gap between the rich and the

poor in Canada. A top priority of future government budgets must be to reduce income inequality for everyone, but especially for women.

There is still much work that needs to be done, but until the Charter was adopted, human rights were narrow and minor. They were protected by the Canadian Bill of Rights (1960), but not taken too seriously because they were not written into the Constitution. Having the Charter gives us a framework to make the changes that are needed and inspires us to continue to press forward.

I was elected as the Chair of the Women's Committee on April 8th, 2018 and look forward to working with our committee to follow our mandate.

In solidarity,
Mary Ann Harrison, Chair