



ONTARIO COUNCIL

Dates & Data

Ontario Council Newsletter

March 2006 (Electronic)

Vol IV, Issue 7

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The morning session of the March 4th CFUW/Ontario Council Standing Committee meetings could have been named “Are we all our children’s keepers?” Thank you to Marianne Singh-Waraich, Education Committee Chair, for organizing the morning program on *Safe Schools and High School Drop-out Rates*

Connect the dots: social determinants for health, for education and success: violence, adults in poverty, family poverty, child poverty, high school dropout rates, youth poverty, youth homelessness, gangs, crime, drugs, unemployment, start again at the beginning for the next generation. Our energetic morning speakers, Liz Sandals MPP and Selwyn Pieters, lawyer, both made the convincing case that education provides the way out of that vicious destructive circle. Not necessarily the one size fits all academic education model, but rather one that includes various types of practical and applied skills training to ready youths for life, in a safe supporting school environment. (see report in this issue)

CFUW National Status of Women & Human Rights Chair, Margaret McGovern offered strong arguments that can be used together with our CFUW policy in support of child care and early learning. In an article in the March 13th *Globe and Mail*, Jim Stanford, a CAW economist compares the child care battle to the Olympic contest where Canadian women fought to win gold. Stanford says “women must step up to the podium with their passion and their activism”. The battle is not pitting stay at home moms against working mothers. The objective is to win childcare and early learning programs for both. The \$100 per month offered to a family by the new federal government cannot replace the funds for the comprehensive childcare programs agreed to by the previous government and the provinces. Because the federal surplus allows it, Stanford suggests that we “could have our daycare cake – and eat it too”. For CFUW, child care and early learning is not cake, a fancy dessert, rather it is bread, plain everyday bread, needed to sustain today’s young families, particularly the ones that need two pay cheques to survive.

Stanford goes on: “The lifetime potential of our children, the productivity of the economy, and the quality of fathers’ lives will all suffer if this program slips through our grasp” and then the writer ends with “But women have the most to lose.... If women can win this one – for our kids today, and our kids still to be born - they’ll deserve much more than a gold medal.” Right.- Wait a minute! Why should it be the task of women alone to win a childcare and early learning program? Don’t fathers fight for their children’s education and good care? Then again, Stanford has a point, we better speak up on this, maybe not for the “quality of fathers’ lives” but for our daughters and granddaughters and their children.

We are fast approaching the end of the current CFUW/Ontario Council year. Thank you for coming out to our September, January and March Standing Committee Meetings at the Toronto Club House in such great numbers. Your input from across the province and your discussions have helped us formulate our CFUW/Ontario Council action.

It took the steady efforts of several people to organize the three meetings: Chairs Sabina Auburger, Legislation, Joan Dunn, Status of Women & Human Rights and Marianne Singh-Waraich have done their very best to make your travel to Toronto worthwhile with a good and meaningful program in their area of

Dates & Data - Also available on www.cfuwontcouncil.ca

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advocacy. Ann McElhinney, Communications, made sure that you were informed of the upcoming events via newsletter and website. Marjorie Melick, Treasurer, and Jane Wandell, Secretary, registered and welcomed the usual crowd of 100 members (or more), Peggy Pinkerton has performed as our excellent roving reporter. The Toronto Club House with Jean Kormos and staff have provided a home like atmosphere for our meetings. We thank them all most heartily.

I look forward to seeing you on May 12th and 13th in Burlington at the CFUW/Ontario Council AGM. It definitely will be spring then. Let's celebrate the lives of girls and women.

Edeltraud Neal

THANK YOU!

Put a Toonie in the Tub

Our lunchtime pass-around of the tub netted \$153.00 which has been donated to the CFUW International Women's Day Project, that will help women with AIDS in Africa via the Stephen Lewis Foundation. Many of our members have also donated in their Club tub collections. Thank you for your contribution.

LHIN Display

Thank you to Sabina Auburger, Legislation Chair, who installed a great, attractive display showing the 14 Local Health Integration Network Regions and where each Club fits in. If you missed it or were not able to be at the March 4th meeting, do contact Sabina for her tailor-made material for your Club and your LHIN Region.

MARCH 4TH, 2006 JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING SPEAKERS



Selwyn Pieters is a lawyer, specializing in education issues, working with parents and students in areas of human rights, safe schools, expulsions and suspensions. He also has an interest in refugee issues, and is a member of many professional and community associations.



Liz Sandals, MPP for Guelph-Wellington and parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, is a former chair of her local school board and Ontario representative on the Canadian School Boards Association.

At the joint morning session, two speakers addressed the related issues of the high school drop-out rate and the Ontario Safe Schools Act. Both speakers have serious issues with the Act, and feel it exacerbates the dropout problem.

The Safe Schools Act was introduced in 2000 to impose a Zero Tolerance policy in Ontario schools. It established province-wide standards that removed any degree of flexibility or individual school autonomy in matters of discipline: students must be suspended or expelled for behaviour that can be seen to threaten others. (Suspensions can be appealed to the school trustees, but by the time the appeal reaches them, the suspension is usually over.) Rates of suspensions rose 34% from 1999 to 2004; rates of expulsion rose 1700% in the same period.

Mr. Pieters is dead-set against the Act, and feels it should be repealed. He sees the policy as being unfair to disadvantaged and marginalized students, including immigrants, Blacks, and students with disabilities, especially learning disabilities, whose other problems may exacerbate their school behaviour and lead them into trouble. As these students' hope for any kind of future rests with their acquiring an education, it is seen as beneficial to keep them in school: removing them, even temporarily, leads to their dropping out altogether, a trend that he connects with street violence.

Liz Sandals is the only politician on the Safe Schools Action Team, appointed by Education Minister Gerard Kennedy to address safety in schools and review the Safe Schools Act. She claims the Safe Schools Act is the "worst communicated Act ever", and that attention focused on the zero tolerance aspect ignores the fact that extenuating circumstances may be taken into account in considering suspension or expulsion. Furthermore, the Act deals with other problems, particularly bullying, which can lead to students dropping out, and offers Boards of Education methods of combating them. She acknowledges difficulties:

- Boards, faced under the Act with the necessity to expel a student, may use "limited" expulsion, which does not require referral to another program, rather than "permanent" expulsion, which requires referral to an alternative;
- Police must be notified if the offence is potentially criminal: if student not charged, he may think his behaviour is acceptable.

Ms. Sandals agreed with Mr. Pieters that the drop-out rate has increased since the Act was introduced, but blamed other factors, notably the new curriculum. She pointed to the *Learning to 18 Program*, which keeps kids "learning", not necessarily in school, and the need to increase access to apprenticeship programs and other alternative routes to graduation.

Marianne Singh-Waraich, OC Education Chair, reminded us that CFUW has made a submission on the *Safe Schools Act*: it agrees with the broad principles of the act, especially the sections against bullying, as long as all children continue to receive appropriate quality education and/or treatment of their problems..

Peggy Pinkerton

LEGISLATION COMMITTEE REPORT

Sabina Auburger, chair

The Legislation Standing Committee afternoon meeting was attended by 29 members from 25 Clubs and featured presentations on two upcoming resolutions: one by Linda Hall and Judy Lee, of CFUW Hamilton, on the Ontario Council proposed resolution: *Income Equality for Ontario's Children*; and one by Susan Pruyt of CFUW St. Catharines on the Draft Resolution: *Homeless Youth*.

CFUW HAMILTON's proposed resolution aims to rectify what is seen as unfair treatment to Ontario families on Social Assistance. In 1998, the Federal Government introduced a child benefit for children under 18 to assist poor families. Provinces and Territories were permitted to "claw back" the amount of the benefit from certain direct social assistance payments (notably Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Plan), and use the funds for social programs. Ontario is one of only two provinces that has elected to take advantage of the claw back: it uses 80% to fund programs for children; 20% goes to municipalities for their own programs. Since many low-income families cannot benefit from these programs, it is seen as unfair that they should subsidize them. Linda Hall provided statistics and studies to show how low-income

families would be better off receiving the money directly. Premier McGuinty promised, during his election campaign, to end the claw back, but has delayed doing so pending a review. CFUW Hamilton is calling for an immediate end to the claw back, and urges other clubs to join in lobbying to this end.

Susan Pruyne described the process by which **CFUW St. Catharines** members moved from a general interest in homelessness in their community to their targeting homeless youth. After meeting with their mayor and regional council they connected with a group interested in youth poverty. *Resource Action for Teens* (RAFT), and worked to support and promote that group. It in turn gave assistance in formulating their resolution. They distinguish between “absolute homelessness”, in which young people live on the street or in hostels, and “relative homelessness”, which sees them “couch surfing” in friends’ houses. Both are harmful, and lead to rootlessness and social disengagement. The causes of youth homelessness are poverty, lack of family ties, family violence (47% are abused). The effects are devastating: for the young people, drugs, violence, a tendency to drop out of school, lack of job readiness, crime, pregnancy, declining health; for society, a group dependent on services, with high health and incarceration costs. What is needed is stable funding for housing and support services. The resolution calls on all levels of government to respond.

The meeting ended with the committee members being urged to monitor and investigate the Local Health Integration Network in their own backyard, in order that CFUW Ontario Council will be prepared to participate in the public review. The public review of the Local Health System Integration Act, 2006 is legislated to occur in 3 years

Peggy Pinkerton

EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT

Marianne Singh-Waraich, Chair

Twenty-two people attended the afternoon session representing the Clubs of Orangeville, Scarborough, North Toronto, Ottawa, Oakville, Etobicoke, Aurora-Newmarket, Kanata, North York, St Catharines, Leaside East York, Muskoka, Mississauga, London, Brantford, Milton, Hamilton, Burlington.

The Ottawa and London Clubs reported on their submission to the *Safe Schools Act Review*. All Clubs reported on their current concerns. Many still do not have an education group but have an issues group which deals with educational matters as well.

I handed out a copy of the Ontario Council submission to the *Safe Schools Act Review* and encouraged Clubs to continue to investigate local conditions both for measures to combat the local drop out rate and the way in which the *Safe Schools Act* is implemented since there are considerable differences from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. **[www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/healthy safe schools](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/healthy_safe_schools)**

We discussed the information from the morning session. Many were surprised to hear how much money Boards spend on litigation and expressed the wish for a more productive use of that money.

CFUW Muskoka alerted us their program called *Opening Doors*, which is a mentoring type program for G 7 and 8 girls. They are also working on bringing a satellite campus of Nipissing U to town. CFUW Leaside East York is lobbying on Early Childhood education as is UWC North York, while CFUW Milton is getting ready for its big booksale fundraiser. CFUW St. Catharines stresses the need for experienced teachers to teach all credit courses. CFUW Orangeville wants more sports programs to attract the non academic students. CFUW Scarborough likes the compulsory Physical Education class and advocates intramural sports as a non-competitive arena where all can participate. CFUW Kanata wants teachers to be inspiring so as to increase their effectiveness. Several Clubs are doing fundraising for scholarships.

I will email a package to all members that will help you lobby on Early Childhood education. It is a time sensitive question. A letter should be sent to MPs and MPPs as soon as possible. The package will contain policy and a sample letter.

This will be my last report since I will be joining the National Board this summer as National Director of Education. I urge all of you interested to speak to the new President of Ontario Council if you are interested in taking on the provincial directorship. You will find it an enriching experience. Ontario Council works well together and makes an active contribution to the community that is the province of Ontario.

STATUS OF WOMEN AND HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE REPORT

Joan Dunn, Chair

There were 30 members in attendance with representatives from the following Clubs: Toronto, Leaside/East York, Oshawa, Northumberland, Etobicoke, St. Catharines, Burlington, Perth, Oakville, Niagara Falls, North York, Aurora/Newmarket, Orillia, Brantford, Stratford, Scarborough, North Toronto, Mississauga, Muskoka, Sudbury.

Annual Evaluation and Survey

Members completed an evaluation/survey to identify issues of major concern, and comments on what works and what would make the meetings better (both morning and afternoon sessions).

The top issues in order of number of times identified:

1. Violence against women
2. Women in politics/elected office
3. Early childhood education/child care
4. Poverty, Housing, Health Care ranked equally as 4th

The other issue that was mentioned by several members (5) was to not spend so much time on round-table discussion of what clubs are doing, and an equal number indicated that that is of great value and learning for them.

In terms of the format of meetings, members who commented, said they like the morning sessions, which give everyone an in-depth look at a topic which is helpful in taking issues back to their clubs. Afternoon meetings, it was suggested, were too short. More time for dialogue and discussion on the topic presented would be useful. Finally, worth noting, five members suggested a better, larger and more comfortable venue would improve the meetings for them.

Violence Against Women Project

Andrea Levan, Regional Director Ontario North, gave an update and clarification of the project that the Status of Women and Human Rights is undertaking, through Clubs at the local level.

We also heard updates from Leaside/East York, Oakville, Ajax/Pickering and North Toronto on their progress on conducting the study. There were several helpful suggestions eg: using e-mail and telephone to conduct the interviews rather than face-to-face meetings.

Campaign School

Darla Campbell announced the launch of *Equal Voice's* on-line campaign school called *Getting to the Gate*. The website is www.gettingtothegate.com. The training is available in both English and French. There is no cost for the training, just the requirement to register. As a member of the Advisory Committee for this project, Darla submitted her speech from the CFUW Ontario Council Standing Committee presentation in September 2004 to the project and she is quoted in the training material! Please encourage any members and friends who could be interest in seeking public office to participate in the on-line training. With the Ontario municipal elections this fall, and provincial election in October 2007, there are lots of opportunities for more women to be elected!

ELECTION REMINDER

Elizabeth Haynes, RD Ontario South and Linda MacGregor, RD Ontario Central have announced their candidacy for the position of CFUW Vice-President Ontario on the CFUW Board. The winning candidate will be President, CFUW Ontario Council. Ballots must be received by the CFUW Returning Officer by **April 13th, 2006** in Richmond BC. Note: Regular mail may take up to 10 days.

ONTARIO COUNCIL RESOLUTION SCHEDULE 2006

- MARCH 11, 2006** Amendments to Proposed Resolution received by Resolutions Committee Chair
- A.S.A.P.** Final version of Proposed Resolution e-mailed to all Clubs by the Regional Directors.
- MARCH 31, 2006** Final version of proposed Resolution mailed to all Clubs with Dates & Data

ONTARIO COUNCIL RESOLUTION SCHEDULE 2007

- OCTOBER 14, 2006** Notice of Intent to Submit a Resolution, Including the draft resolved clauses, received by the Resolutions Committee Chair, the Club's Regional Director, the relevant Standing Committee Chair and the President of CFUW/OC.
- NOVEMBER 18, 2006** Proposed Resolutions received by the Resolutions Committee Chair.

The Resolutions Committee Chair may be contacted at cfuwontario@yahoo.com

ADVOCACY AWARDS

Check the criteria and document what you have done. The winner in each category (relating to Club size) wins one registration to the 2007 Ontario Council AGM in Peterborough.

For more information contact your Regional Director or the Advocacy Committee at tcshaw@cogeco.ca

PLAN TO ATTEND

CFUW Ontario Council AGM 2006
Celebrating Lives of Girls and Women

May 12th and 13th 2006

Hosted by CFUW Burlington

www.cfuwontcouncil.ca

For
More Information &
Registration Form