

CANADIAN FEDERATION OF UNIVERSITY WOMEN

ONTARIO COUNCIL

DATES & DATA

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Standing Committee Reports
Water Report

September 27th, 2008

CFUW ONTARIO COUNCIL STANDING COMMITTEES

Ninety members from Clubs in every region of Ontario met at on September 27th, 2008

at Yorkminster Park Baptist Church, 1585 Yonge Street, Toronto

Joint Morning Session

The joint morning session was organized by the chair of the Status of Women & Human Rights Committee.

CFUW Ontario Council Violence Against Women Survey

Judie Arrowood, Leaside-East York, chair of the Ontario Council Stop Violence Against Women Sub- Committee, introduced the Report of the CFUW Ontario Council Violence Against Women Survey which was initiated by former RD North Andrea Levan, Sudbury, and undertaken by eleven Ontario CFUW Clubs. All together these Clubs surveyed more than 30 agencies that deal with victims of violence. We cannot reproduce the whole report here, it is available on the CFUW Ontario Council website www.cfuwontcouncil.ca . We quote, however, the report's recommendations from the front-line workers to CFUW members:

How can CFUW help?

The vast majority of answers to this question fall under one or both of the following headings: lobbying/advocacy and increased public awareness. Two individual responses summarize these concerns particularly aptly:

"Advocate, advocate, advocate. Lobby parliament for changes. Be in the news. Hold a rally. Create a ruckus."

and

"Lobby, lobby, lobby. Educate, inform, train. Bring this issue to everyone you can. We need this issue to create a tipping point – a solid universal response that deems any violence against women and children as unacceptable and intolerable."

In addition to the nearly universal calls for lobbying/advocacy and increased public awareness, there were a number of more specific things that respondents thought groups like CFUW can do around violence against

women. These are listed here in no particular order.

- Recognize the violence as it is! - not domestic or family abuse.
- Don't put the victim in more danger. She is the expert on her safety.
- Work closely with each county's domestic violence group throughout Ontario and the country.
- Connect with teenagers regarding violence.
- Publicize the need for corrective change (better lighting, emergency signals, video monitoring) to ensure safety in public areas.
- Letter writing.
- Sharing information from front-line practitioners.
- Have guest speakers on the topic of violence.
- Be accessible to isolated women: get on line; have toll-free numbers; have directories of lawyers who specialize in family law involving abuse.
- Be interested, be thoughtful, be current, be knowledgeable.
- Practical help - e.g. providing clothing for women having job interviews; donating items needed for women setting up housekeeping away from an abuser; volunteering; serving as a board member.

We commend and thank all the volunteers from the following Clubs who inquired for us about the reality of violence against women in their community: Barrie, Leaside-East York, Muskoka, Nepean, North Toronto, Oakville, Orangeville, Orillia, Ottawa, Perth & District, Stratford. We also thank Pamela Scott, M.A., CFUW Leaside-East York and A. John Arrowood, Professor Emeritus University of Toronto for compiling the report.

Morning Main Speaker: Pamela Cross

Theme: Religious Arbitration Revisited- Changes in Family Law – Family Law Education - Where do we go from here?

The world of family law can be an impenetrable jungle to women thrust into it in the midst of family breakdown, abusive relationships or child custody disputes. Our speaker described the role of family law in demystifying the law to women, particularly to women in crisis, who have no context to help them understand the system.

Pamela Cross is a feminist lawyer of vast experience working for women's equality locally and globally. She has been a consultant for several women's organizations, as well as executive director of NAWL (National Association of Women in the Law), legal director of METRAC (Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence against Women and Children) and director of Advocacy and Public Policy with the YWCA. She was named a YWCA Woman of Distinction.

A particular concern is legal education for women, and she discussed attempts to inform women of their legal rights and the remedies available to them. Women are often not aware that they have a right, for instance, to spousal and child support and property rights, and do not know the difference between marriage and common law relationships. (Common law confers no property rights.)

There can be several barriers to legal education: women in family court are often traumatized, vulnerable and lacking in self-confidence; they may be non-English speakers; if in a situation of geographic isolation, with infrequent courts, and limited access to lawyers, they may have to co-exist with an abusive spouse awaiting a hearing; in some patriarchal faiths women are not aware that their rights under the law are different from the strictures of the faith; legal information may be difficult to access, and may be unreliable, particularly from the internet.

Ms. Cross described education projects underway:

- Provincial government brochures, available in 14 languages
- Campaigns to inform Franco-Ontarien and aboriginal communities

- Luke's Place (Oshawa) provides legal information, court support, help with affidavits, motions, etc
- METRAC gives information and training to front-line workers
- Springtide Resources assesses workers dealing with women in crisis, offers training in family and immigration law and on-line course (with York U).
- Cleonet is a clearinghouse for information on law
- FLEW (Family Law Education for Women) (grew out of the campaign to halt religious arbitration in Ontario and is funded by over \$1 million from the province) has created specialized information for use by agencies helping isolated women.*

Despite these initiatives, there are still pitfalls that can trap women, and areas in which they need assistance:

- Domestic contracts: women can inadvertently sign away their property rights
- Restraining orders: should be made more enforceable
- The difference in rights between married and common law relationships should be eliminated.

*Note: CFUW /Ontario Council is part of the FLEW Project. The project is close to completion. We want to encourage Clubs to become involved with the legal education campaign. Look for us to contact you with specifics.

Report by Peggy Pinkerton, Etobicoke

STATUS OF WOMEN & HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE - Afternoon Session

Thirty-four members from 24 Clubs from Windsor to North Bay, to Ottawa attended this afternoon meeting.

Workplace Violence

Elizabeth Haynes, CFUW Windsor, presented ways to

- get involved in legislative process around Bill 29, a private member's Bill to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act to protect workers from harassment and violence in the workplace.
- take part in an Ontario Ministry of Labour consultation on Workplace Violence Prevention
- to complete a petition
- write a letter to MPPs, sample letter and all MPP addresses were supplied

CFUW has policy on the issue. The Windsor Club is particularly engaged as its community experienced an extreme case of workplace violence when nurse Lori Dupont was killed by her colleague and ex-boyfriend.

Stop Violence against Women

A lively discussion was initiated with cards with fact and opinion quotes from various sources about violence against women. The cards had been produced by the Stop Violence against Women Sub- Committee and had been displayed on the lunch tables. We found out that many Clubs support in very practical ways women's shelters and groups that help victims of violence. One club even donates Club memberships. One troubling issue that came up in the discussion was domestic and family violence against elderly women, which may be resulting from mental deterioration of the spouse. The group recommended that the sub-committee look at this issue. Thanks to Judie Arrowood, Leaside- East York, Rhea Pretsel, Belleville, Ann McElhinney, Etobicoke, and Arleen Midriak, Burlington for facilitating this part of the meeting. The Stop Violence against Women Sub-Committee will gladly welcome more members. Contact cfuwontario@yahoo.com

At our January 2009 meeting we hope to have a resource person who works in a setting that makes positive changes in the lives of women victims of violence and their children. We shall also look further at the recommendations of our Ontario Council Violence against Women survey and see where we can act in a concerted manner.

Report on House of Commons Committee Gender Budgeting Study

From November 2007 to May 2008 the House of Commons Status of Women Committee conducted a ground breaking study of gender budgeting by federal departments.

The study was like a condensed mini university course on how government budgeting works. The Committee called an impressive list of government and NGO and expert witnesses from Canada and abroad, who mostly showed that our federal departments had only been paying lip service to gender-based analysis and certainly have not implemented measures according to GBA, for instance when contemplating income tax deductions, which result in inequalities for women who profit less because on average they earn less income.

The study resulted in 26 very useful recommendations to the House of Commons, one of which was the creation of Commissioner for Gender Equality, and what I found even more promising, that "the Auditor General of Canada regularly conduct audits to review Canada's implementation of gender- based analysis in the federal government..." The involvement of the Auditor General is necessary for accountability of departments with regard to the effectiveness of government policy and programs and budgets for the benefit of Canadian women and children. The principles established in the Commons Status of Women study can be made applicable to other levels of government. Federal budgetary measures have provincial and municipal implications.

It was notable that, compared to the fractious Committee hearings on the Status of Women Canada cuts, during the gender budgeting study, all political parties seemed serious and interested in learning how to do things better and come up with reasonable recommendations to the House of Commons. With the election and a possible Harper majority government, however, this forward looking report may never see the light of day again. It is up to us as educated women to see that it will not be forgotten, but rather implemented.

CTRL +Click on this link for the report

[Report 11 - Towards Gender Responsive Budgeting: Rising to the Challenge of Achieving Gender Equality](#)

(Adopted by the Committee on June 5, 2008; Presented to the House on June 12, 2008)

To find out more about the gender budgeting, browse through the report the minutes of the hearing sessions make good, very informative reading. (See report table of content and click on relevant parts)

Ask your MP about the Status of Women Report on Gender Budgeting, s/he may not have a clue about it. Make sure s/he knows you know about it and that you do not want to see it forgotten.

Edeltraud Neal, Chair
Status of Women & Human Rights Committee

EDUCATION COMMITTEE - Afternoon Session

The afternoon session of the Education Committee was attended by 17 CFUW Clubs.

Our topic of discussion for the afternoon session was Bill 212, Education Amendment Act (Progressive Discipline and School Safety). The guest speaker was Norman Stormes, the policy implementation coordinator from the Ministry of Education. Mr. Stormes in his career has been a teacher, Vice-Principal, Principal and Superintendent

for the Simcoe County District School Board.

Mr. Stormes outlined the goals of the Ministry of Education:

- High levels of student achievement;
- Reduced gaps in student achievement;
- High levels of public confidence.

The highlights of Bill 212 are:

- adding bullying as an infraction for which suspensions must be considered;
- replacing mandatory suspensions and expulsions for students with the requirement that principals and school boards consider and respond to all infractions that occurred in the most appropriate way;
- requiring that mitigating factors be considered before students are suspended or expelled;
- requiring that programs be provided for students who have been expelled or who are serving suspensions of more than five days.

Mr. Stormes concluded the presentation with the thought that even though we want to save all children who encounter problems, we should be content if we save just one. His gift to each of us was a "Starfish Pin" to remind us. Unfortunately time ran out and we were unable to have a good question and answer time.

Wendy Taylor, Chair
Education Committee

LEGISLATION COMMITTEE - Afternoon Session

Twenty-six members representing 23 Clubs attended and 21 reported that they have Issues/Advocacy Committees.

The Chair thanked Elaine Harvey for chairing the Legislation Committee for the past 2 years and reviewed the mandate. Reports were received on three current issues: Home Care/LHINS, Water and Poverty.

Carolyn Day reported the passage of the Great Lakes Compact "ensuring the strongest protection ever to stop diversions and to regulate large-scale water use". On October 3rd, President Bush signed the agreement. What a victory! Thanks to Carolyn and everyone who worked so hard on this vital issue.

Linda Hall reviewed the anti-poverty advocacy done over the summer. Two key points – it is time for action and poverty is about individuals. Clubs were urged to report any of their advocacy activities to the Chair. As Poverty will be the theme of the January 24th Standing Committee meeting, Clubs are asked to submit a list of any of their activities which contribute to the alleviation of poverty.

Myrtle Greve, Chair
Legislation Committee

WATER REPORT

The past few months have been important ones for the water resources of the Great Lakes.

On July 4th, Pennsylvania became the eighth and final state to sign the Great Lakes Charter Annex Compact Agreement. On September 23rd, the US Congress ratified the Agreement, and then on October 3, 2008, President Bush signed the Annex Compact Agreement, marking the final step in enacting the Compact into law - a historic landmark in the protection of the waters of our Great Lakes.

CFUW Ontario Council has been participating in the negotiation process since 2004 through their membership in the provincial government's Great Lakes Advisory Panel.

Ontario has enacted the Annex provisions into law with the passing of the Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act (SSOW) in 2007, and Ontario Council continues to work with the Advisory Panel and with the Water Guardians Network to frame Regulations for the SSOW - with a special focus on preventing intra-basin transfers between the Lakes.

Carolyn Day
Water Issues
CFUW Ontario Council