

**CANADIAN FEDERATION OF UNIVERSITY WOMEN
ONTARIO COUNCIL**

DATES & DATA

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Standing Committee Reports

September 15th , 2007

CFUW ONTARIO COUNCIL STANDING COMMITTEES

Joint Morning Session

THE ONTARIO ELECTION: Women Candidates' Perspective

Panelists

Liz Couture - Green Party Candidate for Richmond Hill, and President of her Constituency Association
Catherine Fife - New Democratic Party Candidate for Kitchener-Waterloo, and CFUW K-W member
Pamela Taylor - lawyer and first Progressive Conservative Candidate for Toronto Centre Riding
Hon. Kathleen Wynne, Liberal Candidate for Don Valley West, and Minister of Education

Chair Elaine Harvey distributed a questionnaire on the referendum on electoral reform, asking for members' comments. Ontario Council does not have policy on this, but individuals' opinions will be tabulated and the results posted on the website.

Elaine introduced the four candidates, who were given 15 minutes each for opening statements, to be followed by questions. Candidates had been advised to note the election questions prepared at the March Standing Committee meetings and posted on the Ontario Council website.

Liz Couture, Green Party candidate for Richmond Hill, a private music teacher and president of her constituency association, described her family and personal background, and her diverse interests in music, sports, volunteering and the environment. She stated the Green Party's commitment to improve sustainability, fight climate change, and work on problems in the health system. The Greens promised no overall change in taxes, but property taxes will be overhauled to tax toxin producers more heavily. Green Party education platform planks were:

1. Quality childcare: Greens would allocate \$300 million for a child care program.
2. Education should be considered an investment, not a social cost.
3. There should be no faith-based education. Public funds should be used for public schooling only.
4. There should be environmental education in elementary schools.
5. The funding gap between elementary and secondary school teachers should be ended.
6. Physical education should be mandatory in secondary schools.
7. There should be a cap on university tuition.

Catherine Fife, NDP, Kitchener-Waterloo, child advocate, school trustee and member of CFUW K-W, credited her experience living in Parkdale and Cape Breton for exposing her to inequality and instilling a passion for public education as a leveler of playing fields. She accordingly feels that public funding should be directed exclusively to public schools. She relates a strong education platform, including better child care, which she connects directly to public schools; more autonomy for school boards; more emphasis on special

needs education. Other NDP planks were:

- more environment funding, with emphasis on sustainable growth.
- no more nuclear power projects.
- emphasis on conservation, with investments in solar energy.
- opposed to recent MPP pay raise.
- in favour of higher minimum wage.

Pamela Taylor, Progressive Conservative, Toronto Centre (new riding), a lawyer and businesswoman, inspired to enter politics by the inaction of government to her concerns as an activist, commented on the strides already made by women in Ontario, and praised the PC position as one of compassion and inclusion, coupled with the need for a healthy economy. PC positions on CFUW issues:

1. Childcare: research is being done, informed by Mustard and McCain.
2. Clawback: is being looked at.
3. Post secondary Education: for stable, multi-year funding.
4. Education: will revisit the funding formula.
5. Electoral reform: want to “reform the legislature, not the electoral system”.
6. Environment: will take a “realistic, practical approach” granting subsidies and incentives to *Go Green*.
7. Health: will help and hire more nurses.
8. Cities: 2% of gas tax to be directed to infrastructure.

Hon. Kathleen Wynne, Liberal, Don Mills West, Minister of Education, stressed the Liberals’ commitment to restore funding to publicly-funded institutions (education, health care, social services, etc.) unraveled by the Harris Tories. She is strongly in favour of public education, and wants to provide aid to the disadvantaged, and to parenting centres. With respect to CFUW issues, she described Liberal actions already taken:

1. Clawback: Liberal Ontario Child Benefit goes beyond the clawback, to help all children, not just those on social assistance.
2. Minimum Wage: raised by Liberals.
3. Home care: \$700 million for the *Aging at Home* program.
4. Cities: gas tax has been returned to the cities.
5. Environment: she cited the green belt growth plan, and favours wind, water and solar power initiatives.
6. Early child Care: programs are being expanded, including full-day kindergarten for four- and five-year olds.

The candidates answered questions on early childhood education, the working poor, the funding formula for schools, and the loss of manufacturing jobs, and each made concluding statements. All candidates were in favour of inclusiveness, and everyone supported the environment.

Margaret Binek thanked the speakers who had taken time out of their own ridings the week the writ was dropped in order to represent their parties on our panel. To show our appreciation, they were each presented with a copy of the book, *Proudly She Marched*.

Peggy Pinkerton

STATUS OF WOMEN & HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE - Afternoon Session

Judie Arrowood welcomed all members of the Standing Committee and asked that everyone sign-in. Judie would like to include names and email addresses for all members of the Standing Committee in future e-mails.

Margaret McGovern & HPV Immunization Program

Margaret McGovern, a former Public Health Nurse, Chair of the North York University Women's Club's Status of Women Committee and former Chair of the National SW & HR committee, led a discussion about the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) immunization program for Grade 8 girls in Ontario. HPV is one of the most common sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

The federal government is sponsoring (\$300 million) for the proposed vaccination of young Canadian girls. The Canadian Medical Association journal has published the results of a study of the efficacy of this vaccine - see www.cmaj.ca. Also check the *Canadian Women's Health Network* for information - www.cwhn.ca and www.health.gov.on.ca. There was a recent article in *McLean's* magazine about Gardasil® and in the September 16th, 2007 issue of the *Globe & Mail* (pages 1, 16, 17 of section A). The provinces have to opt in now to receive federal funding otherwise the cost is \$400 per girl to receive the vaccine privately.

The vaccination is in 3 shots over 6 months and needs to start soon to be completed within the school year. The vaccine is said to protect against cervical cancer - only 400 Canadian women die from this type of cancer each year in Canada. In 2006, about 1,350 Canadian women were diagnosed with cervical cancer. The vaccination needs to be given before sexual activity starts to be effective. There are 84,000 girls in Grade 8 in Ontario. Quebec and Nova Scotia are proposing to give the vaccine to girls in grade 7. Several provinces have not opted in yet. Newfoundland and PEI have chosen Grade 6 girls to receive it. In Ontario, when they reach the age of 14 can sign their own consent forms for this.

Several questions arose: the only study has been conducted over a 5 year period; Is this long enough? How large was the sample? The trials were conducted on women age 16 and 23. Do we know the long-term effects? Could there be complications? What will the impact be on pre-pubescent girls? Will the girls need booster shots? Do we know? How often? Why the rush? Is this the only pharmaceutical company with a vaccine ready? How was this company selected? Was there lobbying done by Merck Frosst Canada Ltd.? By whom? To whom? Who has this kind of pull?

Finally, there is an ethical issue around forced immunization in the schools, e.g. measles and mumps. Margaret wanted us to know that autism is NOT caused by immunization!!

Margaret informed us that Mr. McGuinty has formed a new health care agency called *ECHO* which will receive \$7.6 million per annum and will replace *The Premier's Women's Health Council*. The Chair will be Caroline Andrew, professor at the School of Political Studies, University of Ottawa. Click on www.health.gov.on.ca and scroll down to August 24th for more information.

ACTION: Margaret will ask Linda MacGregor, OC President, to send a letter congratulating the Premier and asking that CFUW OC be made a member of the Echo Board to represent women.

Vivien Green & Woman Abuse

Vivien Green, who was the Director of Toronto Woman Abuse Council for 16 years and is now with the School of Social Work at Ryerson University, spoke to us about violence against women. She quoted H.L. Mencken, "For every complex issue there is an easy answer and it is wrong." The complex issue is Women Abuse or Intimate Partner Abuse. The number of women abused is 1 in 4 and it has not declined despite all our campaigns and education programs.

Woman abuse ranges from verbal threats to physical force to death. The object is to create fear and to control the woman's actions. The spectrum goes from emotional, negligence, harassment, and the full variety of physical injuries.

Vivien Green serves on the Domestic Violence Death Review Committee and she was most affected by two major inquests. Arlene May's inquest resulted in 250 recommendations. A joint community and government committee was set up to see that those recommendations were implemented. Gillian Hadley's inquest in Pickering resulted in another 50 recommendations. Almost none were implemented. The government's ***Domestic Violence Action Plan*** has received poor marks for its implementation.

Family Doctors and other health care workers are supposed to ask if a woman with suspicious injuries has any worries. Are there any problems at home? Is there any concern about safety? The registered Nurses Association has a policy on asking about abuse.

Suggestions: Doctors could wear a "No Abuse" lapel button which could encourage some patients to discuss their abusive relationships. Buttons could also be used raise awareness or as a fund-raiser. We need to remember that yes/no questions will not always elicit an open response. Elder Abuse also factors into partner abuse.

Most woman abuse is not a crime of passion, but is premeditated and all about control. Highest Risk indicators: When victim says: "I'm going to leave you"; threat of suicide by perpetrator; when the perpetrator is depressed, jealous, unemployed, owns a gun. Educating around risk factors may be an opportunity for CFUW. Where can new Canadian women disclose safely? Is it more taboo for immigrants?

A wide variety of suggestions for improvement were made, ranging all the way from expansion of specialized domestic courts, to posters in fitting rooms and washrooms. In between, a number of suggestions called for changes in attitude – e.g., call it what it is (woman abuse); know the signs and offer suggestions; focus on the abuser (he's the one with the problem); campaign for men to challenge other men. Suggested reading: *The Woman Who Walked Into Doors* a novel by Roddy Doyle, which deals very well with the subject.

For further information on two ideas suggested: a community broadsheet - see www.wact.womanabuse.ca and to learn more about an information program in beauty salons in the U.S. go to www.cutitout.org.

Assaulted Women's Helpline 1-866-863-0511 (24 hour) TTY 1-866-863-7868

Please send ideas for new issues and areas where the Status of Women and Human Rights committee might actively advocate to Judie Arrowood at cfuwontario@yahoo.com

Gwen Williamson for
Judie Arrowood, Chair
Status of Women & Human Rights

EDUCATION COMMITTEE - Afternoon Session

On Saturday September 15, 2007, twenty- three Clubs were present at the Education Standing Committee afternoon meeting.

Our guest speaker for the afternoon was Amanda Aziz, the National Chairperson of the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS). This organization, based in Ottawa, is Canada's largest provincial and national student organization. They represent over 600,000 college and university students. Half of these students study in Ontario.

Amanda discussed the issues that CFS is advocating for. These include the continuing increases in tuition fees. The results of the increases have created financial barriers that have become the strongest deterrent to post-secondary education. She also mentioned that the CFS has and will continue to monitor the effects of

the economy in the coming years as a result of students carrying high debt loads and therefore being unable to be consumers when they graduate. In particular, members became aware that the high tuition costs to study dentistry, law, and medicine, make many students financially unable to study community law or family medicine.

The Canadian Federation of Students is also very active in violence against women, date rape campaigns, action on ancillary fees charged to students, electoral reform, quality of education and students rights.

Wendy Taylor, Chair
Education Committee

LEGISLATION COMMITTEE - Afternoon Session

Water: Carolyn Day gave a detailed update of developments of the Great Lakes Annex Agreement Advisory Panel, of which she has been a member since 2004. She praised the Ontario government for implementing all 121 recommendations of the Walkerton Inquiry, and for working with the Advisory Panel and accepting its input. Bill 198, incorporating the Clean Water Act, was put into force with all party agreement. The Panel is working on identified problems of water transfers, e.g. York Region making unsustainable demands on its aquifer, and draining high-nitrite water from farm run-off to Lake Ontario; Grand Bend taking water from Lake Huron and diverting it to London. She criticized the federal government for not doing its share: 16 highly polluted trouble spots have been identified; only two have been dealt with.

A special concern is Canada's role in the Security and Prosperity Partnerships with the US and Mexico. Pressure from the US is to increase oil production from the oil sands five-fold, which puts a huge demand on Canadian water. It takes 3 barrels of water to produce one barrel of oil, and already the level of the Athabaska River is declining. Furthermore, water is not protected under NAFTA, and there is strong pressure to export fresh water. Canada has no national water policy.

ACTION: CFUW members were urged to lobby their MP's to ban bulk water exports.

All Candidates' Meeting: Peggy Pinkerton gave a brief account of a meeting co-sponsored by CFUW-Etobicoke.

LHINS: Attempts to monitor LHINS Board meetings and have questions answered have been disappointing. Members were urged to keep trying.

Climate Change: Elaine Harvey reported on the annual Department of Public Information/NGO conference at the UN. Climate change has been identified as the most serious problem, and the conference came up with a Declaration on Climate Change which urges governments and industry to promote sustainable development, and organizations and individuals to make lifestyle changes that can lessen the pressure on the environment. The meeting broke into small groups that came up with recommendations on recycling, banning cosmetic pesticides, waste disposal, and protection of water.

The meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

Peggy Pinkerton for
Elaine Harvey, Chair
Legislation Committee

THE REFERENDUM QUESTION

Ontario Council members have expressed considerable interest in the upcoming Referendum Question where the choice is between the present First Past the Post (FPTP) system and the new Mixed Member Proportional System (MMP) for electing Members of Provincial Parliament. Since CFUW has no policy on this issue, Ontario Council cannot make a statement about it. However, the members who attended the Standing Committee session on Saturday, September 15, had the opportunity to indicate anonymously how they would vote on the referendum on October 10.

Here are the results:

For FPTP -	10
For MMP -	42
Haven't decided -	<u>5</u>
TOTAL	57

59% of those present responded. That is generally considered a very good response. What it indicates is that at least 54% of members present must understand the two choices because they have decided how they will vote on the referendum. Only 5% of those present indicated that they haven't decided yet, and therefore, along with the 42% who didn't respond, may not understand the choices.

See next page for their comments:

CFUW MEMBERS' REFERENDUM COMMENTS

For the present First Past the Post System:

- MMP list candidates will not be accountable to a specific constituency.
(3 responses)
- The FPTP system works for women in Quebec.
- Cabinet ministers and even the premier could come from the list [under MMP and thus not have direct responsibility to a constituency].
- I want a majority government, not a splintered one with single interest groups.
- "If it ain't broke, don't fix it."
- MMP gives too much power to parties since a quarter of the MPPs will not be elected by anyone.
- The list may lead to patronage appointments.

Questions and Comments on the FPTP System

- What would the qualifications be of those on the list?
- We have heard only one side of the MMP system.

For the new Mixed Member Proportional System

- MMP is a fairer, forward-looking, more equitable system because it mirrors the popular vote. (12 responses)
- MMP provides an opportunity to have more women and minorities representing us in government. (7 responses)
- It is an excellent system, but difficult to understand.
- It encourages trend-setting interests like the environment.
- This is an historic referendum which will give Ontarians an opportunity to change the system.
- I value the advice of the Citizens' Assembly.
- This referendum is an opportunity that may not come again
- 83 countries have Proportional Representation
- Only 3 countries use the outdated FPTP system
- MMP will more accurately represent the number of votes cast and thus represent the people better.
- Any system would be better than the present one.
- It allows for better representation of all parties, especially minority parties.
- It requires more consensus based decision making.
- It may encourage more women to run and youth to vote.
- It may engage more Ontarians in the voting process.
- The legislature will more accurately reflect the views of the voters.
- It will raise interest in democracy because this system will create a level playing field.
- My decision was based on the March Standing Committee presentation.
- It's time for a change.

Questions and Comments on the MMP

- Who are the list MPPs accountable to?
- Concerns were expressed about how the list will be chosen.
- Majority government works for the party, not the people.
- I need more information on each party's plan for implementation should the MMP pass.
- I need a clearer understanding of the duties and roles of both constituency and "list" MPPs.