



CFUW SOUTHPORT POLICY BRIEF

**Presented to
CAROL MITCHELL, MPP HURON-BRUCE
January 9, 2007**

Who We Are

CFUW Southport is a member of the national organization of the Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW). Our 75 members reside in and around the Town of Saugeen Shores. CFUW, founded in 1919, is a voluntary, non-partisan, bilingual organization of approximately 10,000 women university graduates in 126 clubs across Canada. CFUW members represent a cross-section of women in Canada, and are active in public affairs, working to raise the social, economic and legal status of women, as well as to improve education, the environment, peace, justice and human rights. There are 60 CFUW clubs in Ontario, with 6,000 members, forming the CFUW Ontario Council.

CFUW is affiliated with the International Federation of University Women (IFUW) headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, with 180,000 members in clubs around the world. In 1998, CFUW received special consultative status within the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). IFUW has consultative status within ECOSOC, UNCHS, UNEP, UNESCO, UNICEF and the ILO.

What We Do

CFUW members monitor current legislation and emerging issues, and take action on issues of local, provincial and national concern.

CFUW members develop, discuss and pass policy, initiated through a grassroots process, which touches on political, economic and cultural areas - including education, environment, justice, health and social issues. CFUW advocates dialogue between its members and governments at all levels as a constructive means towards positive change.

CFUW's Fellowships and Awards Program supports women's access to higher learning. CFUW Southport awards three \$500 scholarships each year at our local high school: one to a young woman graduate with the highest academic standing going on to university; one to a young woman graduate with the highest academic standing going on to a college program; one to a young First Nations woman graduate with the highest academic standing going on to post secondary studies.

Members of CFUW Southport would like to discuss with you today issues that touch on the following topics:

Education:

- **Early Childhood Education and Child Care**
- **Promoting Citizenship Education in Canada**
- **Improving English as a Second Language Funding and Support Services**

Environment:

- **Enforcement of the Fisheries Act**
- **Light Pollution**
- **Implementation of the Annex Agreement**
- **Implementation of the Clean Water Act**
- **York Region's "Big Pipe" initiative**

Social & Health:

- **Homeless Youth**
- **LHIN Accountability**
- **Status of Women Canada**

We would also like to discuss with you some updates of government action on issues that we raised with you in previous visits:

- § **Special Education Funding**
- § **Aboriginal Education**
- § **Road Salt**
- § **Income Equality for Ontario's Children**
- § **CFI Funding**

On behalf of all members of CFUW Southport, we thank you for your interest, your support and your time.

EDUCATION:

Early Childhood Education and Child Care: There is no doubt from the research - neurological, psychological and pedagogical - that pre-kindergarten children who take part in quality early child development programs delivered by Early Childhood Education professionals can improve outcomes for their behavior, learning and even health in later life. But current programs often lack inclusiveness, coherency and, in many cases, quality. CFUW Southport appreciates the ECE training provided by Ontario's colleges, and supports Ontario's proposed initiative of establishing a College of Early Childhood Educators which will assist in promoting high professional standards for ECE providers.

The decision of the federal Conservative party to scrap the Childcare Agreement with the provinces was wrongheaded. However, the Private Member's Bill C-303, which would reinstate a national childcare program, passed second reading in the House of Commons on November 22. What does the Ontario government intend to do in the meantime to provide adequate childcare funding and increase childcare spaces in Ontario? In the event parliament dissolves before the Bill comes out of Committee hearings and can be passed into law, what programs and funding will Ontario provide?

Promoting Citizenship Education in Canada: CFUW Southport acknowledges that Ontario provides a compulsory credit in Civics - a half-course in Grade ten. But across Canada, and in Ontario over the past 16 years there has been a sharp decline in participation in the electoral process, especially among the youth. In fact in the 2005 federal election the turnout of youth voters was estimated at 25%. In more recent research, Henry Milner (2005) found that, regardless of their level of educational standing, young people generally lacked the understanding and basic skills to participate in the democratic system in an informed way. We need to engage our young people in the democratic process. We need to give them the skills and the understanding they need to be able to participate fully. We need to help them appreciate the importance of their voice and of their roles and responsibilities as citizens. This can't be achieved in one half-credit course.

In 2005, Alberta started a K-12 social studies program on citizenship and identity. CFUW Southport asks the Ministry of Education and Training to develop a K-12 program in Civics for all students in Ontario schools.

Improving English as a Second Language Funding and Support Services: CFUW policy recognizes that in order to participate fully in Canadian life, our citizens must be completely fluent in one of our official languages. There are several categories of citizens for which this is a vital concern. Many immigrants arrive from countries where neither English nor French is the first language. Some immigrants originate in countries where English is the first language but the dialects are significantly different from the language as it is used in this country. Considering the fact that many of the recent immigrants have had little or no access to formal education prior to arriving in Canada, this presents an additional difficulty in their acquisition of the English language. Furthermore, children of these immigrants who were born in Canada generally have little exposure to English at home and their command of the language is significantly less developed than other Canadian children.

CFUW Southport urges the provincial government to create and adequately fund a more equitable system of assessment and support to improve the integration of immigrant and refugee children and their families into the school system by providing dedicated funding for ESL, by including specialized ESL preparation in all teacher education programs and by increasing the allocated instruction time to five to seven years as needed.

ENVIRONMENT:

Fisheries Act: The federal Fisheries Act prohibits the dumping of deleterious substances into coastal waters which are fish habitats. The provincial government must be able to enforce this same prohibition on dumping "deleterious substances" - substances like raw sewage, contaminated ballast water, toxic effluents, etc. into our Great Lakes and inland waters. What authority does Ontario have over the federal management of the Great Lakes? How effective is the provincial legislation in protecting our lakes and inland waters from dumping by municipalities or industry? How adequately does it now fund the monitoring and enforcement of environmental safeguards in the use of its inland waters? What sanctions and clean-up provisions exist? How does the government deal with environmental hazards dumped in the past?

Light Pollution: Nighttime illumination has become essential to our urban lifestyle. Used properly it increases safety and security and enhances economic activity. But a byproduct of inappropriate outdoor lighting is light pollution, and light pollution wastes massive amounts of energy and money. Poorly aimed or excessive lighting represents a waste of approximately 30% of energy costs and extra unnecessary energy demand. Light pollution is the only man-made form of pollution whose reduction produces immediate cost savings. Calgary's new (2005) Envirosmart Streetlight Retrofit is estimated to save the city \$1.7 million a year in reduced operating costs. Reduced energy consumption also results in reductions in emissions from oil and gas generation. In Calgary the CO₂ emissions are expected to be reduced by 19,000 tonnes. Light pollution also has a negative effect on the environment - disrupting individual organisms and ecosystems including human health. According to American researcher Stephen Pauley (2004), the suppression of melatonin by exposure to light at night may be a cause of the increase of breast and colon cancer in the developed world.

CFUW Southport asks the government of Ontario to enact legislation to cut light pollution by carefully regulating standards for outdoor lighting in our province.

Implementation of the Annex Agreement and Implementation of the Clean Water Act:

- 1. Funding:** These two major accomplishments of the Ontario Government will be an important part of the present government's legacy. In order to be successful, careful planning must happen in the lead-up to setting the 2007 provincial budget to ensure that sufficient funding is allocated to adequately fund the necessary research, data collection, monitoring and enforcement, and infrastructure costs to support municipalities, private well owners and farmers as they bring their systems into compliance. Without this, there will be a huge backlash and loss of support on the part of the public.
- 2. Inter-Ministry Collaboration:** There must also be more careful planning and integration of the work of the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Natural Resources to ensure that the implementation of both these initiatives are coordinated to avoid wasteful duplication and ensure that all the criteria are met.
- 3. Intra-Basin Transfers:** There is a pressing issue that the government must resolve immediately in the Implementation of the Annex Agreement and that relates to **Intra-Basin Transfers** of water. When considering potential diversions (including intra-basin transfers), the Agreement makes it clear that *prima facie* there is a prohibition - that water taken from one watershed must be returned (return flow) to that same watershed after use. An applicant can be exempted from the prohibition if they establish that they fall into one of the tightly regulated exceptions. To be legally effective, Ontario must introduce Measures (defined as legislation, law, regulation, directive, requirement, guideline program, policy, administrative practice or other procedure) to implement the prohibition and the exceptions. If this is not done now, there will not be time to get it into law before the legislature dissolves for the next election. Ontario has before it two proposals for Intra-Basin Transfers. One is an expansion of the water pipeline from Grand Bend (Lake

Huron) to London (Lake Erie); the other is a proposal from York Region to expand their sewer system, taking water from the Lake Simcoe watershed to Lake Ontario. In each case, there is an option to require "return flow" after usage to the original watershed as per the Annex Agreement - but only if the legislation is in effect.

York Region's "Big Pipe" Proposal: York Region proposes to extend the York Durham Sewer System (YDSS) to Holland Landing and Sharon in the Town of East Gwillimbury. It is currently undergoing Class EA review. Currently, Holland Landing, Queensville and Sharon utilize groundwater pumped from wells drawn from the Yonge Street Aquifer, operated by the Region of York. This aquifer is within the Lake Simcoe watershed, which is part of the Georgian Bay and Lake Huron watershed. This well water, once used, is currently discharged through lagoons and septic systems back into the Lake Simcoe watershed. The extension of the York Durham Sewer System to Holland Landing, Queensville and Sharon would result in the diversion of this groundwater from the Lake Simcoe-Georgian Bay-Lake Huron watershed to the Lake Ontario watershed. The proposal would essentially re-engineer the natural hydrological flows within the region, resulting in serious potential ecological impacts. It will deplete groundwater supplies and contribute to declining Great Lakes water levels, which has an adverse impact on the wetlands and fisheries of Eastern Georgian Bay.

Under the Annex Agreement, any intra-basin transfer under 379,000 litres per day is to be regulated at the discretion of the state or province. Anything over 379,000 litres per day but under 19 million litres per day requires the applicant to meet the Exception Standard and prove there is no feasible, cost effective and environmentally sound water supply alternative. Anything over 19 million litres must meet these requirements and be subject to a regional review. The Region of York already diverts 40.3 M/L per day, based on 2005 data, from the Lake Simcoe-Georgian Bay-Lake Huron watershed to the Lake Ontario watershed as part of the water and wastewater system in Aurora and Newmarket. The current plans constitute an additional intra-basin transfer. Under the "Agreement" York Region would be expected to establish that its proposal is an exception to the prohibition against diversions and intra-basin transfers in the Agreement.

CFUW Southport asks you to urge your government to enact the required legislation/regulations to comply with the conditions of the Annex Agreement without delay, and to impose a moratorium on new proposals that would fall under those restrictions until the legislation is in place. Any intra-basin transfers that are allowed to proceed during the gap between signature of the Agreement and the passing of implementing legislation/regulation have the potential to cause lasting impacts to the Basin's ecosystems and contravene the spirit of the Agreement.

SOCIAL & HEALTH:

Homeless Youth: One of Ontario's major social problems is that of homeless youth. There are several factors which contribute to homelessness. Family violence, in terms of sexual assault, physical and emotional abuse, is a major factor. Exposure to a potentially dangerous street environment coupled with isolation and no family ties, creates an untenable situation. Frequently, homeless youth have not completed their secondary education and therefore lack the skills required for employment. With no training or experience, access to the job market is exceedingly difficult. These economic pressures lead to their inability to acquire affordable secure housing. The consequences of a high population of homeless youth are increased costs associated with crime, greater dependency on the health care system and higher dependency on social assistance.

CFUW Southport urges the government to deal with the needs of homeless youth, and recommends that supportive housing options, coordinated accessible support services and consistent long-term funding be provided for this vulnerable youth population.

Local Health Integration Networks: The mandate of the LHINs is to respond to local needs and priorities by planning health care services in each community, and helping to eliminate barriers that patients face in accessing services at the local level. The accountability agreement between each LHIN and the Ministry includes performance goals and objectives for the LHINs, performance standards, targets and measures, and a plan for spending the money the LHINs receive. Each LHIN must also ensure accountability through the introduction of service accountability agreements with local health care providers. LHINs must engage their community, including physicians and other health care practitioners, on an ongoing basis to determine local needs and priorities.

Does a legislated process exist to ensure that these accountability agreements are implemented?

Can we ensure that our front-line health care providers have input in making decisions around budget allocations and service provisions within our region?

The South West LHIN Integrated Health Service Plan has been launched and four strategic integration priorities have been formulated. One of these is strengthening and improving primary health care. This entails supporting Family Health Teams, connecting independent and small group family physicians with other primary health services, and placing a special emphasis on people with mental health and addiction conditions. So far, new partnerships and collaboration between health care professionals, community organizations and voluntary organizations have resulted in the establishment of 15 new Family Health Teams for the South West LHIN. To date, Saugeen Shores has not applied to establish a Family Health Team. Can you and your government play a role in encouraging the consideration of this initiative, which will better serve the people and the community?

Status of Women Canada: CFUW is a non-partisan organization committed to the advancement and equality of women. Although CFUW is self-funded, networking with other women's groups provides valuable information and support. CFUW places the highest value on the research and advocacy made possible through SWC. Recently, SWC has had its administrative budget, including its research and gender advocacy capacity, cut by forty percent. The SWC mandate has been changed in that:

- The word "equality" has been deleted.
- Groups receiving SWC funding are banned from research, advocacy and lobbying.
- Religious-based and "for-profit" groups can now be recipients of grants

These changes seriously hamper Canadian women's ability to work for equality. Furthermore, the advancement of women's rights, the elimination of discrimination against women and the achievement of equality under the law have been adversely affected by these changes in philosophy.

What is the position of the Ontario Women's Caucus on these changes?