

## CFUW SOUTHPORT

### POLICY BRIEF

Presented to  
**CAROL MITCHELL, MPP HURON-BRUCE**  
June 30, 2004

#### Who We Are

CFUW Southport is a member of the national organization of the Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW). Our 67 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. 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 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 grass roots 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.

We would like to discuss with you today issues that touch on the following issues:

#### **EDUCATION: CFUW policy promotes equal access to a public education for all.**

CFUW Southport supports your government's focus on public education, and the increased funding you have allocated to ensure excellence of programs for all Ontario students within our public system. We are pleased with the Minister of Education's determination to consult with the education community, and to support students and staff at all levels of public education in a variety of ways.

- \* Establishing a cap on class size in the Primary grades to give all children a chance to succeed with more individual attention.

- \* An emphasis on Literacy and Numeracy and funding for specially trained Literacy teachers in each school to strengthen
  - training for all teachers, and
  - resources and programs for all students.

- \* The focus on "Pathways" and "Apprenticeship" programs to support, motivate and train non-academic students in Secondary Schools.

- \* Continued support for programs for high needs students through the ISA funding.

\* A change in the Transportation funding model to better reflect real costs in our rural system.

\* Bill 82 Professional Learning Program Cancellation Act which does much to restore teacher morale and pride in professionalism and personal professional development.

**HEALTH: CFUW policy promotes equal access to health care for all.**

CFUW Southport applauds your government's support for the recommendations of the Romanow Report, for the leadership you have demonstrated in the inter-provincial negotiations to establish the Canadian Health Council, and for your determination to make Medicare work for the people of Ontario.

\* Bill 8, Commitment to the Future of Medicare, and the creation of the provincial Health Quality Control Council. We are pleased to see that the provincial Council will have a place for a sufficient number of "ordinary Canadians" so that they can have a positive impact on the Council.

\* The commitment in the budget to increased funding for Healthcare and a continued accountability for hospitals to stay within their new budgets.

\* An increased emphasis and funding for Public Health with their educational and preventative programs.

\* The protection of caregivers' jobs when they must take a leave of absence to care for a loved one who is dying. This is definitely an issue which affects women.

\* The intention to fund more full time nursing positions within the public health system.

\* The intention to allow recognition of the credentials of foreign-trained doctors.

\* We understand the reasons behind the imposition of the Health Premium, and although it is not a popular initiative, we appreciate the fact that you are willing to reassess how the premium affects lower income families to ensure that it is fair and equitable.

We are concerned at the lack of support for children's mental health in our rural area. Bruce County especially is disadvantaged in the amount of funds received through Child and Family Intervention (CFI) funding. Bruce County receives the lowest per capita funding in all of Southwestern Ontario. We would ask you to support us in receiving a fairer allocation of funds to support the children in our area.

We applaud the new Ministry of Children and Youth Services – and its mandate to break down the different mandates and funding silos of the separate Ministries which currently serve the needs of children and their families (Health, Education & Social Services). We are pleased to see that it will support the child and their family as a unit, and look forward to hearing of its work.

We are concerned that sufficient monies be reinstated to fund appropriate Home Care services, made necessary by the earlier discharge of patients from hospital. Cutbacks have been very hard for patients, especially for seniors and for those isolated in rural areas.

**ENVIRONMENT: CFUW policy promotes a sustainable environment and the wise management of natural resources. It supports the Kyoto Accord.**

Ontario has been cited repeatedly in the last years by the tri-national Commission on Environmental Cooperation as being one of the three worst polluters in North America. The Environmental Commissioner has condemned many of the government initiatives over the past eight years.

CFUW Southport applauds the steps your government has already taken to reverse some of the damaging initiatives of the previous Conservative government in this area.

\* The cancellation in January 2004 of the 1.6 billion litre per year water-taking permit issued to OMYA from the Tay River, and the restriction of OMYA's permit to 1500 cubic metres per day (.55 billion litres per year). This was a good step toward establishing limits to ensure the protection and sustainability of our water sources and resources.

\* The strong message sent to the OMB to regain the balance in their arbitrations between corporations and communities and to take greater account of environmental issues and community wishes. We appreciated that a proposed expansion of a quarry on the Bruce Peninsula was not allowed to proceed after an OMB hearing this spring. The expansion was opposed by the municipality and the local residents and would have been potentially destructive to the groundwater and to the survival of endangered species living in the area.

\* The intention to phase out by 2007 coal-fired generating plants with their generation of greenhouse gases and other pollutants.

\* The Clean Air initiative with its strict new regulations to reduce and limit a large number of specific harmful industrial emissions.

\* Bill 49 – Adams Mine Lake Bill. We support this Bill to protect ground water. We hope it will lead to more responsible solutions for dealing with municipal waste.

\* Bill 27 Greenbelt Protection Act. We were disappointed, as we are sure you were, that your government was not able to reverse all the decisions from the previous government around the development of environmentally sensitive lands in the Oak Ridges Moraine, but strongly support the direction of this Bill to place safeguards around existing lands and watersheds.

CFUW Southport is very concerned about the increase in the number of intensive hog farming businesses (factory farms) in our rural area, and the increasing pressure to allow more to be established – especially in the absence of enforceable regulations for safe nutrient management (disposal of manure). This is a danger to groundwater and the run-off into creeks and streams pollutes our lakes and rivers. Each level of government - municipal, county/regional and provincial – is indicating that they haven't the responsibility or the legal right to enact the necessary regulations and each seems to be waiting for the other to take the lead. Meanwhile, more farms are being established and more infractions of waste disposal are polluting our lands and threatening our groundwater. So far the only government action seems to be a Private Member's Bill (Bill 32 – No Hog Farming). What are your government's plans to address this issue?

The previous Conservative government enacted many laws and regulations which effectively dismantled many of the safeguards to protect the environment and conserve natural resources. These included Bill 26, the Omnibus Bill; Bill 25, the Red Tape Reduction Act; Bill 20, revisions to the Planning Act; Bill 76, revised Environmental Assessment Act (including changes to Regulation 347), and the related Bill 57, Environmental Improvements Act; Bill 52, revised Aggregate Resources Act; the Ontario Forest Accord, the Right to Farm. Is your government working to reverse these laws and their harmful effects on the environment?

The previous Conservative government cut staff at the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Natural Resources. It slashed or eliminated funding to many vital environmental programs and organizations – Great Lakes clean-up of the 16 "hot spots", Emissions Reduction strategy, public transportation, Conservation Authorities, etc. Is your government looking to reinstate some of that funding?

**SOCIAL ISSUES: CFUW policy promotes equal access to social programs for all.**

CFUW Southport applauds the steps you have taken to begin to reverse decisions of the previous government which disadvantaged our most vulnerable citizens.

- \* Increase in welfare benefits.
- \* Money in the budget to support extra subsidized childcare places.
- \* Money in the budget for affordable housing.
- \* Increase in funding for women's shelters.

We encourage your government to continue to build on these initiatives, so that children in Ontario don't have to grow up in poverty.

- \* Increase in Literacy and ESL programs accessible to immigrant women.

- \* Increase in the minimum wage.
- \* Creation of a workable rent supplement program.
- \* A program to house new immigrant families in safe affordable housing so children are not housed in cheap motel rooms, without stable community or school supports.

**JUSTICE: CFUW policy promotes equality and the protection of human rights.**

CFUW Southport and CFUW support Gun Control and the national gun registry. We ask your government to cooperate with the national firearms registry program to ensure that illegal guns can be identified.

We support the new Youth Criminal Justice Act and its emphasis on alternatives to sentencing youth to secure facilities, including Justice Circles and community programs for youth in trouble with the law. We are concerned at the practice of housing youth who are in Protective Care with young offenders. This happens more frequently in rural areas where there is often no alternate secure housing available.

CFUW Southport is very concerned about the government's recent approval to the Islamic Institute of Civil Justice to use sharia law and sharia tribunals for settlement of disputes in the Muslim community. Under sharia law, women do not have equal rights, nor do they have the wherewithal to challenge decisions of such tribunals because of the pressure within the Muslim community of which they are a part. Muslim women were not consulted and are very frightened about the impact this decision will have, especially for the rights of new immigrant women. Will your government review the Arbitration Act (1991) and defend the rights of Muslim women in our province?

The previous Conservative government enacted many laws and regulations which effectively changed the way government does business, removing many of the areas which were the prerogative of the Legislature. They were transferred instead from "Legislation" to "Regulation" which could be changed without any notification or debate in the House. The most wide-ranging of these included Bill 26, the Omnibus Bill and Bill 25, the Red Tape Reduction Act. How is your government planning to restore the proper power of the Ontario Legislature?

We look forward to a continuing dialogue with you as our elected representative in the Ontario Legislature on issues of importance to the citizens of Ontario, Huron-Bruce and Saugeen Shores.

Thank you for your interest and for your time.