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**TORONTO, ONTARIO**

# Report of the **National Women's Committee**

Canadian Union of Postal Workers  
Syndicat des travailleurs et travailleuses des postes

**cupw • sttp**

# REPORT OF THE NATIONAL WOMEN'S COMMITTEE

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## COVID AND OUR WORK

For the National Women's Committee, the 2019-2023 term was one of many ups and downs. The committee was able to meet in person on two occasions and virtually on two occasions. Although we managed to get by with new and evolving technology and platforms, for some the ability to meet from the comforts and relative safety of home was a welcome one. Perhaps virtual meetings addressed a constant struggle to find childcare and supports in the home during an away meeting and the opportunity to meet virtually was a welcome relief from the responsibility and worry of leaving children, elderly parents, and a busy home. While for others, the missed face-to-face opportunity to commiserate, share and support one another presented its own challenges and left gaps in our collective learning and networking. The majority of the committee believes that face-to-face meetings produce the most productive results in learning and capacity building.

The difficult reality of COVID, the challenges, heart ache and memories the folks of the National Women's Committee experienced were discussed and reflected throughout the committee meetings and discussions and were highlighted in the Winter 2021 edition of *The Rose* in an article called "**Worker, Teacher, Mom**", a personal story of navigating the pandemic with children, written by Sister Stéphanie Robinson.

## THE SITUATION WE FACE

During the past four years, increased attacks on the freedom and liberties of Women that directly impact our bodily autonomy, access to health and welfare services, and fundamental freedoms have been ever increasing.

With the rise of neoliberalism, these austerity-driven financial policies lead to an increase in unemployment, poverty and reduced wages. Working people have seen massive cuts to healthcare, abortion clinics, education and workers health and safety, while the overall public safety net is under attack.

Our government continues to prioritize the needs of the ultra rich and corporate giants and gross examples of corporate greed and excessive wealth are all around us.

Yet societal issues affecting the poor, less fortunate, Persons of Color, as well as women and girls are not being properly addressed. Year over year, the rates of violence, poverty and economic insecurity of women and girls continues to climb. Workers pay cheques are stretched further than ever before and low-income earners are routinely forced to borrow money while taking on additional debt to meet their daily needs, due to rising consumer pricing.

Recent studies show that one in every five Canadian households skip meals due to high food costs<sup>1</sup>. The same statistics (one in five or 21%) of Adults in Canada report not having any prescription insurance to cover medical costs and avoid treating illnesses because its not affordable<sup>2</sup>.

The picture is even more troublesome for Black and Indigenous women and girls. Ongoing research shows that Black and Indigenous women in Canada face disproportionate rates of negative social and economic health impacts.

Globally gender issues are also bleak, between 75 and 80 percent of the world's 50 million refugees and internally **displaced** persons are **women** and their dependent children.

During the fall 2019, in-person meeting of the National Women's Committee, Sister Marie Clarke-Walker, Vice-Chair, ILO, Workers of the Standard-Setting Committee on Violence and Harassment in the World of Work, met with the committee and provided comments on her more recent ILO presentation. Sister Clarke-Walker represented Canada in the development of ILO convention 190. In her report to the CUPW NWC, she highlighted the achievements of the convention, but emphasized the need for Canadian Unions to push the federal government to ratify ILO 190. Sister Clarke-Walker said the following:

“Firstly, on human rights:

The Convention makes it clear: everyone has the right to a world of work free from violence and harassment including gender-based violence and harassment”, she went on to speak of gender based violence stating “The presence of gender-based violence and harassment in the world of work silences not only those who are targeted but those who fear retribution or retaliation if they speak up against the abuse and violence they witness.

This makes it one of the most effective tools of intimidation, and a significant barrier to the participation of women in the world of work.”

Canada's Unions marked the importance of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women on November 25<sup>th</sup>, and urged the federal government to live up to its commitments and finally **ratify and implement International Labour Organization Convention no. 190 (C-190) on Violence and Harassment**. And finally on January 31, 2023, Canada passed the ILO convention C-190 on the right to work without violence and harassment. the first global treaty that acknowledges the universal right to a world of work free from violence and harassment, which also establishes a clear framework for ending it.

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<sup>1</sup> Tarasuk V, Li T, Fafard St-Germain AA. (2022) Household food insecurity in Canada, 2021. Toronto: Research to identify policy options to reduce food insecurity (PROOF). Retrieved from <https://proof.utoronto.ca/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/221102/dq221102a-eng.htm>

## OUR WORK

In 2020 and 2021, the committee met on a virtual platform and convened on issues such as:

- Decriminalization of sex work;
- UN Convention 190 and a world of work free from violence and harassment;
- Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and Two Spirited persons (MMIWG2S); they asked that the red be capitalized;
- Intersectionality;
- Bystander training;
- Pronouns and exclusive language training.

In 2022, the committee met again in person and convened on the following issues:

- Sexual health and rights;
- Automation and precarious work;
- The rise of hate.

During the 2019-2023 term, the NWC introduced a special feature in *The Rose* magazine and on our National webpage and social media called **Trailblazers**. This new outline allowed us an opportunity to highlight Sisters in each Region who have built a legacy of exceptional dedication to the Union and our membership. These Sisters made the Union a better place, they blazed a trail for others to follow and led by example. Together these Sisters have made the world a better place and we salute them.

We hope that future National Women's Committees will continue in this way, carrying on a new tradition which builds meaningful relationships and encourages femtors in future generations and throughout CUPW's herstory.

We piloted new education materials highlighting Sisters, non-binary and gender diverse folks, like the gender neutral and pronoun training, and the Women's Committee handbook.

We expanded our learning by receiving training on sex work, sexual health and intersectionality. We took time to review CUPW's submissions to the ESDC on miscarriage and stillbirth leave, as well as bereavement leave, and Quebec's Safe Maternity Experience Program and we supported the expansion of CUPW's disability supports portal.

We made several recommendations to the National Executive Board, which included the following:

- That the National Executive Board authorize training for Sisters around identifying and dealing with sexual harassment in the workplace, with a budget of \$10,000 from budget line Education, General Fund;
- That the National Executive Board recommend to the Employer, through the Appendix "T" (1) committee, that the Appendix "HH" training be updated around harassment and sexual harassment in the workplace;

- The National Women's Committee recommends the National Executive Board authorize the National Secretary-Treasurer to send a letter to all Locals, encouraging them to make a financial donation to Action Canada or to local community organizations that advocate for sexual health, safe access to abortion and sexual education in Quebec and Canada, under section 9.37 (r) of the National Constitution;
- The National Women's Committee recommendation that CUPW consult on a national health and safety level with CPC that there be a national rollout of feminine hygiene products in all CPC washrooms and facilities.

## **NATIONAL WOMEN'S COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND NATIONAL EXECUTIVE BOARD RESPONSES**

### **Recommendation No. 1**

It is MOVED, SECONDED and CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY to adopt recommendation no. 1:

The National Women's Committee recommends the National Executive Board authorize a \$1,000 monthly sustaining donation, from October 2022 until April 2023 to "Action Canada", a non- profit organization that advocates for sexual health, safe access to abortion, and sexual education in Quebec and Canada, from budget line Coalition Support – General Fund.

### **Recommendation No. 2**

It is MOVED, SECONDED and CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY to adopt recommendation no. 2:

The National Women's Committee recommends the National Executive Board authorize the National Secretary-Treasurer to send a letter to all Locals, encouraging them to make a financial donation to Action Canada or to local community organizations that advocate for sexual health, safe access to abortion and sexual education in Quebec and Canada, under section 9.37 (r) of the National Constitution.

### **Recommendation No. 3**

It is MOVED, SECONDED and CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY to adopt recommendation no. 3:

The National Women's Committee recommends the National Executive Board that the elected member or alternate to the National Women's Committee in each region be authorized to work one day virtually with the Sisters elected in Regional Offices in order to assist in drafting a report on the work of Region to be included in the NWC report to National Convention, and that this same elected member or alternate be provided an additional day to review the final draft of the National Women's Committee report with the National President and 1<sup>st</sup> National Vice-President on behalf of their Region.

#### **Recommendation No. 4**

It is MOVED, SECONDED and CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY to adopt recommendation no. 4:

The National Women's Committee recommends the National Executive Board that the National Office distribute a bulletin to all Locals to bring awareness and support towards violence against women during the entire month of November.

#### **Recommendation No. 5**

It is MOVED, SECONDED and CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY to adopt recommendation no. 5:

The National Women's Committee unanimously recommends the National Executive Board instruct the Resolution Committees to update Policy C-19 to state that the Union and its membership will work with their provincial federations of labour, labour council, FTQ and CLC to lobby provincial and federal governments to enact at least 10 days of paid leave for all victims of domestic violence and ensure safety and job security to all Canadians.

CUPW will continue to demand domestic violence leave through negotiation for all members.

#### **Recommendation No. 6**

It is MOVED, SECONDED and CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY to adopt recommendation no. 6 as amended:

The NEB will submit a resolution to recommend a National Women's Committee take place once every four years.

#### ***THE ROSE***

The annual publication took on a new look this term with exciting covers that captured the reader's attention from the start. From the stunning photo and gripping cover story "Becoming Gwyndolin - A Personal Story of Transitioning", the winter 2021 edition was a success for our readers. The winter 2022 edition cover story "From Victim to Survivor - One Woman's Brave Account" was an exposé of a sexual assault and harassment case at the post office and one Sister's battle to reclaim her life.

The members of the National Women's Committee made wonderful contributions to *The Rose*, writing articles, and working with CUPW staff to polish our stories and make them unique. We drew from our own experiences, which gave the stories life. We shared large parts of ourselves and opened up spaces for others to talk about their personal experiences. We can only hope that someday CUPW members will hear the callout for letters to the editor and make contributions on topics that are important.

*The Rose* welcomes letters to the editor. We will print letter from a CUPW member provided it:

- Is typed or written neatly;
- Includes the author's name, address, local and a phone number where they can be reached if there are problems;
- Is 400 words or less;
- Does not violate CUPW's policy opposing discrimination, and harassment against women, people of Colour, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people, lesbians, gays, bisexual and transgender individuals, people with different abilities, and/or any other CUPW policies and principles;

Union members may submit longer items for consideration as commentary pieces.

*The Rose* will withhold the author's name if necessary. Otherwise, the author's name and Local will appear.

*The Rose* will contact authors if there are problems with their letters. We accept letters by mail, fax and electronic mail.

## **REGIONAL REPORTS**

### ***Atlantic Region***

This term the women's committee focused attention on trailblazing by women of CUPW. Each region put forward names of CUPW members that paved the way for women. In 2022 the Atlantic Region submitted Ruth Larson's name to 'The Rose' magazine as the Atlantic Trailblazer, 34-year CUPW member. In 2021 the Atlantic Region submitted Jeanie Campbell's name to "The Rose" magazine as the Atlantic Trailblazer, CUPW Lifetime member. In 2020 the Atlantic Region submitted Alice Boudreau's name to "The Rose" magazine as the Atlantic Trailblazer, starting as an RSMC contractor in 1976 and becoming a CUPW member in 2002.

Our final selection for the 2023 Trailblazer was Sister Judy O'Keefe from the St. John's Local, who, like the other Sisters, was a great advocate on behalf of all Sisters in our Region. All these women have an amazing history with CUPW that we had the honor and privilege to interview and share their stories with all CUPW members. The Atlantic region held check-in meetings with many women within the Atlantic region, where it was brought to light that so many of our women had been struggling during this term.

When it became possible to hold an in-person meeting we opted to hold a regional women's retreat. The retreat took place September 7 to 9 /2022 at Broadleaf Ranch, Hopewell Hill, New Brunswick. Sisters came from all over the region for one of the first in-person events since the Covid 19 pandemic. The retreat focused on the region's women and the impact of the pandemic, burnout, healing, support and strategies to cope. The retreat brought to light the negative impact that the pandemic had on the women of the union for over a 2-year period, adding to the struggle faced by our members within the labour movement. The retreat provided the opportunity to come together to support each other as we unpacked the negative and worked towards strategies that we could take back to our locals to help us move forward in solidarity.

The Atlantic has a proud tradition of strong, smart, militant Sisters on the National Women's Committee and we know this will continue with the Sisters who will be taking on these roles and representing the Atlantic Region during the 2023-2027 term. Solidarity to all!

### ***Quebec Region***

The women's committees in the Quebec Region have seen little to no activity in recent years, with a few exceptions, such as several events in the Bas-Saint-Laurent and Gaspésie regions. These events, made possible thanks to FTQ affiliates and non-profit organizations, raised donations for various causes, such as for the fight against cancers affecting women. Among these events, a snowmobile ride raised \$217,000, and a motorcycle ride raised \$18,000.

In addition, the sale of barley sugar, dish towels and tickets to win a throw made by the local Cercle des fermières allowed us to provide clothing to children in need through the La Gigogne women's shelter. We also continue to collect free soaps and other items from hotel rooms during our training sessions. There are several upcoming events, such as an off-road vehicle ride, bingo and a comedy show, with proceeds going to women's cancer organizations.

The Biennial Women's Conference, organized in collaboration with the Montréal Local, was held virtually on October 4, 2021. As part of the event, we attended various conferences, including one prepared by the sisters of the Québec Local on femicides, and another on gender disparity in remote work, prepared by the Women's Committee. We were also treated to a presentation by Chantal Fleury, a comedian and speaker.

For the next few years, the objective of the Women's Committee will be to bring back local committees and to promote the improvement of the status of women in the workplace and involvement in the labour movement.

We now (finally) have a Facebook page, after three years of insisting that the Region get more involved online. I thank the new delegates of the Women's Committee. It is thanks to them that this page was created.

As the above examples show, I have always been involved in women's issues. My hope for the next Committee is that the Region becomes more aware of its work and offers assistance where needed.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all those who have helped me carry out our activities to improve the well-being of women.

### ***Metro-Montreal Region***

During the 2019-2023 mandate, the Metro-Montreal Region was unfortunately unable to participate in many activities due to the limits imposed by the COVID pandemic.



Nonetheless, Sisters from different postal facilities continued to collect donations and clothing for organizations supporting women. We held our wine and cheese event to celebrate March 8. When training sessions resumed, we collected hygiene products for women's shelters. Our biggest activity was the Quebec's Federation of Labour (FTQ) Biennial, which was held via Zoom in October 2021. In addition, we had the Quebec Women's Conference, which precedes the FTQ Biennial.

A 3-day course on Women's Leadership was held during a training session in the fall of 2022 and was very appreciated by the Sisters present. For many of the participants, it was their very first union education course.

For the next term, we need to ensure that we make up for lost time. Since we did not hold the Regional Women's Conference, it is important that we organize it as soon as possible. We also need to continue to encourage our Sisters' participation in union activities.

### ***Central Region***

Well it has been quite an interesting four years with a lot of ups and downs for the Central Region Women.

We started out the mandate working to bring light to human trafficking and how it is sadly a concern for the women of our region. Shortly into the mandate, however, with only two women working at the regional office I became the sole member representing our region with the departure of Maddie Cleroux. It has been difficult to navigate alone as a new Union Representative but with the help and guidance of others in the Union I made it to the other end. Thank you, ladies!

Covid brought struggles for all members, but the toll was hard felt by all the CUPW women of this region. With juggling careers and motherhood and schools shutting down, it was a lot to bear whether you were a mother, aunt, sister, grandmother or friend. It will be years before we can really understand the full ramifications of that time.

The Ottawa Local was busy this mandate. They participated in Day of Mourning, Gay Pride, and Labour Day Marches. They did a fantastic job fundraising; selling T-shirts, selling chocolate, 50/50 draws and selling baskets on tickets. With those funds they sent two Sisters to Chicago for Labour Notes and donating money to support Women's Shelters across the Ottawa area. Sadly, it would seem that this may be the only active Women's Committee in Central Region.

We brought forward resolutions that our Policy Committee passed to help with domestic violence leave, and though I acknowledge that men suffer this as well, women suffer a 5:1 ratio to men and it is on the rise. The province of Ontario, where Central Region lies, has the highest rates in the country.

A big loss for Central Region was the passing of Sister Cindi Moynahan-Forman. She was a trailblazer, mentor, hero and friend to so many sisters of this Union and will be forever sadly missed and always in our thoughts.

In April 2023, Central Region will be holding a Women Empowering Women Conference and we hope to touch on topics related to women's issues, wellness and building solidarity. In this we also hope to have the women of Central Region revive their Local Women's Committees and all start working together to help empower each other and all women in this region, how beautiful would that be....

### ***Metro-Toronto Region***

The COVID-19 pandemic has had severe and far-reaching repercussions for women. We have missed out on opportunities for learning, socializing and engagement. We have been strained and separated from the work we normally do.

Despite the impact of COVID-19, the Metro-Toronto Women's Committee was able to do some important work to try and offset some of the challenges that we faced these past few years.

Throughout the lockdown, we participated in several feminist webinar forums put on by both the OFL and CLC. Sister Sharon Paris, alternate Union Representative, is part of the FNIM circle at the OFL. They are working on guidelines for working with First Nations, Inuit and Metis elders, tobacco offering protocols, Two-Spirit, Indigenous smudge ceremonies, and Indigenous solidarity guidelines.

The Region also participated on the call for action in November of 2022, that the Feminist Alliance for International Action Canada had on the impact of the Indian Act on First Nations women.

In November 2022, we put on the very first women's retreat on mental wellness. This was an opportunity for 25 Sisters from the Toronto Local to gather to concentrate on self-care.

Some highlights include:

- Our discussion on the collective agreement and areas that support mental wellness and where we need change coming into negotiations;
- Sister Liz Parry facilitated an introduction to self-defence course, where the Sister led us on both physical and mental techniques of protection;
- An art activity where we created face masks that showed how we see ourselves versus how we think others see us (please see picture below of our amazing creations);

- Sister Sharon Paris facilitated a session on Turtle Island. It was an emotional but powerful presentation;
- Guest Speaker – Charlene Marshall facilitated a session on “Understanding Your Own Mental Health”. We discussed topics like anxiety, balance, habits, self-care, the impact on our families, health concerns, grief and loss, and resources to name a few.

In Charlene's words we left the retreat reenergized to learn, thrive, enjoy life, and take care of ourselves.

The Region was proud and honoured to put forth the following Sisters as *Trailblazers* within the Metro-Toronto Region: the late Sister Megan Whitfield, Sister Barb Jackson, and Sister Jane Marsh. These three influential Sisters have impacted and shaped the CUPW Toronto Local through their direct-action work, leadership, mentorship, and dedication.

We thank the Sisters of Toronto for their hard work, advocacy and resilience over the past four years. It has been our privilege sitting on the National Women's Committee on your behalf.

### ***Ontario Region***

We all faced many challenges this mandate. The pandemic prevented us from meeting in person. We did not let that deter us. We found a way to share our stories and experiences many of us learning to use video conferencing platforms for the first time. Through the creativity and work of the Sisters at the National Office, nationally we still met using this format as mandated. It was truly special when we were finally able to meet in person this past October.

We created resolutions that were presented to the National Executive Board for adoption to address women's issues with a lens that spanned the Region and entire country.

In Ontario, we continued to try to engage Women's Committees throughout the Region. We solicited through emails and listened to concerns and heard the challenges. These were discussed at our National meetings where we heard similar concerns most times.

Regionally, we were pleased to have some of our committees report back to us on their activities at our last National meeting. Windsor reported on an active committee, helping the community throughout the year. They reach out to and support non-profit organizations at Easter and Thanksgiving providing money or donated items.

They do a “pick a family” at Christmas raising donations for clothes, toys and food for families in need. They are regularly involved in outreach programs, hospices, and Hiatus House.

They are active in women's issues surrounding childcare. They keep a vigilant lens on mental health issues through the Mental Health Association.

They hold Tampon Tuesdays and support Period Product Partner, a program that launched in April of 2022, promoting free access to feminine hygiene products in public places, like schools, libraries, and private businesses. They promote and participate in "Shine the Light" every year and promote Hat and Glove drives during the winter months.

Kitchener reported involvement regularly promoting Tampon Tuesdays as well as promoting food drives throughout the year. They also do donations and drives surrounding the need for coats, hats, and gloves during the winter months. Additionally, actively participating through the year in the community when they can and see a need.

Hamilton reported doing a raffle, and in March of 2022, held their First Annual Purse Drive. This campaign challenged members to donate a purse full of feminine hygiene products or donate items to fill a purse with these products or any hygiene items that a women's shelter might need. It was a huge success and Interval House in Hamilton sent the Local a wonderful letter that we posted at the depots and plan to let members know how much it was appreciated.

The plans for the next drive in 2023 are happening as this report is written. Hamilton is hoping for it to be an even bigger success. This committee also advocates regular donations to food banks and women's shelters and tries to keep a constant lens on gender-based violence and mental health issues.

Women especially marginalized demographics were impacted significantly by the pandemic, something as a Region we researched and contributed to through an article in our National Union's publication *The Rose*. It was called the Shadow Pandemic. *The Rose* as a whole saw tremendous work done with contributions by all the Regions' Sisters through the guidance and assistance of the great staff at the National Office.

When we resumed some in-person Regional meetings, the members as a whole pulled together bringing down their room sundries for collection and donation to local shelters in the respective cities they were held in. Thanks to the members in those locations for getting these supplies to the places they knew they were needed.

As a Region, we hope to continue to find ways to promote Women's Committees and continue to try to bring attention to women's issues whenever we can in as many communities as we can. The pandemic made planning conferences challenging venues were hard to secure. We are confident that we will be able to get back to having a conference next mandate and are excited and dedicated for this to happen. Our Region proudly sees the participation of Sisters in leadership roles both regionally and locally.

Thank you to all the Sisters of our Region that make our Union stronger. I know we don't always hear about all the important things women do in your Locals. Nevertheless, we know you are always appreciated.

### ***Prairie Region***

The Prairie Region's Women's Committees, like all the other Regions was hit hard with COVID-19. There have not been many active Local committees, but the ones that were active had the majority of activities and meetings on hold throughout the pandemic.

### **Edmonton Local Women's Committee**

The Edmonton Local Women's Committee hosted a women's Equinox "Reclaiming our Power" in October 2019. The committee has been hosting these equinoxes for many years and unfortunately had to put them on hold. There have been discussions on having some joint Equinox with Edmonton, Calgary, Red Deer and Lethbridge. The committee took part in a commemoration ceremony for the Montreal Massacre on December 6, 2019, participated in Women's Day marches and raised money, pajamas, diapers, and other toiletries for local women's shelters.

The latest work of the Edmonton Women's Committee was a meeting with the director of operations in Edmonton to discuss incidents of sexual harassment and the overall disrespect of women in EMPP. The committee demanded CPC management at all levels undertake education on harassment and bullying. The local women also discussed the need for accommodation for women experiencing menstrual period issues and the need to have CPC supply free menstrual products in all facilities. This opened a pilot project for the need for menstrual products to all regions.

### **Winnipeg Local Women's Committee**

The Winnipeg Local Women's Committee has been doing a lot of work in regard to feminine products starting with an audit of the installations in Winnipeg to see what types of menstrual products are available for the women who work there. Most of the depots did not have products at all.

These issues were raised with the CPC Winnipeg director and there is a commitment to having JLL look at where they have machines and where they are needed without charge.

Winnipeg have had discussions in relation to the women who worked at the plant, about the way some male supervisors talk to them versus the way they talk to the male workers. Reports of ordering them around rather than asking, automatically going to a woman worker when assigning extra work, like cleaning up on a backed-up runout. They discussed putting together a brief survey on gender-based issues women may face at work, then have the committee members on the work floor to talk to our Sisters and asking they fill it out.

The Winnipeg Local also put forward a resolution at the Regional Conference that our Union advocate for the affordability and access to period products to public places.

### **Calgary Women's Committee**

The committee went from a very active committee who had many laughs and helped a lot of women, to a screeching halt because of COVID-19. The committee did not choose to meet over zoom and waited until the restrictions were lifted to meet in person. In the last four years, the committee has focused mostly on raising money for different charities, have made items to sell at a craft fair, sold items at May Day celebrations, t-shirt sales, silent auctions and 50-50 draws. Money is donated to adopt single families at Christmas and Kiva International to name a few.

The Women's Committee initiated a jacket donation, fill a purse with hygiene products, and fill a bag of hygiene products for men in need that went to the local homeless shelter the Mustard Seed.

In addition to this charity work, the committee hosted two self-defence courses for women. This was a huge success and the women and girls that participated said they were much empowered.

The Calgary Committee has a great vision going forward to have workshops to empower and support women. Some ideas are women under the hood (learning vehicle maintenance), financial budgeting, freezer meals, pebble art night and additional self-defence workshops. The committee is extremely proud of the CUPW t-shirt quilt they handmade, and raised over \$1,100, which hangs proudly in the Regional Office.

### **Red Deer Women's Committee**

The Red Deer Women's Committee is always trying different things to revive their committee. In September, the Red Deer Women's Committee hosted a family picnic with games and a potluck. They have also made a blanket out of old postie uniforms, and other items to raffle off.

The Prairie and Pacific Regions have collaborated on the Regional Women's Conference held each term. The Conference was held in Harrison Hot Springs, and there were a record number of applicants. We wish we could have included more women. The conference had some great speakers; Balbir and Jaspreet Gurm spoke about NEVR-Network to eliminate violence in relationships, Shelly Saje Ricci presented how the labour movement can work toward allyship and reconciliation. She also hosted "Dream Balloons".

In addition, we had a chance to listen to Shellie Bird explain more about the childcare fund which is part of the collective agreement. The participants were able to choose workshops to attend such as yoga, guest speaker about "Sex Work is Work", CUPW Women's History, "Sister to Sister", and "Forest Therapy" to name a few.

The Prairie women were extremely grateful to the Pacific Women's Committee for all the hard work they did planning this event and sharing the experience with them. The conference was a huge success.

There is a lot of work to do next term in the Prairie Region to get Women's Committees up and functioning in the other Locals in this Region. If you are a woman, or identify as one, and want assistance in getting a committee in your Local up and running, don't hesitate to reach out to Prairie Women's Committee.

### ***Pacific Region***

In this 4-year term, the Pacific region has seen a shift in women's involvement in the union. Currently, out of 36 locals, sisters hold approximately 75 percent of the total local executive positions. 24 out of 36 president positions are held by women and many are members within the equity seeking groups.

At the beginning of the term, the Victoria Local focused on having bake sales and 50/50 draws to raise money for the Threshold Housing Society, a non-profit organization that serves at-risk youth that are experiencing homelessness, aging out of care, or fleeing violence in the home.

They also fundraised for the Coldest Night of the Year, a yearly wintery walk that raises money for charities serving people experiencing hurt, hunger, and homelessness.

In February of each year, the women of the Vancouver Local and other locals marched honouring Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit Peoples (MMIWG2S+), they came together to grieve the loss of sisters, remembering the women who are still missing and demand an end to gendered based violence, poverty, and racism.

In March of each year, sisters joined in celebrating International Women's Day events which recognizes women's achievements and is a time to raise awareness on progressions made towards achieving gender equality and the work that remains to be done.

This term the national women's committee introduced the trailblazing series that launched in 2020. This series captured the herstory of powerful sisters who devoted themselves to ensuring that there was a place for women in our union. The Pacific Region had four notable sisters highlighted so far: Sisters Marion Pollack, Mavis Wiebe, Allyson Mayo and Amber Mooney. Each of these sisters strived to remove barriers, supported women or those who identified as women, and worked on finding solutions to address women's issues in the workplace, union, and society. Their loyalty, determination, and advocacy to improving women's rights reminds us of how important it is for sisters to come together and organize around the ongoing challenges that women continue to face every day.

In June of 2021, the Federal Government officially passed bill C-5 to make September 30 the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. On September 30, 2021, Sisters from across the region participated in these events by wearing Orange T-shirts and having discussions about the impacts and tragedies of residential schools.

In September of 2022, The Pacific and Prairie Regions collaborated to coordinate a joint Women's Committee Conference held in Harrison, BC. There was a total of 69 participants with a combination of new and active members.

Sisters engaged in a variety of courses such as: Networking to Eliminate Violence in Relationships, Financial Planning, Culture of Consent, Pensions, CUPWs Women's History, Labour Councils, How the Labour Movement Can Work Toward Allyship and Reconciliation, CUPW Child Care Fund, Pronouns, STDP and How to Form a Women's Committee. There was no shortage of resources or tools and sisters worked together to build a stronger network not only within the regions but nationally as well.

Since the conference, the Kelowna Local returned to their work floors with the knowledge they acquired and started organizing to form a women's committee. They canvassed sisters and collected over 50 contacts of women showing interest in participating in a women's committee. During their first meeting together, there was over 20 participants. The group met to discuss ways in which they can engage women in the union, support different organizations within the community and raise awareness around women's issues. This work has encouraged other locals such as the Central Island East to start establishing women's committees.

In the coming term, the regions focus is to assist locals in developing local women's committees. Given the attacks on women's rights over the course of the last four years, this work is more important than ever.

The Pacific Regions National Women's Committee Representatives want to thank all active sisters (locally, regionally, and nationally) for their devotion to advancing women in our union.

## IN CONCLUSION

The National Women's Committee members feel CUPW must act in an intentional way and move beyond the surface of intersectionality by reviewing gender issues as they relate to low-income earners, poverty, systemic racism and employment, as well as environmental racism and climate change.

For the next National Women's Committee, we would like to make a couple of recommendations, in no particular order of priority.

- That priority be given to scheduling and hosting an In-Person National Women's Conference which incorporates plenary sessions, education, training tools and resources.



- Regular reporting on issues that affect women and gender diverse folks needs to be a priority of the Union.
- We recommend that the Women's advocate training be workshopped and integrated into CUPW education and training materials. Broken down into small sections it can be used for plenary sessions and caucuses.

The National Women's Committee is an inherent part of CUPW and must continue to be at the forefront of the work we do as a Union. With the diverse membership that CUPW represents, we must create a movement in which we all see ourselves as an integral part and we must not take women's rights for granted, we must not characterize this work as easy, it is not.

While the National Women's committee explored many topics important to the rights and advancement of women, we barely scratched the surface of the omnipresent matter of Sisterhood and what it really means to support other sisters in our Union. We believe that CUPW would benefit from exploring ways of breaking the cycle of female rivalry in our Union. This happens when women use their position, power or privilege to keep other women down and mistreat or humiliate other women. Do we judge other women for choices we wouldn't personally make? Do we criticize women over minor issues and forgive men? Do we compete, or do we collaborate?

Going forward into the next four years we may want to ask ourselves how our actions, comments, judgment and treatment of other women perpetuate behaviours and teachings of sexism and patriarchy. Does this happen out of fear? Is it because there are too few seats at table. This scarcity mindset can have the power to pit women against each other. What impacts do patriarchal ideologies have on how we navigate through conflict and what does it look like to explore that meaningfully? Being curious and constantly exploring our fears will help future generations uncover biases and combat stereotypes. Together we can un-learn old habits and re-learn new ways of supporting and lifting one another up.

This report has been developed both as an affirmation that we are proud of the work women have done and will continue to do, to make gains. But this report is also a declaration that Women are in a constant struggle. This is not a cry for help, but a rally cry. We fight every day to be recognized, to be taken seriously, for our rights to equal pay, bodily autonomy, reproductive rights, freedoms, property, a life free from violence and discrimination and as we fight for each other, we fight for our future generations.

We are grandmothers, mothers, daughters, sisters, aunties and friends and within us are the future leaders and change makers. We struggle to desperately hold on to the wins we have notched, while fighting for those who still have so much more to gain.

The best protection we have is our courage and we must use it.

In Solidarity,

Your National Women's Committee

**DISSIDENT REPORT  
FROM THE  
QUEBEC REGION  
REPORT OF THE  
NATIONAL WOMEN’S COMMITTEE FOR  
2019-2023  
IN PREPARATION FOR THE 2023 NATIONAL CONVENTION**

**This dissident report is an integral part of the report submitted by the National Women’s Committee to the 2023 National Convention**

I, Judith Nadeau, member of the National Women’s Committee (NWC) for the Quebec Region, as a regional union officer, record my dissent for the section of the report on the Quebec Region.

I, Audrey Pepin, member of the NWC for the Quebec Region, as a regional union officer, also record my dissent for this section.

Our dissent is directed at the Quebec Region’s section as part of the report of the NWC. We record our dissent based on the following.

The report unfortunately focuses mostly on one part of the region and one sister’s perspective. It does not reflect the participation and activities carried out by other local women’s committees and affiliated organizations.

The report overlooks the following accomplishments:

- Local committees partnered with women’s groups to offer workshops on the meaning of being a feminist and work-life balance.
- A pen sale was organized to offer Christmas gifts to children in need.
- Warm clothing was also collected for homeless women.
- Actions were organized to celebrate International Women’s Day:
  - a) Coworkers offered each other roses;
  - b) Others shared a dinner at an event organized by the FTQ’s Regional Council on the theme “Showing Respect”

- Proceeds from 50-50 draws on the work floor were donated to women's organizations for the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.
- Speakers introduced a group of sisters to Kanak, a Labrador that helps victims and witnesses of crimes or tragic events throughout the judicial process.
- Soaps and bath accessories were collected and donated to a women's shelter.
- Editing and publication in March 2020 of *Vision-Elle*, a regional women's news bulletin written in collaboration with local women's committees, which was available for the first time in both official languages.
- A new women's committee was created and new sisters started to get involved.
- Sisters from our region sat on committees or regional councils of the FTQ, one of whom has been coordinating the FTQ's network of social stewards since October 2022.

The report of the Quebec Region was sent unilaterally to the national level in a time frame that did not allow for any modifications, corrections or amendments to be made, and without first being submitted to the other members of the regional women's committee.

In addition, we disagree with the way in which the creation of the Facebook page was reported. The Regional Office has answered requests on that matter and offered the answers and support available, and issues were always shared with those concerned.

Issues related to the distribution of *The Rose* magazine have also been raised at the national level.

Sisters in the region have shown leadership and solidarity, and their engagement throughout the term was remarkable. The report as presented does not highlight their achievements.

A report should provide a clear picture of the situation and enough background. We want the positive actions and involvement of our sisters to be recognized. Change will not happen if we remain isolated; together we are stronger.

We record our dissent for the above-mentioned reasons.



Judith Nadeau  
Regional Education and Organization Officer  
Member of the National Women's Committee  
Committee



Audrey Pepin  
Regional Union Representative  
Member of the National Women's  
Committee