

NUPGE

Women's Training Session

January 2013



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working together





The National Union's Women's Training Session brought together activists from across the country to discuss two important initiatives:

- the Quality of Women's Lives project
- the All Together Now! campaign's Women 4 Change.

Quality of Women's Lives

The Quality of Women's Lives project focuses on the issue of life/work balance and the additional stresses women take on with a disproportionate share of family caregiving and as workplace responsibilities continue to increase.

Life/work balance has been an important issue for the National Union and the Advisory Committee on Women's Issues (ACWI) for several years. Beginning with a survey conducted in 2010, the project received responses from hundreds of women from across the union who shared their concerns about increased stress due to juggling responsibilities such as child and elder care, growing personal and family health concerns, increased workplace pressure and overall economic insecurity. The results created a clear picture of how these issues directly affect women's ability to participate in union activities, volunteering and engaging in public and political life – including positions of power and influence.

The project has also highlighted how the economic crisis has had a greater negative impact on women, as have the resulting austerity measures by reducing access to quality public services. Many of these services, such as long-term care, early childhood education and health care are services where women tend to be the majority of workers and users.

Women 4 Change

Building upon the Quality of Women's Lives, the Women 4 Change (W4C) component of the ATN campaign concentrates on broader public policies which must change in areas such as child care, elder care and health care in order to improve women's economic future.

The Women 4 Change educational program will help move the message forward that public policies such as health care, child care, education, social services and tax fairness must become a priority for all levels of government. Looking at income inequality from women's perspective, Women 4 Change will build a movement to ensure that affordable, accessible and quality public services are a priority for all levels of government.





G GOOD WORK

JAMES CLANCY, NUPGE National President, greeted participants and thanked them for their dedication to improving the status of all women in society and workplaces. He highlighted specific actions they've taken through NUPGE and their Component unions to fight for women's equality, including:

- Opposing the Harper government's cuts to Status of Women Canada, cancellation of the Court Challenges Program and elimination of the gun registry.
- Fighting for better pay equity legislation, a national child care program, an expanded Canada Pension Plan and better long-term care for the elderly in Canada.
- Working to ensure Motion 312 (a back-door attempt to reopen the abortion debate in Canada) was defeated in the House of Commons.
- Participating in Days of Action to end violence and gender discrimination against women, including honouring the victims of the Montreal Massacre every year on December 6th, and supporting the Native Women's Association of Canada's Sisters In Spirit Initiative and their call for a national inquiry into missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in Canada.
- Building support for Bill C-400 which, if passed by the House of Commons, would have established a national affordable housing strategy to help tackle homelessness which includes a growing number of women and children.

Clancy provided background on the key elements of the conference by outlining the core analysis of NUPGE's All Together Now! campaign. He explained that rising income inequality is a serious problem in Canada and it has severe social, health, economic, and democratic costs for all Canadians but especially women. The attack on labour rights, lack of a modern industrial strategy, no tax fairness and cuts to public services have increased income inequality and made life/work balance a lot worse for women. He emphasized the need for Women 4 Change to use the training and tools they receive at the training session in their ongoing fight to improve the quality of women's lives.



ONE VOICE

BRENDA HILDAHL welcomed participants to the training session and noted that the session was developed through NUPGE's ACWI. She introduced the members of the ACWI: Anne Davis (HSABC/NUPGE), Mariana Burstyn (HSAA/NUPGE), Mary Ann Harrison (SGEU/NUPGE), Deb Jamerson (MGEU/NUPGE), Elaine Kerr (OPSEU/NUPGE), Sylvia Melanson (NBUPPE/NUPGE), Dawn Ferris (NSGEU/NUPGE) and Dina DesRoches (PEIUPSE/NUPGE). ACWI members Arlene Sedlickas (NAPE/NUPGE) and Stephanie Smith (BCGEU/NUPGE) were unable to attend.

Hildahl stated that history has proven when women put their voices together, they can change history. She stressed that we must join together and raise our voices now! Women's equality has been under direct attack since 2006 when the Harper government began its series of cuts and changes to public policies and services.

The list includes the elimination of funding for a universal child care and early learning program, the elimination of "gender equality" from the mandate of Status of Women Canada, the elimination of the funding to the court challenges program and the continuing cuts to public services, just to name a few.

Hildahl noted that January 28th marked the 25th anniversary of the Morgentaler Decision. On this date, 25 years ago, the Supreme Court of Canada overturned the criminal abortion law and gave women the right to abortion on request without restriction in Canada. It was a day of celebration for the thousands of pro-choice activists who had worked diligently for decades to win abortion rights in Canada. Hildahl remarked that this is a great example of what women can do when they join their voices together.

She stressed that together we can make a change for all women—not just union women. We must fight to make changes for ourselves, our sisters, daughters, mothers and our grandmothers!



KEYNOTE

■ Meg Soper

MEG SOPER, professional speaker and comedienne, is recognized as one of the premier motivators on life balance in Canada. Meg has shared the stage with such celebrities as Ray Romano and Ellen DeGeneres.

In a humorous but extremely informative manner, Soper walked the participants through the struggle to obtain life/work balance. She reinforced the importance of women taking time for themselves to ensure their own well-being while providing care to so many others. Soper strongly suggested that individuals set aside 30 minutes a day dedicated to doing something for themselves.

Soper also encouraged participants to meet life's stresses such as child care, work, traffic and housework with a positive, strong attitude. Participants were asked to stand up, put their shoulders back, raise their chin and shout "Bring it on!" to all these stresses.

Soper also explored the differences between the generations – baby boomers, Gen X and Gen Y. She noted that each generation responds to and views family responsibilities and work responsibilities differently.





TRAINING

Women 4 Change Training

■ Mike Luff

MIKE LUFF explained that Women 4 Change is the latest initiative in the National Union's All Together Now! Campaign for public services, good jobs and tax fairness. Women 4 Change provides a gender-based analysis and perspective of the issues that the All Together Now! Campaign is raising.

Women 4 Change will move the message forward that public policies such as child care, elder care, social services, and education must become a priority of all levels of government.

Luff explained the purpose of the W4C presentation is to educate and mobilize people - our members, coworkers, friends, and neighbours - by using word of mouth communication. The presentation highlights the importance of public services and why good jobs and tax fairness are so important to fight against growing income inequality.

The W4C presentation is designed to outline the main issues, examine the impact of these issues on women's lives and review ways for more women to get involved. Luff flagged numerous areas in the presentation where it can be customized and personalized.



PRIMER

Getting the Message Out: Social Media Primer ■ Deborah Duffy

DEBORAH DUFFY walked participants through the world of social media. She explained how massive and constantly growing the industry of social networking is. Corporations and employers are investing time and energy in social media to share their messages; the Prime Minister took to Twitter recently to communicate to Canadian voters how hard he is working (“a day in the life of the PM”). She stressed how important it is for women and labour to play a role in this new form of connecting, communicating and organizing.

Duffy identified the most popular and useful networks for building an online campaign: websites, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, and provided concrete examples of how each tool can be used to get your message out.

She also cautioned people not to only focus on social media to spread their message. As valuable as social media is to expand the reach / build a broader support base for a campaign, Duffy argued it is not the only way to campaign. Citing the example of the All Together Now! Campaign, which uses a member-to-member approach as well as a social media strategy, she emphasized the importance of working at both levels.

It’s never too late to get started on social media, Duffy encouraged. Social media is not going away so use the tool and let your voice be heard.





BALANCE

Quality of Women's Lives Life/Work Balance

■ **Gaela Nelson**

GAELA NELSON, a researcher and writer, began by providing an overview of the realities for working women. She noted that despite the fact more women are in the paid workforce (82% of women aged 25 to 54) they still perform most of the unpaid household work and provide more caregiving duties, such as child care and elder care, than men do.



This has led to growing life/work conflict for women. The results are increasing levels of stress, health impacts of stress and injury, financial impacts of lost time at work, less time with children, family and friends and less time for civic or union engagement.

These issues were identified by participants of NUPGE's Quality of Women's Lives 2010 survey. The survey results indicated long work hours, lack of flexible hours and lack of paid leave for family emergencies were barriers to obtaining life/work balance and that workplace policies that reflected these needs were the most wanted policies.

Nelson identified several public policy recommendations that would help reduce life/work stress for women including implementing a national child care program, developing and implementing a national elder care program and ensuring labour legislation includes specific language around long-term leave for caregiving.

Nelson provided an overview of the Quality of Women's Lives Life/Work Educational. It provides union leaders, activists and members with ideas on how to identify life/work issues within the union and the workplace, examines solutions and strategies to promote life/work balance and provides tools for union members and activists to take action at the level of the community, the workplace and in public policy. It uses presentations, interactive exercises and facilitated discussions and has been developed in a module format to allow flexibility to design 2-hour, 4-hour or full-day workshops.

WORKSHOPS

DURING THE TRAINING session, participants took part in two workshops. They enthusiastically talked, debated, shared and strategized. Below is a summary of their hard work.

Women 4 Change Workshop

STRATEGIES FOR OUTREACH:

- * think about how to get the message out
- * inform the misinformed or a new audience
- * make the information relevant to audience
- * use the campaign information as a resource for lobbying
- * create posters to advertise training sessions
- * send out special invitations to potentially interested people and groups



- * tailor presentation through gender lens
- * when doing presentation talk about spending priorities, governments need to know where to put increased revenue (not fighter jets)
- * put on joint union workshops (OPSEU/MGEU) to show solidarity on the issues
- * start to educate members who are new to the ideas
- * tell personal stories
- * use statistics to back up stories

- * bring in as guest speakers people who are affected (e.g. woman from Coal Harbour protesting EI cuts)
- * create a national presence by organizing events (e.g. pick a date across the country to wear W4C t-shirt)



- * find ways that unions can help women become more comfortable with the issues
- * talk about how public services help people and families
- * include information about how your work impacts women
- * talk about how the workplace has changed since the start of your career and what factors have contributed to those changes
- * link everyday experiences to what has happened
- * encourage more women to become involved in politics
- * practice potential scenarios and one-on-one conversations with each other to build skills and confidence
- * find resources to help prove your point (e.g. use MissRepresentation.org for women's portrayal in media)
- * collect resources about how women talk about taxation
- * connect the idea of women and voting
- * open up about harsh realities of different life situations
- * talk to audience about what life will look like in 10-20 years if income inequality is not tackled
- * talk about how income inequality affects caregivers
- * find ways to empower women

- * connect issues, not just economic costs but social and environmental costs as well
- * mention recession's possible double whammy for women: husband's lost private sector jobs plus threat of own public sector job loss
- * use media (letters to editor, write community articles and opinion pieces)



GROUPS AND EVENTS THAT WOMEN 4 CHANGE CAN SPEAK TO AND DO A PRESENTATION FOR:

- * Labour Councils
- * Federations of Labour
- * other unions
- * union conventions
- * worker groups
- * other organizations' conventions
- * women's dinners
- * different workplace sectors
- * university and college students
- * food banks
- * International Women's Day events
- * politicians
- * community groups

- * women's shelters
- * seniors
- * boards of directors
- * 'lunch and learn' sessions
- * other women in the union
- * unions working together in the community
- * coworkers from other unions in your workplace
- * community town meetings
- * non-profit agencies
- * women's groups
- * student unions (high school and post-secondary)
- * immigration support agencies
- * youth groups



- * youth camps (CLC)
- * week long schools
- * women's committee events (e.g. host mothers and daughters conference for members)

Life/Work Educational Workshop

1. What are the biggest life / work balance issues facing women today?

- * women not having personal time
- * caring for family members: child and elder care, sandwich generation
- * difficulties prioritizing everything (have it all, do it all)
- * shift work
- * employer attitudes to workers' issues
- * workload at work, less resources
- * transient spouses (farming, transportation)
- * working more than full time jobs or multiple jobs
- * physical and mental health
- * family health
- * prioritizing stress management
- * volunteering
- * financial responsibilities



Of these issues what are the top three?

- * prioritizing/personal time
- * child and elder care
- * employer/employee attitude, workload and culture of workforce

2. Have the challenges of maintaining a healthy life/work balance increased as a result of the 2008 recession?

* Yes!



Why?

- * lack of job security
- * threats to/lack of pensions, not a Defined Benefit Plan or none at all
- * increasing family obligations
- * increasing commuting time
- * less discretionary spending
- * increased food bank use
- * increased hours of work, multiple jobs

Are the issues different from the ones women were facing prior to 2008?

- * No, but the issues are magnified more by:
 - increased attack on public services and in social services which deal with the most vulnerable (where women are the majority of the workforce)
 - increased stress of job loss
 - decrease in social services to support people
 - diminished savings
 - lack of retirement planning
 - lack of pension or threat to pension

3. What has the impact of the economic recession been on your life?

At work?

- * takes away ability to focus on big picture issues (poverty, AIDs), makes people focus more on individual areas/issues
- * people are scared and stressed
- * falling further behind leading to domestic strife
- * less team/more individualistic efforts, not standing up/ supporting each other
- * stress among clients (e.g. mental health), and workers take that stress home
- * increased costs of basic necessities
- * wages not keeping up
- * deterioration of families
- * increased use of food banks
- * increased addiction issues



- * financial stress
- * education costs
- * working longer to get pension or to afford to retire

Have these new pressures affected the quality of your life?

- * Yes!

How?

- * lives more fragmented, not as whole
- * need to help broader family members
- * new pressure feeds into stress



4. What strategies have you used to be able to cope with the increased responsibilities and stress?

- * eating (ice cream, comfort food)
- * carve out time for selves
- * partners stepping up to take on (more) family responsibilities
- * union involvement becomes “me time”
- * spending more time with family
- * drugs/alcohol
- * shopping
- * speaking out
- * yoga
- * working less / more
- * prescribed medications
- * spending time with positive people
- * reading
- * being outside
- * taking vacation, using lieu days
- * focusing on bucket list – trying to do things now

5. What other places can you look to for support in coping with these challenges?

- * families
- * union family
- * your village (community), neighbours, friends
- * community drop-in centres



- * workers health and safety centre resources
- * employee assistance programs
- * building activism and education will build support networks
- * social services
- * resources (massage)

6. Are there things that the government, your employer or your union could do to help women achieve more life/work balance?

Government:

- * national child care/elder care programs
- * changing tax structure
- * improving health care system
- * improving assistance for families with special needs children
- * legislating worker family provisions

Employer:

- * implement effective wellness programs in workplace which work for everyone
- * provide on-site wellness services
- * negotiate wellness funds
- * foster change in culture of how work gets done
- * create affordable on-site child care
- * additional days for sick leave
- * additional days for compassionate leave
- * elder care leave
- * provide proper kitchen/eating area rather than desk

Union:

- * effective outreach campaigns to members to educate on life/work balance
- * negotiate collective agreement language
- * once negotiated, replicate language in other sectors within union



- * integrate life/activist balance into process (motions by email instead of meetings)
- * develop or improve upon child care reimbursement policies
- * develop union policies to address imbalance

Members:

- * educate ourselves and each other
- * support each other
- * help change culture

7. If you could solve one major life/work balance issue for yourself or other women, what would the issue be?

- * quality child care
- * occupational stress
- * learn how to articulate how life/work imbalance impacts our lives
- * flex time
- * bring workforce into 21st century
- * elder care
- * greater access to support or programs
- * flexible hours
- * improved financial assistance
- * elder day programming with transportation



What would your solution be?

- * national child care
- * occupational health specialists
- * 24 hour child care

8. If life/work issues remain unaddressed, what do you think the implications are?

- * losing programs which have been fought for or not maintained or improved
- * health issues (physical manifestation of stress)
- * women give up jobs, work part-time (loss of income, loss of confidence)
- * fabric of society continues to erode
- * worried/scared moving us to an individualistic society
- * decreased productivity
- * decreased coping skills
- * unemployment



Participants



BCGEU

Carol Adams

HSABC

Anne Davis

Leila Lolua

HSAA

Mariana Burstyn

Mary Dahr

Jodi Skage

SGEU

Mary Ann Harrison

MGEU

Michelle Gawronsky

Darlene Adamson

Kaye Annie Byfield

Lee Edwards

Laurie Geseron

Paula Hamm

Deb Jamerson

Teresa Loucks

Crystal Painter

Brenda Neiles

Shannon Reynolds

OPSEU

Anne Bradstreet

Mary Cory

Felicia Fahey

Elaine Kerr

Janet Heymann

Heather Hoddinott

Sara Labelle

Dora Robinson

Edie Strachan

Jennifer Van Zetten

NBUPPE

Susie Proulx-Daigle

Nicki MacAfee

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