



**FINAL REPORT
2005 PSAC NATIONAL WOMEN'S
CONFERENCE**



National Conference • Vancouver • February 17-20 , 2005

*Changing
the Face of Power*

*Féminisons
le pouvoir*

Conférence nationale • Vancouver • 17 au 20 février 2005



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GREETINGS FROM THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT AND THE 2005 WOMEN'S CONFERENCE CO-CHAIRS

Sisters and Brothers:

The 2005 National Women's Conference marks an important time of reflection and renewal for the women activists of our Union. Even as the long and exhausting struggle for pay equity has put the PSAC on the frontlines of the struggle for women's equality, both new and old issues continue to surface for women and, of course, PSAC women continue to rise to the challenge. This Conference, attended by over 200 women from all parts of the country, was truly a bridge and an opportunity in many different ways, and crucial issues were brought to the floor.

The theme of our 8th National Women's Conference was:

"Changing the Face of Power"

In keeping with this theme, the Conference featured speakers who directly addressed and provided examples of what women are doing to change the face of power that remains, after decades of struggle, overwhelmingly male. Our panellists talked about how to fight corporate globalization in concrete ways, both inspiring and challenging the delegates to do the same. By sharing their experiences of resistance

GREETINGS FROM THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT AND THE 2005 WOMEN'S CONFERENCE CO-CHAIRS

and struggle, they provided us with meaningful ways to stand up to the corporate globalization machine.

Our keynote speaker is the founder of a groundbreaking new political movement which will become a force to be reckoned with in Quebec politics. Option Citoyenne is showing Canadian women and their sisters world-wide that there are other options than the status quo, and through its example, is setting an encouraging precedent for us.

The workshops we proposed to our participants sought to equip them with tools to effect real change in their political and social landscapes. The resolutions debates were vibrant and engaging. For many sisters, this was the first time they had an opportunity to share their view with all of us and shape the political agenda of their union. We hope that attending workshops and debating resolutions was an empowering experience for all participants.

We want to also take this opportunity to thank the members of the Steering Committee and Resolutions Committee for all their hard work in putting this important conference together.

And finally, we want to thank all women activists for having chosen to get involved in our Union. Union work requires a lot of effort, it takes time away from our families, and it requires many other sacrifices, particularly from those who are already shouldering the burden of caregiving and the "triple day", and who continue to face gender-based discrimination in their communities and workplaces. Our Union has been and will remain strong because of our sisters' participation and ongoing commitment to equality and justice.

NATIONAL CONFERENCE COMMITTEES

Steering Committee

The PSAC established a Steering Committee for the National Women's Conference whose mandate was to put forward recommendations to the Alliance Executive Committee on the theme and objectives of the Conference.

The Committee members discussed and debated a background paper with the overall objective of linking women's rights to the community and Labour and specifically to the overall vision of the PSAC. The members of the Steering Committee made a direct contribution in setting the political tone and direction of the Conference. Their input was essential in the selection of our workshop topics as well as our panellists.

They also met during the Conference to discuss any issue requiring their attention and to make immediate recommendations to resolve outstanding issues.

Without their commitment, their leadership and their experience, an event such as this one would never happen. On behalf of all the delegates, observers and guests, thank you for your contribution.

NATIONAL CONFERENCE COMMITTEES

MEMBERS OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE

Sister Patty Ducharme,
Chair of the National Women's Conference Steering Committee

Sister Christine Collins
Sister Cheryl Lucier
Sister Jo-Anne Smith
Sister Leila White
Sister Ghislaine Jalbert
Sister Irene Howell
Sister Joanne Ursino

Resolutions Committee

The primary purpose of the Resolutions Committee is to expedite Conference business by reworking each resolution into a form which will be acceptable to the Conference delegates.

In some cases, much deliberation and debate was required by Committee members. The Committee agreed on a specific recommendation for each resolution and it became part of the Resolutions Committee's Report to Conference. The Committee recommendation is usually one of concurrence or non-concurrence. The delegates vote on the Committee's recommendation.

The Committee also established its priorities for the presentation of the resolutions including late resolutions and emergency resolutions. Accordingly, the Committee members met many times over the course of the Conference.

On behalf of all the delegates, observers and guests, thank you for your hard work and your valuable contribution.

NATIONAL CONFERENCE COMMITTEES

MEMBERS OF THE RESOLUTIONS COMMITTEE

Sister Robyn Benson,
Chair of the National Women's Conference Resolutions Committee

Sister Joyce Giles
Sister Valerie Fargey
Sister Maureen Doherty
Sister Tamara Kozlowska
Sister Danielle Dubuc
Sister Debbie Graham
Sister Cindy Little

CONFERENCE OBJECTIVES

Back in October 2003, the National Board of Directors (NBoD) of the PSAC established the following five broad priorities for collective action throughout the Union to be promoted over the next three years.

- Link globalization to members' lives;
- Build membership support through effective bargaining;
- Defend members' rights against employer and corporate strategies;
- Re-empower the membership and build the Union;
- Organize to protect members' gains.

These five priorities build on the vision for the PSAC developed by the NBoD at its January 2002 Planning Session. The vision reads: *Through collective action, further the interests of all PSAC members and working people in general.* This vision recognizes the union's responsibility to fight to improve the workplace rights and working conditions of our members, and acknowledges our role in fighting to improve the society in which our members live.

Accordingly, those priorities were integrated during the development of the Women's Conference Background Paper. The Conference Steering Committee worked on the implementation of these broad priorities with a gender perspective.

CONFERENCE OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the National Women's Conference were as follows:

Our union is powerful because of our sisterhood and solidarity. We want to continue our herstory of developing strong women leaders by:

- building women's political capacity and activism with a strong gender analysis;
- developing strategies and working in coalitions to further advance our issues;
- strengthening our analysis of globalization and developing international solidarity.

The Conference theme was then developed by our Steering Committee to reflect our Conference objectives.

As stated in the PSAC Policy 34 "From the Margins to the Mainstream", our Union has a vital interest in advancing women's equality. The National Conference and the Regional Women's Conferences are key activities used in promoting women's rights within our Union.

CONFERENCE BACKGROUND PAPER

Twenty years after our first National Women's Conference in 1985, and on the eve of the PSAC's 40th anniversary, we should ask ourselves: How far have we come as PSAC sisters and as women? What are our next steps? This background paper takes stock of our collective 'herstory'* and outlines some important political battles that have yet to be won.

(* Concepts described in the glossary)

Herstories

70s

For PSAC women, the '70s was about getting a foot in the door. During that decade, women got elected as union officials and increased their representation at Conventions. In 1976, the PSAC Status of Women Committee was founded as a Standing Committee, which became the Equal Opportunities Committee for Women. As they entered the workplace in increasing numbers, women also began to organize within public sector unions such as the PSAC, changing the face of labour from a business union* model towards a more social union* ideal. Business unionism does not challenge the system, focusing only on "bread and butter issues". Business unionism creates a strict hierarchy with a "service mentality", leading to increased apathy among members. "Social unionism", on the other hand, expands the labour movement to involve it in local, national and international struggles for social justice and equality. By advancing social unionism, union women have changed the definition of union issues.

CONFERENCE BACKGROUND PAPER

For many women in the Global North*, this decade was a time of intense activity, known as the “second wave” of the women’s movement (the first wave being the battle for the vote in the late 19th and early 20th centuries). Women challenged every aspect of men’s power, and “raised consciousness” among their sisters to become politicized and to demand equal rights. For example, the gender wage gap was identified and pay equity* – equal pay for equal work – became an issue.

In other parts of the world, colonialism* and poverty have made it extremely difficult for women to organize for full equality in the same ways as their more privileged sisters in the Global North. However, sisters of the Global South*, at the centre of emerging globalization* processes, have played important roles in local struggles such as democracy, anti-racist, ecological and reform movements. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW*), which is often described as an international bill of rights for women, was adopted by the UN General Assembly in December, 1979. This followed the UN “International Women’s Year” in 1975.

80s

For the PSAC, this was the decade where meaningful change for women was negotiated at the bargaining table and established within the union structures. Maternity leave and other family-related leaves were gained, as were no-discrimination clauses. In 1980, fifty thousand federal clerks took their demand for fair wages into the streets. This was one of the largest strike actions ever launched in Canada, and fully three quarters of the clerks were women. The very first pay equity settlement was won for the Library Science (LS) group; a groundbreaking start for the long pay equity struggle to follow. From 1985 to 1989, the largest joint union/management equal pay study in Canada was conducted involving Treasury Board, the PSAC and other federal unions. The PSAC Women at Work course was developed. A PSAC sexual harassment policy was adopted, and National Women’s Conferences and Regional Women’s Committees received funding. This provided opportunities for women to come together to share experiences and develop strategies and skills, which equipped them to take on more leadership roles within the union and their communities.

CONFERENCE BACKGROUND PAPER

In the Global North, this was the decade during which the backlash* began. The backlash was the false idea that women had already achieved full equality, and that further struggle was pushy, counter-productive, and even harmful to women. Strong women became labelled as “un-feminine” and “man-haters” while privatization, deregulation and a culture of corporate greed were eroding the gains that women had made.

However, the 80s was also a decade of stealthy advances in some women’s access to the rights and privileges enjoyed by men. Popular support for women’s rights grew even though wage gaps, systemic discrimination, and violence against women persisted. Many women argued that ‘70s feminism left some sisters behind, and this combined with the backlash to make feminism a dirty word. In addition, working women’s increased entry into the labour force did not entail less work for them in the home, leading to burn-out as cutbacks to social programs began to take their toll.

The feminism of the Global North had a great deal of influence upon women’s struggles in other parts of the world. This also led to a kind of backlash as patriarchs* attacked “westernized”, “modern” women in the name of preserving national cultures and traditions. The adoption of Global Northern feminism was also a problem for many sisters, who wanted to be able to voice their own particular experiences. Women across the world continued to be active in their local struggles, and to present anti-globalization perspectives drawn directly from their experiences of the privatization of their resources, the exploitation of their labour, and their suffering under the violence and war which are linked to the first two. For example, the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo*, who first organized in Argentina during the mid-70s, grew during the 1980s to inspire women in Latin America and around the world to march and demand an end to ‘disappearances’.

90s

In 1991, the Canadian Human Rights Commission appointed a Tribunal to hear the largest Pay Equity complaint filed in Canadian history. In 1998, the PSAC won a landmark decision in its 14-year battle for pay equity on behalf of federal public service workers in female-dominated groups. The

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importance of diversity and inclusion of all equity-seeking groups was formally recognized and incorporated into union structures within the PSAC and its affiliates. The PSAC policy paper “Women: From the Margins to the Mainstream” was released in 1994, representing a major focus upon women’s issues within our union, as more and more women became activists and elected officials. Regional Women’s Committees began to extend their activities into other areas. The PSAC as a union also extended its solidarity actions, forging alliances with women’s organizations such as NAC, community groups, grassroots activists and anti-globalization activists. It sent a delegation to the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women* (the Beijing Conference) in 1995. PSAC women across Canada joined with women in their communities and participated in the World March of Women Against Poverty.

In the Global North, women’s struggles became explicitly connected to broader movements. The Global South’s struggle against globalization found common ground with the labour movement’s struggles against privatization, contracting-out, and sweatshops. Governments ripped holes in social safety nets, and core funding to women’s organizations was slashed. The boom in Internet technology meant better opportunities for mobilizing activists. The women’s movement regrouped and issued a declaration and platform for action at the Beijing Conference in the mid-nineties, while the Canadian World March of Women against Poverty also made its mark. In Quebec, more than 800 women organized by the Quebec Federation of Women marched for ten days through the hot sun and pouring rain from different regions of Quebec to Quebec City, echoing the 1912 working women’s rallying cry “Bread and Roses!” - bread for jobs and better economic conditions, and roses for quality of life. The end of the nineties saw a historic unification of people opposed to globalization at the “Battle of Seattle” and in Quebec City, and in 2002 at the G8 Summit in Kananaskis, Alberta.

Women in the Global South continued to organize for their rights, and became increasingly militant in the face of opposition. The Narmada Dam protesters Narmada Bachao Andolan* (Save the Narmada Movement), led by Medha Patkar, are one example of powerful and successful resistance to the World Bank, campaigning for the rights of those likely to be displaced by the gigantic dam project. Other versions of feminism – anti-oppression, anti-racism, womanism* – have sparked

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passionate debates about inclusion and class/race privilege. At the same time, working women's struggles everywhere have been eroded by growing 'gendered' poverty and lack of opportunity, wars, and the lack or steady erosion of public services.

00s

The PSAC elected its first woman President, sister Nycole Turmel, in 2000; she was acclaimed for a second term in 2003. Representation in public sector union structures continues to improve for women and for equity-seeking groups generally.

At the same time, the PSAC has had to continue fighting for the pay equity victory to be meaningfully implemented. Precarious – part-time, casual and term – employment is growing, and public services in general continue to be threatened by privatization. The PSAC developed a Plan of Action on globalization in response to an action plan put forward by the National Women's Conference that outlined the effects of globalization upon women. Once again, women led the way.

In the Global North, a third wave* of feminism has been developing, as a response to and continuation of the second wave. Many earlier gains are now considered part of the mainstream and the word "feminism" is rejected, even as pay gaps, unfair workloads, poverty, sexual harassment, violence and discrimination continue to shape women's lives. While a handful of women have gained more political and economic power, women continue to be hugely under-represented in political and economic decision-making bodies. Ongoing cuts to social programs under neo-liberal* regimes have had serious consequences for women, who are forced to shoulder more of the work of caring for others in society.

In the Global South, the struggle continues as a growing number of women and children suffer from poverty and disease, particularly HIV/AIDS. Armed conflict causes our sisters to suffer even more from violence, occupation, and the loss of their families and homes. 3 out of 4 fatalities of "modern" wars are women and children. Rape is now frequently used as a weapon of war specifically to degrade and terrorize women. For example, in the former Yugoslavia, 20,000 women and girls

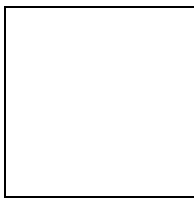
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were raped during the first months of the war, while accounts of mass rapes in Rwanda and now Sudan are continuing to surface.

Women have continued to be active in anti-globalization struggles, even facing terrible odds. But while these women are caught up in the struggle for basic survival, overshadowed by corporate interests, their hope of claiming full equality is bleak.

Ongoing Battles to Be Won

On the whole, the women's movement has certainly progressed, and our victories need to be both celebrated and maintained. However, it is important to look at pressing issues that we are now facing, both locally and globally, in order to pick the battles that need to be fought... and that we can win. In the wake of the struggles for pay equity and union representation, it is tempting for us both as PSAC women and as women of the Global North to declare victory: some equality at last! However, the lessons of the past equally apply to the following challenges:



Globalization

We cannot forget that the neo-liberal agenda of tax cuts for the rich, union-busting, deregulation and for-profit services has been gaining force ever since women began to enter the workforce in significant numbers, particularly in the newly-unionized public sector. The PSAC Plan of Action on Globalization needs to be taken up by PSAC sisters in solidarity with sisters from the Global South.

- 70% of people in abject poverty – living on less than \$1 per day – are women.
- Today Canadian women are experiencing the highest rate of women's poverty in two decades – almost 19% of adult women are poor. Poverty rates are even more distressing among Aboriginal women, racially visible women, immigrant women and women with disabilities. Women's incomes are steadily declining, according to the most recent statistics.

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We cannot forget that women around the world continue to be significantly under-represented in the higher paid sectors of the workforce. Women around the world continue to be over-represented in poverty and to experience “poverty of opportunity”. Only 1% of the world's assets are in the name of women. There is no country in the world where women's wages are equal to those of men.

- Women's participation in managerial and administrative posts is around 33% in the Global North, 15% in Africa, and 13% in Asia and the Pacific.
- Data from the 2001 Canadian census indicates that the wage gap persists: the average employment income for women working full-time in the year 2000 was 70.8% of what men earned.
- In 1997, the federal government gutted the Unemployment Insurance program and gave it a new name, Employment Insurance. Only 30% of unemployed women in 2000 are covered by EI, as opposed to 70% in 1990.

Political Representation

In the midst of the terrible conflicts, atrocities and inequalities which prevail in the world, we cannot forget that women are barred from the decision-making processes which lead to these problems and their consequences. The UN estimates that 30% is the “critical mass” for a real voice in politics.

- Out of over 180 countries, only 12 (6.7%) are currently headed by women.
- In the whole world, we have 5 Vice-Presidents, 4 Governor-Generals, and 4 major Opposition Leaders.
- 7% of the world's total cabinet ministers are women. 15.4% of members of national Parliaments worldwide are women.
- Women ministers remain concentrated in social areas (14%) compared to legal (9.4%), economic (4.1%), political affairs (3.4%), and the executive (3.9%).
- In the 21st century, some countries still do not allow women to vote.

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- In Canada, the 2004 House of Commons will include 65 women, or 21.1 per cent of the 308 seats. Once again, our women politicians appear stalled at about one-fifth, the informal "glass ceiling" which pertains across the country. This falls far short of the "critical mass" (30%) and even shorter of the 50% required for a truly representative House.

The equal representation of women is a question of political will. In Mozambique, Vietnam, and Namibia, 30%, 27.3%, and 26.4%, respectively, of seats in the Lower House of Parliament are held by women. On the other hand, in the USA, France, and Japan, 14.3%, 12.2%, and 7.1%, respectively, of the House of Representatives or Lower House of Parliament are comprised of women.

In some countries, women have fought for – and won – quota systems and reserved seats in Parliament. Some political parties have voluntarily adopted systems that can lead to legislation guaranteeing the participation of women. These countries and political parties tend to fare much better in terms of representation.

- Rwanda has the highest proportion of women parliamentarians in the world with the National Assembly comprised of 49% women. This followed the passage of a constitutional referendum guaranteeing a minimum of 30% of parliamentary seats and other leadership positions to women.
- In Sweden, the Social Democratic Party in 1994 introduced the "zebra principle" of listing a woman on every second line of the party list. In 1995, Sweden became the first country to have an equal number of women and men in ministerial posts.
- In Morocco, 10% of parliamentary seats are reserved for women. (Following the October 2002 elections, the number of female parliamentarians increased from two to an Arab-world record of 35.)
- In India, 33% of seats at the local government level are reserved for women.
- In Tanzania, 20% of national seats and 25% of local government seats are reserved for women.

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- In France, a 1999 constitutional amendment requires political parties to include 50% of women candidates on party lists submitted for election.
- In South Africa, a municipal act states that political parties must ensure women comprise 50% of candidate lists submitted for local-level elections.
- In Norway, the Labour Party in 1993 introduced a 40% quota for women.

Child Care in Canada

We cannot forget that full equality for women includes having access to a national, fully-funded quality child care program. The Canadian government is not fulfilling its promises to women about child care despite recent findings that \$1 spent on quality child care returns \$2 in social and economic benefits to our society.

- 83% of married couples with children have two or more earners and the percentage of female lone-parent families with children has soared to 82% of lone-parent families in 2003.
- Canada has gone from having the lowest proportion of working women among major industrialized countries to a record high participation rate of 71%.
- In Canada, 56% of single parent families headed by women are poor: such families have doubled in the past 30 years and approximately 40 percent of the bottom 10 percent of income earners are single-mother families, as compared to 24 percent in 1970.
- Although Canadians support public spending on quality child care, Canada compares poorly when it comes to publicly funded child care and has fallen farther behind many countries in the provision of child care.
- The only public maternity and parental leave provisions in Canada are delivered through the EI system, to which the same stringent criteria and low benefits apply. 10,000 fewer women are now able to access EI maternity benefits than prior to the 1997 EI reform.

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Violence against Women in Canada

Despite the work that has gone into this issue, we must not forget that 1997 federal government cuts to core funding of women's organizations resulted in serious consequences for women and girls facing violence and abuse. We need to ask why violence persists against women and girls, and we need to ask what we, as trade union sisters, can do about it.

- Half of Canadian women (51%) have been victims of at least one act of physical or sexual violence since the age of 16.
- Of all victims of crimes against the person in 2000, women made up the vast majority of victims of sexual assaults (86%), criminal harassment (78%) and kidnapping/hostage-taking or abduction (67%).
- In 2003 the UN criticized Canada for failing in its duty to reduce women's vulnerability and protect women and children.
- Aboriginal women on reserve are denied access to the Canadian Human Rights Act. Up to 80% of Aboriginal women have suffered sexual abuse or assault. In both the Prairies and in B.C., Aboriginal women have been the target of serial killers who murder with impunity due to apathy on the part of the police and the public.
- Younger women are subjected not only to violence but also to new, toxic "date rape drugs" that rob them of their choice.

Conclusion

Women must remember and celebrate the gains we have made, and continue to embrace the issues that affect our lives, in actively transforming our world. We must take on leadership roles, and encourage and inspire other women to take on leadership roles. We must challenge ourselves to go further. As we move forward into our third decade of the women's program at the PSAC, let us remember that what we want for ourselves, we want for all people, and the progress that we make as union women will mean a better world to live in.

CONFERENCE BACKGROUND PAPER

Our union is powerful because of our sisterhood and solidarity. We want to continue our herstory of developing strong women leaders by:

- building women's political capacity and activism with a strong gender analysis;
- developing strategies and working in coalitions to further advance our issues;
- strengthening our analysis of globalization and developing international solidarity

Towards those objectives, as union women, as community members, and as citizens of the global village, we must ask ourselves the following questions:

- After decades of women's struggle, why are we still second-class citizens, subjected to silence, violence, poverty and discrimination world-wide?
- How can we reach out to our sisters and voice a feminism that maintains its relevance for future generations?
- How do women gain and hold on to political and economic power in a world where they are more than half the population but are overwhelmingly left out of the decision-making?
- What alternatives can we, as women, propose?

GLOSSARY FOR THE CONFERENCE BACKGROUND PAPER

Glossary

Backlash (ressac):

A term popularized by the American investigative journalist Susan Faludi in her meticulously documented best-seller, *Backlash: The Undeclared War against American Women* (1991). In *Backlash*, Faludi took a long, hard look at the 1980s and debunked the myth that women had “made it” and that the struggle for their equality was therefore no longer necessary. “The truth”, she wrote, “is that the last decade has seen a powerful counterassault on women’s rights, a backlash, an attempt to retract the handful of small and hard-won victories that the feminist movement did manage to win for women.”

Business Union / Social Union (syndicalisme d'affaires/syndicalisme social):

Labour historians have identified three waves of unionism in Canada:

- First, the early craft unions of the nineteenth century, which concentrated on skilled workers, with the result that women, as unskilled workers, were excluded;
- Second, the industrial unions of the thirties and forties, which organized skilled and unskilled workers alike, with the result that some women were union members, but faced constant discrimination, plus inadequate representation and encouragement to organize for their own needs within the union structure.
- Third, the public sector unions such as our own. Between 1965 and 1975 many public sector workers joined the union movement; federal and provincial government employees, municipal workers, workers in schools and hospitals and nurses and teachers. All these groups included large numbers of women workers, which has had a profound impact on the union movement.

Social public sector unions have been seen as a challenge to the business unionism of traditional industrial unions.

CEDAW (“*CEDAW*”):

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly, is often described as an international bill of rights for women. Consisting of a preamble and 30 articles, it defines what constitutes discrimination

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against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination.

The Convention defines discrimination against women as "any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field."

Countries that have ratified or acceded to the Convention are legally bound to put its provisions into practice. They are also committed to submit national reports, at least every four years, on measures they have taken to comply with their treaty obligations.

The Convention, which entered into force on September 3rd, 1981, has, as of March 2004, 176 States parties. Canada is a signatory.

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm>

Colonialism (colonialisme):

In some analyses, globalization is just a continuation of colonialism, which refers to the historical invasion, occupation, usurpation and exploitation of a people's lands and resources by others. Colonialism has been maintained by genocide, slavery and the suppression of people's cultures and social systems. Canada, for example, was colonized by the French and the English, and up until very recently, was a colony of Great Britain, as was India and Australia. Colonialism and post-colonialism can refer to structures and values that linger even after a country has declared independence, and also refer to the idea that the values of the colonizer are superior to those of the colonized; for example, the loss of indigenous languages and the marginalization and poverty of indigenous peoples.

Globalization (mondialisation): See also "neo-liberalism".

The term "globalization" captures a number of corporate and governmental activities that are designed to provide corporations with the right to operate internationally under common rules. By definition, these rules decrease the power of governments to enforce their own rules and laws, and lead to a loss of control over domestic resources and economic development.

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(This definition provided by PSAC background discussion paper on globalization at <http://www.psac.com/issues/globalization/globalization-e.shtml>)

Global North / Global South (Nord global/Sud global):

Terms often now used to refer to countries which were previously called First World / Third World, developed / developing / underdeveloped or industrialized / pre-industrialized. Global North does not necessarily mean that the country is geographically in the northern hemisphere (e.g. Australia). Using the terms "Global North" and "Global South" avoids the negative and patronizing connotations of previous concepts while also capturing the unequal relationships that continue to prevail between the Global North and the Global South under globalization.

Herstory ("herstory"):

"Herstory" is a feminist play upon the word "history," challenging the idea that chronicles of events are exclusively about men and male achievements. The PSAC has a document entitled PSAC Herstory, updated July 2003, which highlights what women have accomplished within the PSAC. In this paper, "herstory" is set against the broader background of the Global North and the Global South respectively.

Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo (mères de la Place de Mai) :

The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo (La Asociación Madres de Plaza de Mayo) is an association of Argentine mothers whose children were disappeared by the military junta. Several of them, including their founder, Azucena Villaflor de Vicenti, have been disappeared themselves as a result. This group of women became a symbol of human rights activism and courage. Dressed in black, they have been demonstrating for years every Thursday at 3:30 in the afternoon, in the famous Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires, demanding to know the fates of their loved ones. Marching around the statue of liberty, in front of the presidential palace, they tie white handkerchiefs imprinted with names of disappeared sons and daughters around their heads.

Narmada Bachao Andolan (Save the Narmada Movement / mouvement pour la sauvegarde du fleuve Narmada):

India's Narmada Valley Development Project, one of the largest hydroelectric projects in the world, is estimated to displace 1.5 million people from their land in three states. The construction of more than

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3,000 dams will flood thousands of acres of forest and agricultural land, striking a devastating blow to human lives and biodiversity. Experts have disputed the Indian government's claims that the dam would provide water to 40 million people, irrigate 1.8 million hectares, and generate about 1450 megawatts of power. Those who oppose the project place themselves in danger of rising floodwaters and of arrest and detention. Over the past ten years, human rights advocates and environmentalists have documented the use of preventive arrest, excessive force during arrest, detention, physical abuse, and threats against opponents of the dam project by the authorities. Since 1985, the Narmada Bachao Andolan has been organizing massive rallies and peaceful demonstrations to protest the destruction of the Narmada Valley. Despite the non-violent nature of the protests, NBA activists have been arrested and beaten on countless occasions. Throughout 1990-91, with a series of dharnas (sit-ins), and non-violent protests (satyagraha) the NBA highlighted the plight of the displaced and the fundamentally flawed nature of the project. Under intense pressure, the World Bank (which was funding the dam to the tune of \$450 million) was forced to constitute an independent review committee. The first independent review of any of the Bank funded projects, the Morse Report indicted the Bank on many counts and tacitly endorsed all the main concerns raised by the Andolan. The resultant international furore forced the Bank to finally withdraw from the project.

Neo-liberalism (néolibéralisme):

Neo-liberalism is a set of economic policies that have become widespread during the last 25 years or so. The term is often used interchangeably with "globalization".

The main points of neo-liberalism include:

- I. THE RULE OF THE MARKET. Liberating free enterprise or private enterprise from any bonds imposed by the government (the state) no matter how much social damage this causes. Greater openness to international trade and investment, as in NAFTA. Reduce wages by de-unionizing workers and eliminating workers' rights that had been won over many years of struggle. No more price controls. All in

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all, total freedom of movement for capital, goods and services. To convince us this is good for us, neo-liberals say "an unregulated market is the best way to increase economic growth, which will ultimately benefit everyone."

- II. CUTTING PUBLIC EXPENDITURE FOR SOCIAL SERVICES like education and health care. REDUCING THE SAFETY-NET FOR THE POOR, and even maintenance of roads, bridges, water supply – again in the name of reducing government's role. Of course, neo-liberals don't oppose government subsidies and tax benefits for business.
- III. DEREGULATION. Reduce government regulation of everything that could diminish profits, including protecting the environment and safety on the job.
- IV. PRIVATIZATION. Sell state-owned enterprises, goods and services to private investors. This includes banks, key industries, railroads, toll highways, electricity, schools, hospitals and even fresh water. Although usually done in the name of greater efficiency, which is often needed, privatization has mainly had the effect of concentrating wealth even more in a few hands and making the public pay even more for its needs.
- V. ELIMINATING THE CONCEPT OF "THE PUBLIC GOOD" or "COMMUNITY" and replacing it with "individual responsibility." Pressuring the poorest people in a society to find solutions to their lack of health care, education and social security all by themselves – then qualifying them, if they fail, as lazy.

Around the world, neo-liberalism has been imposed by powerful financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank. (This definition provided by Elizabeth Martinez and Arnaldo Garcia.

<http://www.globalexchange.org/campaigns/econ101/neoliberalDefined.html>

Patriarch (patriarche):

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"Patriarch" in the sense in which we use it means the male rulers of families, tribes, groups and governments, and not in any Orthodox or Biblical sense. It is related to the feminist challenge to the patriarchy or rule by men.

Pay Equity (équité salariale):

For more detailed information about the historic pay equity battle, see the document entitled PSAC Herstory and also the PSAC website at the following links: <http://www.psac.com/what/payequity/archive-e.shtml#>

A detailed chronology can be found at

<http://www.psac.com/payequity/new/archives/chrono-long-e.htm>

Third Wave Feminism (féminisme de la troisième vague):

While there is no agreed-upon definition of third wave feminism, it is seen to differ from the feminism of the 60's and '70s in emphasizing greater sexual freedom and self-expression for women, and a broader spectrum of issues around which to mobilize. While feminists in the second wave were more focused on fighting for gender equality in the workplace, abortion rights and economic parity, third wave feminists say they are looking at a wider range of topics through the feminist lens. This has been made possible by the gains of the second wave and younger women who have not experienced that history are sometimes accused of taking this for granted. However, second wave feminists do not always recognize the work being done by third wave feminists in their 20s and 30s, seeing it instead as a watered down version of their own achievements. Some second wave feminists claim that the younger generation has given up feminist struggle to concentrate upon individual empowerment. On the other hand, third wave feminists have criticized second wave feminists for holding onto rigid definitions of feminism and silencing younger and diverse women.

Examples of third wave feminism at work include "riot grrls" and "girl power". It should not be forgotten that most of the discussion about third wave feminism is still very much confined to the Global North and that sisters in the Global South have different perspectives. For more information, see *Manifesta: Young Women, Feminism, and the Future* by Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2000).

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United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing Conference) (4e Conférence mondiale des Nations Unies sur les femmes):

The theme of this important conference, held from the 4th -15th of September 1995, was: "Action for Equality, Development and Peace". Women from all around the world came together and issued a declaration and platform for action, the text of which can be found at <http://www.un.org/esa/gopher-data/conf/fwcw/off/a--20.en>

Womanism ("womanism"):

Womanist and womanism are culture-specific and poetic synonyms for Black feminist and Black feminism. Though womanism appears in the Oxford English Dictionary as a nineteenth-century term for "advocacy of or enthusiasm for the rights, achievements etc. of women"—and womanist as a synonym for "womanizer"—their current U.S. usage has been redefined by Alice Walker, African American novelist, poet, essayist, and activist. As Walker explained to the *New York Times* in 1984: "I don't choose womanism because it is 'better' than feminism ... Since womanism means black feminism, this would be a nonsensical distinction. I choose it because I prefer the sound, the feel, the fit of it; because I cherish the spirit of the women (like Sojourner) the word calls to mind, and because I share the old ethnic-American habit of offering society a new word when the old word it is using fails to describe behavior and change that only a new word can help it more fully see." Walker added in an interview for this article, "I dislike having to add a color in order to become visible, as in black feminist. Womanism gives us a word of our own."

(This definition supplied by Gloria Steinem and Diana L. Hayes, at http://college.hmco.com/history/readerscomp/women/html/wh_039700_womanism.htm)

OPENING REMARKS

Sister Patty Ducharme introduced Sister Robyn Benson, Co-chair of the National Women's Conference, and welcomed all delegates, observers and guests to the PSAC National Women's Conference.

Sister Joanne Ursino then introduced PSAC member and Elder Pat Reid who brought greetings from and acknowledged gratitude to the Aboriginal people upon whose land the Conference was held. The singers and drummers Painted Pony then performed three songs: the Grandmother song, the Universal Welcoming song and the Women Warriors song.

Sister Patty Ducharme introduced the members of the Host Committee and the members of the Steering Committee.

Sister Robyn Benson motioned to adopt the Conference agenda.

Sister Lynn Ray asked for a moment of silence to honour the memory of Sister Louise Pargeter who was tragically murdered on October 6th 2004 while working as a federal parole officer.

OPENING REMARKS

Sister Leila White and Sister Irene Howell then read out the PSAC Harassment Statement in both official languages. The Harassment Coordinator was pointed out to all participants.

Sister Leila White also reminded all participants that all PSAC events are to be held in a smoke-free and scent-free environment.

Sister Patty Ducharme described the objectives of the Conference and reminded participants of the PSAC's long history of supporting women's rights. She also asked Conference participants to reflect upon the ongoing issue of violence against women in the context of the murdered and disappeared women of the Downtown Eastside and to pledge to make the violence stop.

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Good morning Sisters!

Being here today, in the presence of over 250 leaders in our Union, is both an honour and a privilege. Sisters, I truly believe that each and every one of you in this room is a leader. Whether you are a member of your Regional Women's Committee or a Human Rights' Committee, a Local Steward, a Component Officer, a National or Regional Officer, or a young worker who wants to get more involved in your Union, you are a leader. And our Union is better and stronger because you are here today.

So thank you. Thanks to each and every one of you for taking the time to be here today. To all the familiar faces and to those of you who are attending their first National Women's Conference, welcome, and thank you. To the Sisters on the organizing committee and on the resolutions committee, and to the co-chairs of this Conference, Sister Patty Ducharme and Sister Robyn Benson, who have worked so hard so that we could come together over the next few days in order to move our Union forward, thanks. Thanks to all the staff — without their commitment, their hard work and their patience, we would not be here today.

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It's hard to believe that it's been 20 years since our Union's first National Women's Conference! Women have made such a difference in our Union. We've done it together – Sisters from coast to coast to coast, Aboriginal, First Nations, Inuit and Métis Sisters, Racially Visible Sisters, Sisters with disabilities, lesbian, bi-sexual and transgender Sisters, younger Sisters and older Sisters. Together, we have, and we ARE, making the PSAC a better Union.

I would not be where I am today, had it not been for the Sisters of our Union, and the structures our Union has put in place for women to come together, strategize and organize.

I started working for the federal government in 1977, as a CR-4 – an Employment Counselor Assistant - at the Canada Employment Centre in Alma, Québec. I got involved in the Union because I saw how unfairly workers — mostly women — were treated, and I wanted to do something about it.

So many of my opportunities for activism and growth as a trade unionist, a feminist and a leader, have involved the Sisters of the PSAC.

The **CR Strike in the early 1980s** was a key turning point for the Union, for women's involvement in the Union, and for me personally.

Women workers were being told by our Union not to take strike action against an unfair employer. Unfortunately, the male-dominated leadership at the time was out of touch with the reality faced by CRs in the workplace. We were outraged by the way the Union was treating us, but we were even more outraged at the employer. We took them both on, and we became leaders overnight.

To drive our message, we sent funeral wreaths and cactuses to the PSAC leadership. But we did a lot more than that in the workplace – we organized and we had fun! We would dress up in all sorts of costumes to greet our clients, and at key moments, we would all toot our whistles, which would cause quite a storm. On the picket lines, we played ouija,

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we wrote songs and signs, and got to know our local police chief quite well. We didn't have cell phones back then, and had a system whereby the receptionist would put everyone who called in on hold. In Dolbeau, the two lone women strikers were getting several threats from the manager for trying to set up a picket line, so two of us from Alma decided to drive down and help them. It wasn't long before the whole community of Dolbeau knew that four women had taken on the manager, put up a picket line, refused to budge, and closed down the Canada Employment Office!

Most of us strikers were women in our thirties with young children. I was a single mother at that point, and none of us had access to the \$7 per day child care system that our Québec Sisters fought so hard for. We were exhausted when it was all over! But the solidarity we built made us strong. We took on the employer and the Union, and we were successful.

Some significant gains were made for women as a result of our strike action – CRs won maternity top-up leave, care and nurturing of pre-school children leave, and adoption leave.

The CR strike provided an opportunity for women to mobilize with other women on women's issues and demand a Union that was more responsive to our issues and reality. We are a stronger and better Union today because of it.

A few years after the CR Strike, we got our **First National Women's Conference!** There were three PSAC Sisters on the National Board of Directors at the time who organized and mobilized to bring forward a resolution to the Board that gave us our first ever National Women's Conference shortly afterwards in 1985. Those three women were Sisters Alice West, Susan Giampietri and Pierrette Vaillant-Pierre. I'm not sure they knew the impact of their work at the time, but the reality is that they set the stage for the rest of us. We thank them for their vision and their commitment to provide an opportunity for women to come together to talk about their experiences, to learn, to network, to strategize, to build friendships and political alliances. Close to 500 people attended that

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historic National Women's Conference. And while not all of them were women, many of the women who were there went on to make significant contributions to our Union. These Sisters pushed forward an equity agenda, emphasized the need to be mobilized and politicized. They raised issues that were key for women, like child care, anti-harassment, pay equity – issues that are still relevant for us today. And they went on to do this as long-time activists, as staff for the Union, and as Union leaders.

1985 was quite a year for women in our Union! When the Board resolution was adopted to have a National Women's Conference, the expectations of what might follow were not clear. But in 1985, we won Constitutional recognition of Triennial National Women's Conferences to report to the PSAC Convention and we won a Constitutional provision providing for six cents per member per month for **funding of Regional and National Women's Conferences**.

Three years later, **Regional Women's Committees** were constitutionally recognized and funded! Across the country, women had been meeting often through Area Councils. We began to realize that we wanted a funded, formalized process for women to meet and work together on common issues. Today we have a network of more than 41 active Regional Women's Committees, from St. John's, Newfoundland to Iqaluit, Nunavut, to Vancouver British Columbia.

One of the memorable moments in my leadership at the PSAC was the National Women's Conference in 1993. It was my first conference as the AEC officer responsible for the women's program, and many of you here today will remember what a conference it was! My efforts to change the conference process – by debating a policy paper, in addition to the usual resolutions – met with resistance, to say the least. Our Sisters from equity-seeking groups challenged us, and demanded that we listen to them and given them their rightful place in our Union. We had a lot of difficult debates. On a political level, my leadership was challenged, and I almost lost my seat on the Alliance Executive Committee the following year. But the 1993 Conference provided our Union with an inclusive feminist vision, and it made our women's program stronger and more

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inclusive. On a personal level, I learned to accept challenges to my leadership – Sister Benson will remember that well! I learned to persevere. And I also learned to listen – a lesson that has served me well over the years.

Sisters, while we have taken on many struggles for women's equality in the workplace and beyond over the past twenty years or so, one stands out as the PSAC's issue – and that's equal pay for work of equal value, or **pay equity**. We have a track record of fighting the fight, even fights that are unpopular with employers and the corporate world. Whether it's against the federal government, the Government of the Northwest Territories, or Canada Post, we haven't given up. And the women of the PSAC can take the credit for that!

We've mobilized around pay equity, we've organized, we've written letters and signed petitions, we've made postcards, fake money, and T-shirts. We were in our MPs' faces, and made sure they knew we weren't going away. We've written songs and signs, we've made banners, and so much more.

I was among the many Sisters who did some pretty crazy and courageous things in our fight for pay equity. Let me tell you about one of them—our occupation of the office of the Status of Women Minister in 1991. It was in September, during the famous 1991 strike in the federal government. We wanted to draw the public's attention to our struggle for pay equity, and to the rights of women workers. Two or three Sisters did the master plan, and we carried it through. Armed with food, sleeping bags, and cell phones, a very small number of us – seven or so – entered the Status of Women Canada offices. What we wanted was a meeting with Mary Collins, the Minister at the time.

To say the least, we threw the government officials off guard. They didn't know what to do with us. They didn't want to call the police, and they didn't want to call the Minister, but we wouldn't leave. We stayed there the whole day. And after a meeting with the Deputy Minister and a few hours carefully plotting our exit strategy with the Sisters on the outside – and at 10:30 p.m., we came out, victorious. Our objective was

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to draw attention to PSAC's pay equity fight, and we did it. We got the attention of the media, we put pay equity on the map, and we earned the respect of the public.

Throughout the 15 years, we stuck together, we didn't give up. Regional Women's Committees took pay equity on, and they mobilized and organized. Many Sisters became active in our Union because of pay equity. For many of us, pay equity made us the leaders we are today.

Before I leave the subject of pay equity, I want us to remember a few things. Pay equity is a hard fight. In fact, some still have not gotten over the fact that we won that fight. We should be proud of our pay equity fight. Never apologize for the fact that your Union did everything we could to make sure that women are paid for the value of the work they do. It's as simple as that.

Sisters, we have made great strides within the PSAC since the first National Women's Conference 20 years ago. About 60% of our members are women. Women made up 50% of all Union Development Program trainees between 2002 and 2004. We made up 43% of Convention delegates in 2003—up from 40% in 2000. 51% of all Regional Council positions and 50% of all union officer positions are held by women.

As many of you know, I will be retiring next year, after six years as National President. Some of my Sisters on the National Board of Directors – Sister Lynn Ray and Sister Bernice Wilson – are also retiring after many years of serving their members and their Union. Thanks to both of you.

Sisters, this National Women's Conference is an opportunity to take stock of your collective strength, as women and as leaders. This Union needs the leadership of women. Taking leadership isn't easy, to be sure. Yes, it's risky. Yes, it's a sacrifice. It takes courage. You win some, you lose some, as they say. But don't let anyone tell you it's not possible. I hope that many of you here today are considering running for and

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holding formal leadership positions in this union – and getting recognized for the leadership you already play.

I'm also going to be a little bold, and to offer a few thoughts to you on strategies for change. Clearly, building in and formalizing places for women to strategize and mobilize is not only necessary, but critical to making our Union a better one. But we can't lose sight of the fact that many of these structures are tools. They are only as good as the use we make of them. To be effective, we have to use these tools to move our agenda forward. Regional Women's Committees are tools – a place for Sisters to act! Resolutions to Convention are just that – a tool to set a vision for our Union, to provide direction for action. Resolutions don't change the world – we do.

My hope is that in twenty years from now, we will look back and be proud of the further gains that all women have made within the PSAC, including the leadership. I hope the face of power will be more inclusive of our racially visible Sisters, our Inuit, Métis, and Aboriginal Sisters, our Sisters with disabilities, our younger Sisters, and our Sisters from the LGBT communities.

As important as is women's leadership in changing the face of power within our Union, so too is our Union's leadership in changing the face of power in our workplaces, in our communities, in Canada and beyond.

Unions are among the few organizations that have the power to take collective action in order to effect change. We have a responsibility to do just that.

And when the rights to unionize are threatened – by the Walmarts of this world, who are closing the store in Jonquière, Québec because the workers exercised their right to form a union – we need to speak out.

Collectively, we can take on governments, and we have a responsibility to do just that. We can challenge governments to put human rights ahead of corporate rights, to put public services ahead of profits, to

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make equality a priority. And we have the power to take them on when they don't.

The same Liberal federal minority government who forced a strike by over 100,000 workers in the fall of last year has certainly given us many reasons to take them on.

In the past few months, at the Regional Women's Conferences, I proposed an agenda to do just that – a women's political agenda. Three issues that I know will be discussed and debated over the next three days, and that I hope Regional Women's Committees and other union structures will take on.

Child care – we want a pan-Canadian child care system that is public, not-for-profit, universal, and accessible. We want governments to be accountable for the child care monies they receive. We want our federal, territorial and provincial governments to get it right.

Pay Equity – we want a mandatory, pro-active pay equity law at the federal level. We want the federal government to implement the recommendations of its own Pay Equity Task Force. We want pay equity to become a reality for all workers in the federal jurisdiction. No one should have to wait 15 or 20 years to get paid the wages they deserve.

Protective reassignment – we clearly need more protection for pregnant and nursing women who are at risk at work. We want the federal government to pass legislation to afford full protection off pregnant and nursing women, whose work poses a risk to the health of their baby or their fetus. Québec already has this right in law. Federal workers need it too.

Victories on these three issues would make such a difference in the lives of women in Canada.

There are many, many other fights we need to take on to make a difference in the lives of women. Equal marriage – the right of same-sex couples to marry, is one of these. Denying the right to marry to

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same-sex couples is discrimination, pure and simple. Giving them this right doesn't take a right away from anyone else.

Together with the Canadian labour and social justice movements, we can take on these fights, and we can win!

The coming weeks and months promise to add to our challenges and reasons for collective action.

Next week, Ralph Goodale will release the 2005 federal budget, and the results of the impending federal 'program review'. In December 2003, when Paul Martin became Prime Minister, he announced that program review would be an ongoing government activity. At that time, I wrote to Martin urging him to undertake any review process in an open and accountable way, in consultation with bargaining agents and the front-line workers who provide services to Canadians. Martin obviously did not take our advice.

What we know is that the federal government is seeking savings in the order of \$12 billion over four years. That's their famous expenditure review. Last week, I received a brown envelope which I gave to the media, on the government's plans to create a new shared services organization for information technology and corporate administrative services across departments and agencies. An estimated 30,000 workers will be affected, and 13,000 jobs will be cut. The plan includes moving jobs from Ottawa to the regions – i.e. to ridings where the Liberal minority government needs votes.

There's no doubt that the government's restructuring plans will affect the services to Canadians, and the workers who provide them. Coupled with the phased-in implementation of the Public Service Modernization Act – the omnibus piece of legislation designed to enhance management rights to the detriment of workers and their Unions – we know we have our work cut out for us.

But our Union has a long and strong history of defending our members' workplace rights. Together, we will face this government, and

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collectively we will make a difference. We will speak out to ensure that public services that Canadians expect and deserve are protected—like food safety, drug testing, search and rescue, pension and employment insurance benefits, border protection and so many more services that are the back bone of a vibrant and equitable society. We will also speak out on the rights and working conditions of the workers who provide these services.

Sisters, over the past twenty years, we have been able to rally around our common fights and we will continue to do just that. Together, we will continue to learn to respect our diversity, and to consider our diversity as our strength. We will learn from our history. Young women can teach us new and innovative strategies to get involved and to take action, and we need to make room for them, their ideas, and their strengths. Our movement, and our Union, will only be stronger for it.

I want to end where I began—by thanking each and every one of you. I'll say it again—being the National President of the PSAC is an honour and a privilege. And that includes being inspired by the leadership, the energy, the commitment and the contributions of each and every one of you.

Thank you, and all the best for a great conference!

PANEL ON WOMEN RESISTING GLOBALIZATION

The panel on Globalization was introduced by **Sister Joanne Ursino**, a member of the Steering Committee of the 2005 National Women's Conference. The following is Sister Ursino's address to the participants:

Following our last National Women's Conference, we identified the ongoing fight against corporate globalization as one of the most pressing issues for women. We know that corporate globalization exerts a downward pressure on all workers' rights, but on the rights of women in particular. As women, our already underpaid and precarious jobs are threatened by the "race to the bottom" to find cheaper labour, often performed by more exploited sisters around the world.

Public sector jobs are threatened by the privatization agenda. Women are the ones who pay the heaviest price for the erosion of government regulation, the cuts to public spending and services, and the so-called "austerity measures" such as wage freezes dictated by the so-called "new economy." And, not surprisingly, women are often in the forefront, speaking out against the sale, pollution and theft of our natural resources by corporations on the rampage in our communities.

The problem with globalization is that sometimes it seems too big to fight. But women can and will make a difference. Today we will hear from three speakers on how women have been resisting globalization in their communities and in their unions, at the national level, and through international solidarity.

Allison Brewer

Summary of the Presentation

Sister Allison Brewer identified the GLBT movement as one of the most exciting and influential movements of the past two decades: an international human rights revolution that has many lessons to teach us in striving for solidarity. As she pointed out, grave challenges continue to exist. Tragically, AIDS has taken many young GLBT people long before their time, and gay-bashing continues to be legitimated by our institutions. This was recently demonstrated by the brutal slaying of Aaron Webster and the judiciary's inability to recognize his murder as a hate crime.

Sister's Brewer's own experiences as an activist were offered as an example of how local struggles can develop and become part of broader national and global movements. She became politicized on lesbian, gay, transgender rights when she came out in 1979 and became a founding member of a community organization that would become known as FLAG, Fredericton Lesbians and Gays.

“Our needs were simple... all we were fighting for in those days was social recognition and a place to dance. As we had doors slammed in our faces all over Fredericton, our indignation grew and so did our determination to fight for our rights.”

As Sister Brewer learned, there was power in numbers and it was the information that FLAG was able to gather through their collective stories that informed them of their own oppression. Small battles gave FLAG the courage to keep pushing. Little did they imagine then that, 25 years later, they would be seeing legislation that would legalize same sex marriage and Canada on the cutting edge of world-wide human rights leadership. This struggle began, Sister Brewer reminded the conference, with the fight for inclusion of sexual orientation language in

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Canada. Canada was the first of many countries to stand up for sexual orientation rights at the 1995 Beijing Conference on Women. A year after Beijing, the Canadian Human Rights Act was amended in Parliament to include sexual orientation in the list of prohibited grounds for discrimination.

The labour movement's support was vital to this struggle. In 1991, New Brunswick became the third province in Canada to amend its human rights legislation to include sexual orientation. The lobby for change came from a number of groups, but the union movement in New Brunswick was at the forefront of that battle. Union support will likewise be crucial to winning equal marriage in the face of a determined backlash against equal rights for GLBT people. The Public Service Alliance of Canada has been among the most proactive in the union movement. As far back as 1992 the PSA negotiated a travel insurance policy that recognized same-sex spouses, and that was just the beginning.

Despite their opposition to same-sex rights, the Conservatives can sometimes advance support for GLBT people when the depth of their intolerance is recognized: they are the walking talking proof that lesbians, gay men and transgendered people need protection. For example, Stephen Harper's anti-same-sex marriage tactics are outrageous: he is trying to instill fear in people by dishonestly claiming that churches will be forced to perform same-sex marriages. And, as a former member of the Reform Party of Canada, which was highly critical of what it saw as the country's "lax" immigration laws, he is targeting ethnic communities with his anti-same-sex marriage rhetoric. This clearly shows that discrimination is alive and well in Canada.

According to the *Village Voice* recently, there are internal battles in most of the countries of the world over issues of gay and lesbian rights. Gay rights have emerged as a major issue in international law and international institutions. While in Canada lesbians, gay men and transgendered people are protected from discrimination, there is still much work to be done to educate people on the issues of homophobia and discrimination world-wide. Over 70 countries retain criminal

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prohibitions against homosexual activity; some with penalties as severe as death. The wide differences between countries that uphold the rights of gays and lesbians as fundamental and universal, to others where homosexuality remains condemned as an “abomination”, assures continuing tension in international law and politics. This tension can also be felt across the border between Canada and the United States. But it may well be a cross-border issue that Canada will win. In the past 10 years, national and local lawmakers in dozens of countries have enacted laws to bar discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in housing, employment, public accommodation and health benefits. Many of these countries are also beginning to recognize rights for lesbian and gay families.

GLBT people and their allies who live in countries where the wins outweigh the losses have been made bolder by their victories. Through ongoing global communications, others will be inspired to continue to seek safety and recognition for the expression of their sexuality through legislation and legitimization. Canada should exert pressure on an international level to ensure that the rights of lesbians, gay men and transgendered people worldwide are respected. While the focus right now is very much on the issue of marriage, it is important that we not forget other equality issues that affect lesbians and gay men generally and transgendered people particularly. The fight is far from over.

Marie-Clarke Walker

Summary of the Presentation

Sister Marie-Clarke Walker began by praising women's conferences as incredible opportunities to share our analysis of women's lives and the forces that affect them. Globalization is one of those forces. It continues to have an immensely negative impact on women everywhere in the world, no matter where they live. Women have seen their wages fall or stagnate, their environment deteriorate, their jobs disappear or reappear in the form of contingent, precarious work, and their unpaid workloads soar. More women have become poor, and poverty has deepened. While these changes are similar throughout the world, we know that the extent of hardship and human suffering generated by these circumstances is the deepest for women living in countries where poverty, hunger, and illness are the norm.

Globalization is one of the major causes of rising inequality. Powerful corporate entities, mainly the owners and shareholders of multi-national corporations, are attempting to create a single, global market economy. It is to have a single set of rules to which all countries must adhere. National, public policies which stand in the way of this objective must be eliminated.

“The building blocks of this economic model are universal around the world — privatizing public services, downward pressure on wages and working conditions, weak environmental legislation and labour standards, union busting and intimidation in the workplace, and weakened human rights protection. This is the face of corporate power.”

Sister Walker pointed out that economic globalization cannot take place without the complicity of governments. Trade agreements and institutions that create them, like the International Monetary Fund, the

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World Bank, and the World Trade Organization, are not faceless institutions with power of their own. Our government sends representatives to these institutions where they make and control decisions. Women understand fully that the purpose of public programs is to counter the unequal outcomes of the market and to achieve things like gender equality, promoting anti-racism and non-discrimination, pay and employment equity, eliminating poverty, and the achievement of human rights. But women's equality is not on the agenda of corporate economic globalization and the evidence of growing inequality and poverty is stark. Women of colour, Aboriginal women, and women with disabilities experience the deepest levels of poverty and exploitation.

The media, politicians, right-wing economists, and the corporate elite all claim that the economy is driven by forces out of our control — “the invisible hand of the market” — as if no one has any say in how the economy works. This argument assumes that the market, and only the market, has legitimacy in shaping the quality of people's lives. As Sister Walker emphasized, there is no factual, scientific, or any other basis for this assumption.

Sister Walker then went on to make the link between corporate globalization and racism. Since the nations most hurt by economic globalization are in the Southern hemispheres, and populated by people of colour, there is a racist undertone to globalization which also plays out in developed nations like ours. Sometimes it is subtle and sometimes it is blatant, but the political elite is making use of an age-old strategy — divide and conquer white people who are economically vulnerable and people with different ethnic origins. This keeps us from uniting in a common struggle.

If our vision as women includes a democratic world, in which equality, and social and economic justice are at the core, then racial equality must also be at the core. Our rejection of economic globalization must include an analysis of racism and economic colonialism, just as it must include an analysis of homophobia, ableism, sexism, and classism. Only with such an integrated analysis, and by building communication and bridges with those who suffer great inequality around the world, can we

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begin to address the fundamental cause of all inequality — that of social and economic injustice. So, we have many tasks before us as union women. We need to make sure that the labour movement continues down the path of social unionism with its vision for equality and social and economic justice. We need to remember, always, that the global corporate agenda is won on the backs of working class people the world over. It is happening at the expense of human rights commitments and women's equality. We need to remember that other political and economic choices can be made.

As the Women's Conference theme states, we must change the face of power if we hope to achieve true economic and social justice. We must be part of creating a world where people come before profit, and profit must never be the value on which we organize ourselves as a nation. These challenges are many, but Sister Walker asked the delegates to continue to have hope and to remember the sisters who came before us — both white and sisters of colour — sisters with vision and voice who dared to take risks and made the world a better place for all of us in their time.

Beth Myers

Summary of the Presentation

Sister Beth Myers reminded us that people around the world are taught not to see women as union workers or to see us as strong economic forces. But we are a major part of the world's economy. Women are also a major part of the solution to many of the economic problems facing the world. Sister Myers' organization STITCH defines globalization as the movement of businesses and money around the world as well as an increasing consolidation of businesses into large multi-national corporations. Also implied are the larger policies of neo-liberal economic reform. These policies push for individual responsibility instead of state or community responsibility. They encourage corporations to provide services traditionally provided by the government and let the free market system make all the rules without considering the impact on people.

Women around the world are more likely to live in poverty and be concentrated in non-unionized work. Women also have to take care of their families as well as their paid work. This leaves women with a greater amount of work, especially when the economic reforms mentioned above include cuts to healthcare or water or food. Women then have to double their unpaid work to find what they need to support their families. Sexism is a part of globalization. Multinational companies specifically pick women to work in their factories, seeing them as docile and desperate.

Sister Myers recounted the stories of some of the women workers that STITCH works with in solidarity who are on the frontlines of globalization. For example, **Carmen's** mother and father were both employed on a banana plantation until her mother was fired for becoming pregnant. Thanks to the strong unions in the banana sector, Carmen was able to go to a school run by the company until she was 16. Carmen loved school and was hoping to graduate. Unfortunately, the company closed the factory in 1999 and forced her and her coworkers to travel by bus to another factory. That year, 200 armed men

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took over the union headquarters. The plantations were subcontracted out to provide bananas to the same multinational that once ran the unionized factories. Despite the rampant machismo they have faced, Carmen and some of her union sisters were among the first unionists to go back and reopen the union hall. Carmen was recently elected as a leader in her union. They are struggling to rebuild the union as they are continuing to be threatened with having the factories close down and move to areas with cheaper labour.

Marie Mejia, as the oldest of 7, started working at 12 to help her family. Marie has cleared bush, picked through garbage, and sold food on the street. She was forced to leave work as a domestic after she was attacked by one of the men in the family where she worked. She finally ended up in a maquila factory, where she was required to work from 7 am to 5 pm every day on the rare occasion when she didn't have to work mandatory overtime. For this work, Marie got paid around \$15 every two weeks.

“She didn't know anything about a union but she definitely wanted things to get better. When Marie joined the union, she was promptly fired. She got a job at another maquila factory and met local organizers for the International Textile, Garment, and Leather Workers Federation. Now Marie is organizing maquilas for a living.”

Just 2 weeks ago, in a small clothing factory outside of Guatemala City, the **Nobland factory workers** who have been struggling to form a new union were physically attacked by a manager. These women have been facing death threats from the many thugs that have been brought in to scare the union away for the past year. Companies are fighting tooth and nail to stop the increase of unions throughout the global south because they know that if unions spread, they will be unable to continue to take advantage of women in their race to the bottom.

Sister Myers acknowledged that sometimes when we hear these stories, it's easy to feel overwhelmed. The reality is that our struggles are not

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different. Solidarity means not just that we help others, but by joining together we make things better for all of us. STITCH was created by a group of union women who wanted to make a difference. It organizes the training of hundreds of women organizers throughout Central America, trains women on the nuts and bolts of starting a new union and how to get into leadership in existing unions. STITCH also arranges delegations, publishes booklets, and lobbies companies and elected officials. Here are some of the suggestions that STITCH has for women who want to make a difference:

- Encourage your government to take an active role in negotiating labour rights into trade agreements.
- Buy and demand union-made goods.
- Share information on unions with immigrants and international groups
- Support your union's social justice fund. Send a letter, write an email. Speak up to support workers internationally. You can and will make a difference. Our sisters everywhere are counting on you.

SISTER FRANÇOISE DAVID - KEY NOTE SPEAKER

Sister Françoise David began her keynote address with a tribute to the PSAC and to National President Nycole Turmel. She reminded the delegates that they are the women of a huge and powerful Canadian union. She has followed PSAC women's campaigns with great interest. Sister David praised PSAC's women for linking their struggles with the general situation of women who are not privileged to be in unions and with women in the Global South. At the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, Sister David and Sister Turmel worked together and this was part of what gave her the inspiration to enter politics. For example, she has been inspired by the courageous position Sister Turmel has taken as PSAC President by supporting asbestos workers. Asbestos is a carcinogenic substance that the European Union refuses to import and a very dangerous industry. Quebec is a major producer of asbestos. There is a vigorous campaign led by industrialists to promote this product in the Global South and there has also been pressure on your President to allow asbestos in public federal buildings. It's wrong to lie to the public, to workers, to the countries of the Global South, and Nycole's stance showed her leadership.

Sister David explained that she has entered politics because this is where the decisions are made. We spend our lives fighting these decisions and, if we are making these decisions, perhaps we can do something about the problems faced by working women. The 2000

World March of Women was an extraordinary event which enabled Canadian women to create solidarity with the struggles of women around the world and to take on the World Bank at home and the International Monetary Fund. However, Sister David cautioned, we need to be honest and admit that since then, we haven't won many concrete gains. Rising frustration has caused many women to consider a feminist party, a left-wing party. Sister David shared that she had to think about it for three full years before finally taking the plunge because, as an activist, it's scary to go to the other side of the barricades. The election of a resolutely right-wing government in Quebec was a pivotal moment. For many activists, it was a big shock and a call to action. On the 20th of May 2004, a new political movement was founded in Quebec called Option Citoyenne, which had its first meeting last November. OC currently has 1650 members but this is just the beginning.

Two-thirds of Option Citoyenne members are women – a Canadian first. Men also participate in the movement, but the leadership is principally female. The challenge will be to maintain and continue this leadership among women and achieve public credibility.

“Option Citoyenne is left-wing, progressive, for social justice and sharing wealth, feminist, ecologist, anti-racist, pacifist, etc... it has all the virtues! What sets OC apart as a political party is its first priority – social justice or what is called “the common good”: sharing wealth, respect for the collective interest. OC's vision of development is one which will make wise decisions not only now but for the next ten generations.”

There are struggles to which we are more accustomed to taking on as feminists and left-wing activists, such as pay equity and protective reassignment. But OC has also had to think about new issues that we face as feminists: issues that are difficult. Sister David offered some examples, stating that, even if we disagree with each other, we do have to address them and debate these issues because our opposition is not divided!

For example, the rise of the religious right has been exploited by politicians across the world. We see it in other countries and it seems far away but it's closer than we think. For example, Americans recently wasted a week discussing Janet Jackson's breast. Didn't they have anything better to do? What about sexism, violence and misinformation on American television? What about Iraq and Guantanamo? Why couldn't they talk about that? Sister David also pointed out that fundamentalist Christianity has inspired fundamentalism in Muslim and Hindu populations of the world. And in every case, women are the first to suffer. We need to speak out on this, no matter how difficult and controversial it is. Sister David remarked that she read with disbelief the report of the former minister of the Status of Women in Ontario recommending sharia tribunals. Respect and goodwill for all cultures in Canada does not mean abandoning the rights of women.

Another example: in Quebec, on radio talk shows such as Mario Dumont's, messages of hate and mistrust circulate which is bad for women and minority groups. The same challenge pertains to gay marriage. What is deplorable about Stephen Harper's campaign against equal marriage is that he is targeting immigrant and minority communities to mobilize against gay marriage. As women and feminists, we have to occupy ourselves with the rights of all minorities. OC opposes free votes and referendums when it comes to defending fundamental minority rights because we must protect minorities from the majority overwhelming their voices.

Another issue is that men's groups are on the rise. Some of these groups do get together to challenge gender stereotypes and ally themselves with feminism, but there are others that get together to challenge what they call the "feminist lobby". Sister David mentioned a men's website in Quebec where feminists are called "feminazis". It's important to distinguish between these hateful messages from men who want to keep women down and the movement of men who are questioning their own behaviours and realizing that they are also products of stereotypes imposed by patriarchy. This doesn't mean that they have to face the same discrimination as women but it does mean that they can rid themselves of the stereotypes; for example, that all men are aggressive. So, Sister David suggested, we can form alliances

with men who are ready to fight violence against women or work side by side with our brothers for such things as better parental leave, better work-life balance, and child care. We can win these battles if we ally ourselves with pro-feminist men. We also need to acknowledge through a feminist lens that there are certain problems experienced primarily by men.

Another disturbing issue is the regressive increase in sexist publicity and the commercial exploitation of women and girls, not to mention the world-wide trafficking of women and girls. Here in Canada, what are we doing to our little girls at earlier and earlier ages? Why are we sexualizing and eroticizing our little girls? Why do little girls feel that they have to be seductive and attract boys at the age of eight? Clearly, the market is seeking a new and vulnerable female public from which to profit and, without undue moralizing, we need to stop this.

These and other issues are unfolding against a backdrop of neo-liberalism and of wars that indiscriminately kill and force millions of women into refugee camps; a world where democracy is undermined. In the recent elections in Saudi Arabia, women could not vote. In Iraq, notice all the women who went to vote veiled from head to toe and who could not walk the streets any other way. Under Saddam Hussein, these women had access to education and employment, as Sister David saw for herself when she was there observing the effects of the sanctions. The sanctions had the effect of increasing religious conservatism in the country because they increased despair. Democracy under such conditions is therefore “relative” – what laws will the next Iraqi government put in place and how will this affect women?

Sister David declared that Option Citoyenne as a new political party will fight the rise of conservatism, individualism and consumerism. We want to live in a society with more solidarity. OC also has a more in-depth ecologist vision, recognizing that it's not enough to just recycle or compost or conserve water. We need to look at our entire economy and ask why we are producing all these unnecessary and polluting gadgets. An ecologist vision would force us to reflect on our choices and think more “long-term”. Do we want Wal-Martization or do we want to pay a little more for more equitable, small-scale and local businesses?

Will Option Citoyenne run in the next provincial elections? Not at this point, because the fledgling party is taking it step by step. More people need to join and there is a lot of work to do. At a time when people distrust politicians, when the image of politics is tainted, should left-wing feminists even take the plunge into politics? But, as progressive people know, if you don't concern yourself with politics, politics will concern itself with you. In Quebec, progressives know that it will be difficult to unite the left. But there is a strong desire for change in our population. We want something other than a traditional political party! So what we have to do is work very hard and keep saying "Yes! One day we will have a feminist left-wing political party in power."

For more information about Option Citoyenne, visit their website at: www.optioncitoyenne.ca

CONFERENCE WORKSHOP TOPICS

Women activists are often trying to deal with many different issues at once. The Steering Committee members wanted the workshops to meet the objectives of the Conference and to cover many of the ongoing struggles that women members must tackle.

Six workshop topics were offered at the National Conference. All applicants were asked to indicate their order of preference for the different workshops. Every attempt was made to respect their first preference. All delegates attended one workshop during the conference.

Women and Politics

This workshop looked at how the political system works and examined the pitfalls and advantages of working within the political system. Information and strategies were offered for lobbying, coalition-building and grassroots activities to push issues forward.

In all, 20 members participated in this workshop, which was offered in English.

CONFERENCE WORKSHOP TOPICS

Regional Women's Committees

This workshop looked at the roles of Regional Women's Committees. Discussion and exercises focussed on how these committees can connect with other PSAC / Federation / community structures, what's missing, and how RWCs can be made more effective and powerful.

In all, 38 members participated in the English workshops and 20 in the bilingual workshop.

The Politics of Caring

This workshop looked at how women can resist and fight back as neo-liberal policies drain social programs and dump more and more responsibilities onto women as the primary caregivers in society. Participants had an opportunity to discuss the "triple day" and to strategize around ways to make the work of caring more equitable.

In all, 22 members participated in this workshop, which was offered in English.

Leadership

This workshop looked at the reasons for there being so comparatively few women in leadership positions in the 21st century. Participants discussed leadership skills and strategized around achieving more women leaders and better representation.

In all, 40 members participated in the English workshop and 20 members participated in the Bilingual workshop.

Women and Globalization

This workshop was aimed at demystifying globalization by asking: what are the particular effects of globalization upon women? Participants looked at scenarios and examples of how women across the world have organized to fight globalization.

In all, 21 members participated in the English workshop and 19 members participated in the French workshop.

CONFERENCE WORKSHOP TOPICS

Taking Our Rightful Place

This was an action-oriented workshop to get women mobilized around specific issues and develop meaningful action plans for full equality, in workplaces, in unions, and in communities.

In all, 20 members participated in this workshop, which was offered in English.

CONFERENCE WORKSHOP RECOMMENDATIONS

The number of participants to our Conference required more than one group working on the same workshop topic. The Conference Agenda also included workshop reports to be presented to the plenary session.

In all, eleven reports were presented to the plenary. Each workshop had three minutes to present its report. Workshop reporters were encouraged to be creative in their reports and many took up this challenge by presenting their reports accompanied by a march or a chant or through using materials produced in the workshops.

The following is a summary of the recommendations made from all workshops.

The objectives of the **Women and Politics** workshop were to identify the main structures and institutions of Canadian politics, to understand the avenues of public participation that are open to women, and to develop lobbying strategies to address issues of importance to women. Participants explored both the traditional political process and possible alternatives or reforms, including Gender Parity, Critical Mass, Participatory Democracy, and Proportional Representation. Although women are 51% of the Canadian population, the vast majority of our elected leaders are still

CONFERENCE WORKSHOP RECOMMENDATIONS

male, despite the fact that women have been able to run for office since the 1920s.

In a quiz game called “Question Period,” workshop participants tested their knowledge of the history of women in politics and of existing institutions, such as the House of Commons, provincial legislatures and municipal councils. Kits and information sheets also provided information on how to lobby for important issues and how to work with elections. Coming out of this workshop, members affirmed how important it was to get involved with political parties through a procession of the workshop participants carrying party banners.

The purpose of the **Regional Women’s Committees** workshops was to develop the potential of Regional Women’s Committees. Objectives included: knowing the structure and mandate of RWCs within the PSAC, feeling inspired to participate in/ start up a RWC, being able to explain what a RWC is and what it does, organize or join a RWC, and developing goals and action plans to achieve them. These workshops provided a forum to network, re-energize and mobilize, gathering some of the most dynamic women in Canada together to create an open, honest and diversified platform to share ideas and solutions.

Participants created their own “herstories” of their activism as women of the PSAC over the years and across the generations. They looked at the RWC structure and reviewed how to organize or join a RWC in their Regions. They tackled scenarios that raised the issues of how to strengthen RWCs, how to connect RWCs to each other and to other equity-seeking groups, and what kinds of activities might be most powerful and effective for RWCs to undertake. Specific issues tackled in RWC workshop scenarios included: mobilization for national funding for child care; confronting homophobia and racism; and overall, building an active RWC.

CONFERENCE WORKSHOP RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations re: Child Care

- Public awareness meetings for Locals
- Calling into radio open-line shows to raise awareness of the issue
- Coalition building with other unions
- Benefits from a national childcare program: it's good for the local economy. This affects everyone, not only women. Child care workers are highly trained professionals and need to be valued.
- Child care is currently being debated and should be a priority issue

Recommendations re: Confronting Homophobia and Racism

- These are issues that can prevent the recruitment of new members and affect what equity issues the committee takes on, for example, same-sex marriage.
- Mediation in the case of conflict
- Education and anti-harassment training
- EOC Rep involvement

Recommendations re: Making an Active RWC

- Commitment and dedication to something to fight for
- A clear and well-defined mandate
- Sharing information and coalition work
- Outreach to new members
- Connecting with workplace issues
- Training on structure and history
- Speakers from the community and from conferences
- Frequent meetings with the participation of all members
- Child care
- Joint training with other union committees
- Regional, national and global strategies

CONFERENCE WORKSHOP RECOMMENDATIONS

Objectives for the **Politics of Caring** workshop involved discussing how pressures on women are affected by how the worlds of family, work and community are constructed. The learning activities aimed to inspire women to make individual decisions to counteract the pressures related to the politics of caring, while helping to challenge the status quo; to be able to effectively advocate for a change in the status quo; and to be able to identify collective and institutional measures that are inclusive and supportive of families, work and community involvement. By examining different factors that have an impact on women's caregiving, participants developed an in-depth analysis of how the structures of society affect individual lives.

A common factor that participants noticed during the exercises in the workshop is that women play many roles in life which constitute unpaid work. Women care about what they do, but understandably feel over-extended. The participants developed recommendations to address this issue:

Recommendations

- Build partnerships with other unions
- Lobby against health care privatization
- Remain active within the union
- More outreach for young people
- Prioritize and lobby for child care
- PSAC review this past strike strategy and look at other ways of forming collective bargaining teams.

Women taking part in the **Leadership** workshops had the following objectives: to identify leadership attributes that build, sustain and support women's equality; to analyze reasons why women don't attain leadership positions in sufficient numbers; to develop strategies that will promote leadership opportunities for women and to pose challenges to leadership that promote women's equality.

CONFERENCE WORKSHOP RECOMMENDATIONS

Through exercises such as the Leadership Awareness Wheel and critically examining the CBC's "Greatest Canadian" contest, participants came up with definitions and attributes of leadership that were more inclusive of women. Participants recognized the power of decision-makers to affect every aspect of women's lives, and developed the following recommendations to promote and advance women leaders and women's equality:

Recommendations

- Strengthen women's rights in the workplace through child care, collective agreement language, pensions
- Remove barriers to electing women such as lack of money, biased nomination processes, lack of media recognition and support systems
- Challenge Bill C-25 (modernisation of public service)
- Fight privatization
- Oppose war
- Support the Kyoto agreement
- Mobilization: challenge all members to go back to your workplaces and recruit one new woman every 3 months!
- 60% of PSAC members are women but only 43% of Convention delegates are women and only 35% of the NBoD are women: better representation is needed
- Media must recognize women's positive achievements: we want to live in a society where women are taken seriously in leadership roles
- Building women's leadership: training on resolutions, equal representation on resolution committees, training women for public speaking, networking and creating support groups, coalition-building, taking advantage of new technologies to bridge geographical barriers, media events, supporting each other
- RWCs to take leadership on education about women's rights
- Where women can show leadership: in their communities, support labour events; in their workplaces, hold lunchtime meetings, bring in speakers, educational materials; globally, anti-sweatshop education

CONFERENCE WORKSHOP RECOMMENDATIONS

The **Women and Globalization** workshops covered a lot of material about globalization, its effects upon people and specifically upon women, and offered case studies and scenarios to help participants achieve the following objectives: to define globalization from a broad perspective, explore its historic underpinning and analyze its impact on women here and across the world; to outline the key players and proponents of globalization and their influence on the current global agenda; to analyze the impact of globalization on women, particularly the poor, indigenous, marginalized and oppressed; to make the links between racism, poverty, violence, war, sexism, homophobia, ableism and classism and the current global agenda; and, finally, to draw upon global examples of resistance to develop individual, community, workplace and union strategies that will resist an unjust and corporate global agenda.

After linking globalization to their everyday lives and working conditions, and after reading about and discussing the lives and working conditions of other women across the world, workshop participants left this workshop with the following specific recommendations and commitments to counter the corporate global agenda.

Recommendations

- Commit to talking about and educating our communities about globalization and global issues, and their impact on women
- Campaign against privatization
- Become more informed about your consumer choices – who made it? Where was it made? What are the environmental impacts of its production?
- Become more informed and educated about global issues such as fair trade, child labour, women in sweatshops
- Use your purchasing power - commit to spend a certain percentage on fair-trade and union-made products, and to support local and small businesses
- Work on building partnerships with fair trade and pro-union organizations
- Work with NGOs to make water a basic human right

CONFERENCE WORKSHOP RECOMMENDATIONS

- Boycotting multinational corporations such as Wal-Mart that suppress labour and human rights
- Sharing globalization stories with businesses in the community
- Respect and protect the environment from short-sighted profiteering
- Support social programs
- Oppose wars

Women in the **Taking Our Rightful Place** workshop took on numerous issues that are important to women, including pay equity, globalization, harassment and violence in the workplace, and child care. The purpose of this workshop was to explore political options for addressing such issues, to articulate and take steps towards developing a broad-based women's political agenda and action plan. Participants identified issues that are important to women, examined these issues in detail, worked together to develop and present action plans on chosen issues, and created comprehensive strategies to follow through on the action plans. Different models of political action were discussed, including advocacy and awareness-raising, lobbying and direct action planning techniques.

With a rousing chorus based upon "We Are Family", workshop participants let the National Women's Conference plenary know that they were ready to act on behalf of women's rights, and to inspire others to do the same.

RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY THE DELEGATES

On August 23rd, 2004 registration forms for the National Women's Conference were sent to all PSAC Regional Women's Committees, Locals, Components and all PSAC Regional Offices with a general call for resolutions deadline of October 9th 2004.

All constitutionally recognized bodies and Union structures were entitled to forward resolutions to the National Women's Conference.

The resolutions were then presented to our Conference Resolutions Committee for their review and recommendation to our Conference delegates.

A report from the Conference Resolutions Committee was then prepared in advance of the Conference and delegates debate. Delegates voted based on the Committee's recommendations.

RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY THE DELEGATES

The AEC also made the decision that all resolutions should be forwarded to our National President before being sent to the PSAC Convention. That will allow the PSAC to act upon some of the resolutions before the next Convention.

Any outstanding resolutions adopted by the delegates at the Conference will be submitted to the next PSAC Triennial Convention in 2006.

The following are the resolutions which were passed by the delegates at the 2005 National Women's Conference:

COMPOSITE RESOLUTION 11A

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the PSAC exert pressure to produce federal legislation guaranteeing protective reassignment and/or preventative withdrawal with paid leave for pregnant or nursing employees whose physicians have recommended such action, as is the case in Quebec; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the PSAC, in discussion with all employers, ensure that protective reassignment and/or preventative withdrawal with paid leave is a prime issue; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the PSAC continue the petition campaign to advance the cause of protective reassignment and/or preventative withdrawal.

RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY THE DELEGATES

EMERGENCY RESOLUTION 1A

BE IT RESOLVED that the PSAC and the National Women's Conference take a position in support of the Civil Marriage Act; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Public Service Alliance of Canada strongly and publicly denounce Stephen Harper's tactic to defeat the Civil Marriage Act as homophobic and anti-human rights; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we call on Regional Women's and Human Rights' Committees to join Conference delegates in lobbying MPs and speaking to friends, family, and co-workers to ensure they support the Civil Marriage Act; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Public Service Alliance of Canada immediately, within the next few weeks, begin a public education campaign in support of same sex marriage and human rights legislation.

RESOLUTION 16

BE IT RESOLVED THAT pension inequality resulting from the identified wage gap be recognized as an important factor in the fight for pay equity across the public service.

RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY THE DELEGATES

RESOLUTION 49

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the PSAC undertake a campaign to protect members from violence in the workplace and from hazardous situations, including but not limited to:

- make effective anti-violence in the workplace language a top bargaining priority;
- develop a campaign to educate the membership, the employer and the Canadian public as to the seriousness of violence in the workplace and the need to stop it;
- initiate a review with the employer to ensure that workplace practices do not unreasonably place employees at risk.

EMERGENCY RESOLUTION 3

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the PSAC create membership awareness by adding a module to the Globalization Course about the social, economic and labour impact of « Wal-Martization »; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the PSAC join in any action or coalition denouncing Wal-Mart's union-busting practices.

RESOLUTION 3

BE IT RESOLVED THAT PSAC fight to end the discriminatory practice of reducing federal employee superannuation benefits by CPP/QPP and ensure federal employees retain the full benefits of their pensions at retirement without penalty; and

RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY THE DELEGATES

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT PSAC continue to commit funds to fight this unfair practice.

RESOLUTION 57

BE IT RESOLVED THAT active Regional Women's Committees be entitled to one delegate per RWC with full status at the PSAC Triennial Conventions.

RESOLUTION 14

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the PSAC Constitution be amended to give Regional Women's Conferences the power to send resolutions to National Women's Conferences.

RESOLUTION 47

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Regional Womens' Committees be authorized to submit bargaining proposals directly to the Collective Bargaining Branch.

RESOLUTION 50

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the PSAC increase the budgets of Regional Women's Committees.

RESOLUTION 58

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the budgets of the PSAC Regional Women's Conferences be raised to a sufficient level to cover all of the expenses of a participating representative who represents 1% of the total number of the members per region.

RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY THE DELEGATES

RESOLUTION 8

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the PSAC lobby Canadian authorities to take all of the necessary measures on an urgent basis to better protect indigenous women and children in Canada.

RESOLUTION 19

BE IT RESOLVED THAT PSAC National provide fully funded delegate status to each regional council member representing women to the PSAC Triennial Convention; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT PSAC create additional delegate seats for this purpose.

RESOLUTION 35

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the PSAC press employers to invoice the PSAC for unpaid union leave, whether planned or not, in order for the members to continue receiving their pay cheques.

RESOLUTION 7

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Social Justice Fund allocate some funding to organizations whose aim it is to fight poverty and exclusion in Canada.

RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY THE DELEGATES

RESOLUTION 55

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the PSAC develop strategies to educate the membership on the negative effect that the sale of water as a commodity will have worldwide; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the PSAC take direct action to mobilize all its members to force an amendment to NAFTA which would create a specific exception for water and thus acknowledging that this is a fundamental human rights issue.

RESOLUTION 26

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Public Service Alliance of Canada lobby the federal government to pressure the Mexican and Guatemalan governments into making every possible effort to solve and stop crimes against women in both countries.

RESOLUTION 5

BE IT RESOLVED THAT PSAC support campaigns to maintain the universality of health care programs in Canada; and

BE IT RESOLVED THAT PSAC continue to speak out against all attempts to privatize and cut the budgets of health care programs in the country.

RESOLUTION 6

BE IT RESOLVED THAT PSAC continue to study the working conditions of PSAC members in call centres and that these members are consulted.

RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY THE DELEGATES

RESOLUTION 17

BE IT RESOLVED THAT PSAC fully fund Federation of Labour Conference organizers, facilitators and Co-chairs when they are there representing the PSAC.

EMERGENCY RESOLUTION 5

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Public Service Alliance of Canada send a message to the Saskatchewan Government on behalf of all participants at the PSAC National Women's Conference condemning them for caving to right wing corporate forces and not recognizing that workers deserve an opportunity to obtain full-time employment of 40 hours per week instead of having to work 2 or 3 part time jobs to provide food, shelter and child care for their families.

RESOLUTION 39

BE IT RESOLVED THAT PSAC National cover the cost of conference calls three times per year for all active Regional Women's Committees within their region; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT RWC conference calls be budgeted for a minimum of 1.5 hours to be held three times each year and that translation be provided as required.

RESOLUTION 23

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Public Service Alliance of Canada implement a training project that will be adapted to different workplaces to make members aware of mobbing and to give them the tools to eradicate it: and

RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY THE DELEGATES

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Public Service Alliance of Canada take steps with Treasury Board and various employers to have this training given to both management and the employees in all workplaces; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the PSAC provide members with support during the prevention process and while a harassment complaint is being processed.

RESOLUTION 2

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Alliance Executive Committee of the PSAC be given the person year allotment and funds to staff a Regional Office to be located in Prince George, BC; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the PSAC Convention delegates urge immediate acceptance and action of this resolution in the year 2006.

RESOLUTION 51

BE IT RESOLVED THAT there be 2 representatives per RWC as fully funded delegates to the National Women's Conference.

CLOSING REMARKS

Sister Patty Ducharme

As I look around this room, I see strong, motivated women who came here to Vancouver to change the face of power and I think we can say that we are all leaving this Conference with some renewed hope, energy and support to get out into our Regions, our workplaces, our committees and our communities to do just that.

Sisters, your enthusiasm, your commitment and your creativity during these past three days have been outstanding. It's obvious that everybody worked very hard in the workshops, during the resolutions debate, and in their caucuses, and you should all be extremely proud of yourselves.

It's really inspiring to see women from across the country getting together, networking and sharing their resources, their wisdom and their experience. I hope that you have gained as much from this Conference as I have. I hope that this Conference will lead to some real change in our political and social landscape over the next few years. International Women's Day will be here soon, and I hope that all of us can get behind that CLC postcard campaign and make sure we get the child care system that we and our children deserve.

CLOSING REMARKS

So if you haven't already put some postcards in your bag to take back to your sisters and brothers in the Regions, make sure you do so. And at your local International Women's Day event, take a moment and think about everything that has happened here, and about the PSAC women who are standing shoulder to shoulder with you across the country.

"Talking about putting women in power, Françoise David talked to us about the foundation of a new political party in Quebec - Option Citoyenne – which is feminist and puts social justice and the common good in the forefront. She proposed to us that we reflect on major issues – the rise of religious conservatism here and elsewhere in the world, the rise in anti-feminist groups and the strong comeback of sexist advertising – which affect us as women and as citizens. As Françoise said, living in an integrated society is more complicated but far more rewarding! On behalf of the women in PSAC, thank you Françoise for deciding to make the leap into politics!

Sister Robyn Benson

Further energy, hope and commitment came from the strong and powerful women who have inspired us with their presence here. Our National President, Nycole Turmel, shared her experience with us as a woman union leader from her first involvement with the CR strike in the '80s. She has encouraged us to work together towards some concrete actions that will change women's lives. She has showed us how it's done.

Let's take on her challenge and demonstrate our leadership on these issues. We are going to fight for a pan-Canadian child care system that gets it right. We are going to fight for a pro-active pay equity law. We are going to fight for protective reassignment for pregnant and nursing workers. And we are going to win.

CLOSING REMARKS

Our panelists provided us with perspectives on women fighting globalization, and on particular issues that women are facing in their communities and at the national and international levels.

Sister Allison Brewer has reminded us of how far we have come and how far we still have to go in supporting the human rights of our lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered sisters and brothers. She also reminded us of the importance of building coalitions on every level because this truly is, as Sister Allison said, a global human rights revolution.

Sister Marie-Clarke Walker inspired us with her analysis of how capitalism puts profit before people and how the corporate agenda has divided workers. As trade unionists, we have a responsibility to fight that division through international solidarity, and as women, we can support our sisters in the Global South through our social justice funds.

Last, but not least, Sister Beth Myers showed us what women can do when they support international solidarity and make a difference for women workers around the world. Her stories of the sisters in the Global South and her suggestions of concrete actions we can take have set an example for us to follow.

At this Conference, a number of resolutions were passed that will come to the PSAC Triennial Convention in 2006. Some may even be acted upon prior to the Convention and some will have repercussions upon Regional and Component Conventions. That's how we change the face of power!

I would like to congratulate you all upon a respectful, impassioned, and lively discussion that brought some extremely important issues to the floor. We've stood up and demanded protective reassignment. We have unanimously supported equal marriage rights. We've linked pay equity to pension inequality. We've spoken out against violence. We've called for better representation and resources for our sisters within the union structure. We've recognized the importance of international solidarity and fighting globalization. We've stood up for

CLOSING REMARKS

public health care. We've upheld the rights of women and equity-seeking groups.

So much was accomplished here through women's resolutions. Let's make sure we follow up when we get back to our homes, our workplaces and our Regions.

Regional, Component and Equity Breakdown of Participants

List of Delegates by Component

Agriculture Union	11
Canada Employment and Immigration Union	28
Customs Excise Union Douanes Accise	16
Directly Chartered Locals	5
Environment Component	12
Government Services Union	10
National Component	28
Nunavut Employees Union	6
National Health and Welfare Union	10
Natural Resources Union	4
Union of Canadian Transportation Employees	7
Union of National Defence Employees	12
Union of Northern Workers	6
Union of Postal Communications Employees	8
Union of Solicitor General Employees	16
Union of Taxation Employees	24
Union of Veterans' Affairs Employees	7
Yukon Employees Union	8
TOTAL	218

List of Delegates by Region

National Capital Region	34
Ontario	31
Prairies	40
Quebec	31
Atlantic	35
British Columbia	22
North	25
TOTAL	218

Equity Groups Participation - Delegates

Persons with a Disability	38
Aboriginal	26
Racially Visible	26
GLBT	18
Youth	9

AGENDA

Public Service Alliance of Canada
National Women's Conference 2005
February 17th-20th, 2005
Vancouver, B.C.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 17TH

6:00 pm – 9:00 pm Registration

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 18TH

7:15 am – 8:15 am Registration

7:30 am – 8:30 am Meet and Greet (optional)

8:30 am - 9:15 am Greetings by an Aboriginal
Representative

Opening by Co-Chairs:
Patty Ducharme and Robyn Benson

Introductions: Conference Steering

9:15 am – 9:45 am PSAC National President Address:
Nycole Turmel

9:45 am – 10:00 am *Health Break*

10:00 am – 11:30 am Panel Discussion:
"Women Resisting Globalization"

Guest speakers:

Marie Clarke-Walker (CLC)
 Allison Brewer (Lesbian & Gay Rights
 Activist)
 Beth Myers (STITCH)

11:30 am - 1:00 pm

LUNCH

1:00 pm – 3:00 pm

Workshops

3:00 pm - 3:15 pm

Health Break

3:15 pm - 5:00 pm

Continuation of Workshops

5:15 pm – 6:00 pm

Resolution Orientation for new
 delegates (optional)

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 19TH

7:30 am – 8:15 am

Resolution Orientation for new
 delegates (optional)

8:30 am – 10:00 am

Keynote speaker:
 “Changing the Face of Power”
 Françoise David (*Option citoyenne*)

10:00 am – 10:15 am

Health break

10:15 am – 11:00 am

Workshops Reports in Plenary

11:00 am – 12:00 am

Regional Caucuses

12:00 am – 1:00 pm

LUNCH

1:00 pm – 3:00 pm

Resolutions Debate

APPENDIX "B"

<i>3:00 pm – 3:15 pm</i>	<i>Health break</i>
3:15 pm – 5:00 pm	Resolutions Debate
7:00 pm – 10:00 pm	Banquet (optional)

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 20TH

8:30 am – 10:00 am	Resolutions Debate
<i>10:00 am – 10:15 am</i>	<i>Health break</i>
10:15 am – 11:30 am	Closing Remarks