
& NEWSBULLETIN &

Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women

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International Women's Week 2004 is being marked by events and celebrations to bring attention to the circumstances of women in our communities, province, country and throughout the world. Yes, there is indeed much to celebrate. For some women it is leaving an abusive relationship, for union women it may be standing up for their collective bargaining process, for another it may be opening a business, or obtaining a job at Voisey's Bay Nickel and for ten women in Newfoundland and Labrador it was getting re/elected to serve our province in the House of Assembly.

Historic, certainly! Groundbreaking, for sure! Incredibly our province now has four women in Cabinet, three former Cabinet Ministers in Opposition and three other women sitting with government. The real question still remains, what influence will these women have in guiding the decisions being made to determine the future of Newfoundland and Labrador? The House of Assembly is about to open, the first budget will be released and a new government administration will begin making policies and legislation which will profoundly affect the lives of women, families and communities. As a feminist community we expect a lot from women who have chosen politics. We expect them to bring gender concerns to every decision made within government departments.

We expect that our Premier include a gender-based analysis in the direction he is planning for our province. We are of course proud of the success of these six new and four returning MHA's, but as we support you we also need to challenge you to stand up for the advancement of women socially, economically, politically, culturally and legally.

A wise feminist said, "Be thee ever vigilant ~ and as women we must." The hard won gains of the women's movement can be set back quite easily when right wing conservative men, regardless of political stripe, are in positions of power.

The years ahead will be challenging and we need to make it clear to our new provincial government that there is a feminist community *alive and well* in our province and we expect to not merely be considered, but included. Bread and Roses was the cry of our foremothers and as much as we should not have to fight for enough food, decent employment and wages, and an end to violence and inequality, we still do. And we must continue to push for the inclusion of women in decision making and leadership in every community and region of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Joyce M. Hancock
President, PACSW



March 8, IWD

An opportunity to reflect on the progress made to advance women's equality, assess the challenges facing women today, consider future steps and celebrate the gains made in these areas.

The origins of IWD may be traced back to the struggles of women workers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In 1857, thousands of female garment workers took to the streets of New York to protest unfair wages, a twelve-hour work day, and sexual harassment in the workplace; however, conditions did not improve. On March 8, 1908, fifteen thousand women marched through New York City demanding shorter work hours, better pay, voting rights and an end to child labour. They adopted the slogan "Bread and Roses," with bread symbolizing economic security and roses a better quality of life.

In 1910, more than 100 women representing 17 countries met in Denmark. They voted to establish an IWD to recognize women's struggles around the world, including the fight for universal suffrage. In 1977, two years after International Women's Year, the UN adopted a resolution inviting countries to dedicate one day to the celebration of the rights of women and international peace. March 8th became the date of recognition in many countries.

Quebec Court Decision on Maternity and Parental Leave

Women's organizations throughout the country are concerned with a Quebec Court decision regarding maternity, parental and sick benefits paid through our country's Employment Insurance Program. On January 27, 2004, the Quebec Court of Appeal ruled that these benefits are matters of provincial jurisdiction, and that the Employment Insurance program should only be used to replace the wages of those who have lost their jobs. Consequently, the government of Canada would have no right to ensure that the working women and men of our country have access to such benefits.

Unemployment insurance is clearly a federal responsibility; its purpose is to temporarily replace the earnings of workers due to specific conditions that may affect or limit participation in the paid labour force. These include the interruption of earnings due to temporary or permanent loss of one's job, parental care for a newborn infant or adoption, compassionate care, and the classroom component of apprenticeship training. The Quebec Court ruling, if allowed to stand, would throw this into jeopardy.

In response, the Network on Women's Social and Economic Rights spearheaded a letter writing campaign calling for the federal government to appeal the Quebec Court

decision. The campaign, which was supported by equality-seeking individuals and organizations throughout the country, including this Advisory Council, was successful. A spokesperson for Human Resources and Skills Development confirmed that the federal government filed an appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada of the Quebec Court of Appeal decision on parental leave on February 23rd. Congratulations to all who supported the campaign by writing letters, sending email and working with the media!

Breaking Bread... for Women in Afghanistan

Breaking Bread... for Women in Afghanistan is a volunteer fund-raising project to support education projects for Afghan women and girls by holding pot luck dinners across Canada. The goal of each dinner is to raise \$750, which is the approximate cost of one teacher's salary for a year in Afghanistan. One hundred percent of funds donated will be forwarded to support education projects in Afghanistan through the project partners working with CW4WAfghan (Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan).

The Advisory Council will host a *Breaking Bread... For Women in Afghanistan Luncheon* as part of this year's International Women's Week activities on Friday, March 12. For more information on how you can hold a potluck fund-raiser in support Afghan women and girls, call 416.366.2516, email info@breakingbreadforwomen.com or visit www.breakingbreadforwomen.com.

Honouring Moyra

Long time advocate and activist, Moyra Buchan, is retiring from her position as Executive Director with the Canadian Mental Health Association. On March 12th during International Women's Week, a Women's Community Luncheon will honour Moyra for the many years of work she has provided to advance the rights of people dealing with mental health issues. In leaving her position Moyra stated, "I have lived and breathed this for so long I am definitely not going to stop now. I'm looking forward to taking part in exploring areas of mental health that I have not had time to be a part of in the last fifteen years."

Happy 20th Anniversary

Congratulations to the Gateway Status of Women Council on their 20th Anniversary. On International Women's Day the women involved with the Gateway Women's Council/Women's Centre are planning a retrospective dinner to celebrate their twenty years of moving forward women's equality work. Rather than honouring a woman of the year, they will honour the numerous women who have made this equality-seeking feminist organization the strong sustaining presence for women and families in the Port Aux Basques region.