



report

**Advisory Committee
on Women's Issues
Videoconference on
COVID-19**

June 3, 2020

The National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE) is a family of 11 Component and 3 affiliate unions. Taken together, we are one of the largest unions in Canada. Most of our 390,000 members work to deliver public services of every kind to the citizens of their home provinces. We also have a large and growing number of members who work for private businesses.

Larry Brown, President

Bert Blundon, Secretary-Treasurer

**Advisory Committee on Women Issues
Videoconference on COVID-19
June 3, 2020
1:30 pm EDT**



PARTICIPANTS

NAPE/NUPGE

Arlene Sedlickas

PEI UPSE/NUPGE

Dina DesRoches

NSGEU/NUPGE

Sandra Mullen

NBU/NUPGE

Lisa Watters

OPSEU/NUPGE

Susanne Fairweather

MGEU/NUPGE

Michelle Gawronsky

SGEU/NUPGE

Lynne Guicke

HSAA/NUPGE

Faika Satterthwaite

HSABC/NUPGE

Mandi Ayers

BCGEU/NUPGE

Joanna Lord

NUPGE

Larry Brown, President
Bert Blundon, Secretary-Treasurer
Brenda Hildahl, National Coordinator, Research
Sandra Megeney, Administrative Representative

REGRETS

Sylvia Melanson, NBU/NUPGE
Terry-Lyn Gagnon, MGEU/NUPGE

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 1:30 pm by Chair Brenda Hildahl. She welcomed all attendees, including Lisa Watters who was attending on behalf of Sylvia Melanson who sent her regrets.

Hildahl congratulated Sandra Mullen for being presented with the Sister of the Year award from the Nova Scotia Federation of Labour.

The committee was advised that the purpose of the videoconference was to provide the members with an opportunity to discuss how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted women more than men and has resulted in a drastic increase in domestic violence.

National Report

Larry Brown, President, provided the national report. He stressed to the committee that NUPGE is strongly dedicated to ensuring that changes are made to how our country operates post-COVID-19 and that our economic recovery plan will not be based on austerity measures.

COVID-19 has raised public awareness of the issue of long-term care facilities being underfunded and understaffed. When private companies are involved, decisions are not based on the needs of the patients but rather on the financial bottom line. This has had tragic results, with so many deaths across Canada in long-term care facilities during this pandemic. NUPGE has been campaigning to move long-term care under the *Canada Health Act* to ensure there are national standards, public accountability, and secure funding.

President Brown then addressed the issue of the rioting that is occurring in Minnesota. This rioting is the result of a black man named George Floyd dying at the hands of police. Sadly, his death is far from the first due to racist violence. Compounding the issue is President Trump's public response, which has incited even more racism. Brown stressed that here in Canada we are not immune to racism—Indigenous people, people of Asian descent, Muslims, and black people have all been abused and threatened. To ensure that NUPGE is doing everything it can to show that racism is not tolerated in Canada, a special anti-racism committee has been convened to help address these issues.

An important aspect of the economic recovery is going to be affordable, accessible, and universal early learning and child care. Without this, it is going to be extremely difficult for parents, especially women, to return to work. There is also a need for workers in this sector to be appropriately paid for the important work they do. A videoconference will be held in the near future to discuss advocacy on post-pandemic early learning and child care.

President Brown then spoke to the issue of domestic violence. The rate of domestic violence has always been high but has increased substantially during the pandemic. NUPGE has lobbied for decades on the issue of domestic violence and has financially supported shelters and transition houses. He asked each committee member to work with NUPGE to provide a concrete policy solution in order to litigate domestic violence against women. Committee members responded with numerous suggestions, including lobbying the federal government for a national strategy to end violence against women, and for more education regarding domestic violence. The strategy would involve politicians in the solution and engage men in the solution. The general consensus was a national strategy needs to be developed. Committee members were asked to send their comments and suggestions to Chair Hildahl who will then compile them and present them to the officers.

Bert Blundon, Secretary-Treasurer, raised the important issue that numerous employers are going to continue to have staff working from home. Women escaping violence often feel that their workplace is a safe place; but if you are working from home, there is no safe place.

Component Reports

The Component reports are contained in the Appendix of this report. The Component reports were shared electronically to the committee prior to the meeting. Faika Satterthwaite gave the HSAA report verbally.

Committee members spoke about their respective Component reports. The discussion highlighted many common challenges across provinces during the COVID-19.

A key issue during the pandemic has been the lack of child care due to the shutdown. Child care has been available mainly to essential workers, particularly those in the health care sector. Workers in other sectors who are working through the shutdown have struggled to find child care provisions. There are also concerns that when child care becomes broadly available, it may not be safe.

Another issue is women struggling with work/life balance. Many women have been working remotely during the shutdown. Due to the lack of child care, their children are at home, as well as receiving schooling online. This is placing strain on women as they are usually the primary caregivers, and has resulted in women working longer hours per day to balance their careers, home responsibilities, and their children's needs. This strain is resulting in women reporting higher rates of stress and exhaustion.

The issue of domestic violence across the country during the shutdown has been concerning. In some areas, shelters and crisis lines have been overwhelmed. In other areas, there has been a major decrease in shelters receiving calls. There are major concerns that women wishing to escape domestic violence can not reach out for help, as the perpetrator is in their home. Further, due to the lockdown, leaving the home is

extremely difficult. It was also noted that the perpetrator of the mass shooting in Portapique, Nova Scotia, had a long history of domestic violence.

Women and the Economic Future

Chair Hildahl reported to the committee that the most affected sectors (catering, social work, and cashiering) for job loss during the pandemic are female dominated. Women also hold more precarious positions that are easily eliminated during times of crisis. They also tend to be employed in jobs that have less flexibility to work remotely, as their jobs are more service oriented. 20% of women have lost their jobs, compared to 13% of men.

The committee discussed the fact that it is imperative that governments' economic recovery plans must have a gender-based analysis. Women must be included in all levels of consultation and decision-making. Moving into the recovery phase, it is essential that services such as child care are available and affordable. The committee will hold a more fulsome discussion at their next meeting.

Joanna Lord highlighted the Hawaiian COVID-19 plan for economic recovery called *Building Bridges, Not Walking on Backs: A Feminist Economic Recovery Plan for COVID-19*. Chair Hildahl will circulate the link to the committee.

Other Business

The next meeting of the Advisory Committee on Women's Issues is tentatively scheduled for October 2020.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:50 pm.

Follow-Ups

- The committee is to forward suggestions and/or comments on developing a national campaign to address the issue of how to end domestic violence.
- The Chair will circulate the Hawaiian COVID-19 plan for economic recovery called *Building Bridges, Not Walking on Backs: A Feminist Economic Recovery Plan for COVID-19*.

APPENDIX

Component Reports

NAPE/NUPGE

Sister Arlene Sedlickas reported.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM NAPE'S WOMEN'S COMMITTEE

Since the last advisory committee meeting, NAPE's Provincial Women's Committee had been very active. Unfortunately, the Covid-19 Pandemic occurred and shuttered all events. NAPE's Women's Committee had organized their annual Women's Conference for May 2020. The provincial conference was to be on Respectful Workplaces/Cultural Diversity. It has since been postponed until May 2021.

Our international women's Day celebrations were also cancelled not because of the Pandemic but due to a massive snowstorm.

Especially evident throughout COVID-19 is the need for a common approach to emergency child care. In Canada today, there is no national Early Childhood Education and Care program or policy. Each province/territory has its own approach, supported by a variety of funding arrangements.

In NL, licensed/regulated services are provided by self-governing, not-for-profit organizations whose volunteer boards hold legal responsibility, as well as by a smaller number of commercial operators. Most service providers receive minimal public funding and are dependent on revenues from parent fees. The very low compensation paid to the predominantly female workforce has created a crisis in recruitment and retention of qualified early childhood educators and other staff.

During this pandemic, both the federal and provincial government have taken many important steps to help workers and their families including a coordinated, federally supported plan to provide safe, free, emergency licensed child care to parents who are required to work, or who cannot make other child care arrangements. If parents and guardians of young children do not have access to the child care services they need to return to work, our economic recovery will be in jeopardy.

The pandemic lockdown has also put women at increased risk of domestic violence. To make up for the closure of schools, child care centers and other social services, it has also expanded their burden of unpaid care and domestic work. We anticipate there will be a far greater need for community mental health and social supports for women, vulnerable populations and those who are affected by unemployment, financial distress, isolation, and domestic violence.

The women's committee supports the position of the St. John's Status of Women Council (SJSWC), the Provincial Action Network on the Status of Women (PANSOW), and the Gender and Politics Lab Memorial University, on their 5-point action plan which includes:

1. Women in leadership roles, and a Gender Based Analysis;
2. A central phone line for the province for victims of domestic violence;
3. A task force on domestic violence;
4. A living wage; and
5. Child care.

UPDATES FROM NAPE- GENERAL

NAPE Signs on to Joint Statement on Personal Protective Equipment

Nape has been working tirelessly to protect workers throughout this pandemic. Nape has been pushing for better protocols and procedures and engaged with local suppliers and groups to source much-needed PPE.

Part of that process was working with the employers, government, and the other healthcare unions to develop a joint statement on guiding principles on PPE. A joint statement on personal protective equipment has been signed by RNU, NAPE, NLMA, CUPE, AAHP, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and Regional Health Authorities. It identifies PPE standards for health care workers.

Good Neighbour Agreement

Labour unions representing health care workers across the province have reached an agreement with the Regional Health Authorities (RHAs) and The Newfoundland and Labrador Centre for Health Information (NLCHI) to help ensure a uniform and coordinated response to COVID-19 in our health care system.

This Agreement applies to members with the RHAs and NLCHI only.

NAPE, the Registered Nurses' Union Newfoundland & Labrador (RNU), the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), and the Association of Allied Health Professionals (AAHP) have all signed on to this Agreement.

Newfoundland and Labrador joins several other provinces across Canada in reaching such agreements, often referred to as Good Neighbour Agreements. A similar agreement was reached in 2009 for the H1N1 outbreak.

The Good Neighbour Agreement lays out a planned and mutually agreed-upon response to the current Public Health Emergency created by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Agreement ensures the health, safety and security of the people of the province while protecting the health care workers who are on the front lines of the pandemic response.

The Agreement includes provisions for compensation due to self-isolation, scheduling, assignment of duties, deployment of staff, and protections related to child care.

Nape Welcomes New Members

Some good news during these unsettling times. Nape is proud to welcome the 22 new members of Garda World, who provide security services at the gate of the Vale Long Harbour Processing Plant to our union family!

These workers voted overwhelmingly in support of joining our great union, and NAPE was certified as the bargaining agent for this great group of workers by the Labour Relations Board on May 28, 2020.

PEI UPSE/NUPGE

Sister Dina DesRoches reported.

Since our last meeting on January 16 and 17, 2020 our PEI UPSE Women's Committee had a full day meeting with our new committee members included on March 11. It was a very productive day in which we outlined our priorities and started planning for our women's conference. We had our UPSE financial and planning staff join us to discuss the women's conference. Then Covid 19 put these plans on hold and we are going to postpone the women's conference until next year.

During Covid, many of our members are working in health care and long-term care and many others are working from home. UPSE Executive, Stewards and Staff have been active in helping people transition to this new way of working and problem-solving issues.

Due to the tragedy of the killing of 22 people in Nova Scotia in April of 2020, the issue of intimate partner violence has been in the forefront of the news. This has brought attention to the services I provide to men who are Court ordered to attend treatment due to offences against their partner. This has added extra pressure in our work and there has always been a high level of pressure to provide services with very limited staff before Covid. This has intensified during Covid as any intervention we provide could escalate the man's violence putting the victim and children at greater risk while they are isolated at home. During the past 9 weeks, I have been working from home however, we are returning to seeing clients soon with the public health safety precautions in place.

During Covid 19 there have been television ads on CBC. Karen Jackson, our UPSE President thanks the membership (Faces of the Frontlines) for providing the essential services Islanders need during this challenging time.

The PEI Union of Public Sector Employees welcomed Instructors at the Atlantic Tourism and Hospitality Institute Inc. (ATHI) to our membership. Subsequent to applying to the PEI Labour Relations Board, a vote was held, with 86 percent of instructional personnel supporting unionization. Consequently, the Board issued an Order dated May 11, 2020 certifying PEI UPSE to act as the bargaining agent for this new bargaining unit. ATHI is affiliated with Holland College and provides training to students in fields such as tourism, recreation, business, hospitality and culinary arts. PEI UPSE is the largest union in Prince Edward Island and represents members at Holland College and throughout government institutions and the broader public sector in all parts of the province.

In general, in PEI we have been coping well with the challenges of Covid 19. We have few cases and they all recovered, no deaths and have the advantage of being an Island that could block people from coming to our Province. We also have a minority government that was collaborating with the other parties before Covid-19 and for the most part, this continued. However recently, the government made the decision to let

Canadians who have homes on PEI can apply to come to the Island and conflict between the parties has surfaced because of this decision. Many Islanders and the Opposition parties have voiced concerns about this causing unnecessary risk and feel this shouldn't be done before other phases of re-opening have been done safely.

NSGEU/NUPGE

Sister Sandra Mullen reported.

Post January meeting of the National Committee, the NSGEU Women's Issues Committee met during our annual International Women's Day Breakfast that we cohost with the NS Federation of Labour. Our committee had only first met in the fall and we were busy working on initiatives that had been planned previously such as the Period Poverty campaign with United Way, that would see the kickoff event during our Breakfast March 6. We had a good turnout for the breakfast and amazing support for the campaign from Media in the province and great coverage leading up to the launch. NSFL Women's' committee names a Sister of Year each year and this breakfast and much to my surprise, NSGEU had submitted my name as the nomination and I was chosen by the committee as the recipient. I was shocked as I of course had submitted another name as a Nominee. Many of the Executive and Staff of NSGEU were on hand for the Breakfast and I was truly honored.

The Other major campaign that the NSGEU WIC will be working on is that of "Stop the Pink Tax. We have yet to proceed as we found ourselves in COVID 19 Lockdown shortly afterward.

UNCSW64 – This event that was to be attended by myself and 2nd VP Tammy Gillis was also cancelled in the midst of the COVID outbreak in NYC and is to be rescheduled (however it would appear more likely that it will not happen before 2021)

No in person meetings have happened and nor will they likely happen for the remainder of the year so we are moving to Zoom meetings and the committee will be planning a meeting in the coming months.

Due to COVID 19. All events and picnics have been postponed, including our weeklong labour school that was to happen late May.

NSGEU

President Maclean and the staff have been working full out during the early phases of the Pandemic and while working from home for the most part we have been doing Townhall calls and Zoom meetings with all of our sectors. During the first month there were meetings for the executive and board on a daily basis. I have attended many of the NUPGE Conference calls and Zoom Meetings on Jason's Behalf as I have been working from home.

NSGEU represents many of the frontline workers in NS. Healthcare, home support and Long-term care to name a few as well as the Civil Service that are required to provide service during the lockdown. This had ongoing issues as we all know with the lack of PPE and safety to staff during early days.

Our Nurses from the COVID unit at our Hospital were “ordered “to work at the Northwood LTC facility that has seen 53 of the provinces 60 deaths. We are fighting that order in court at present.

Good Neighbor Protocol – Agreement that was done during SARS that would allow for healthcare professionals to voluntarily provide services outside of their normal workspace was reactivated. The order by Government superseded this taking away the voluntary in the case of the crisis at Northwood LTC. Staff continued to service members who were constantly advised to do things outside the CA, those are ongoing.

While the outbreak had been mostly in the Central zone of the province we have been stating since the beginning that the staff were not properly prepared for the work environment that they were to respond to.

Extreme Sadness

Needless to say; the Country mourned with us during the Massacre that unfolded in April when 22 innocent victims lost their lives. Kristen Beaton was a member of the VON local providing Home Support Services in the area that morning when she was killed. She had been making her concerns known that the lack of PPE was causing her great concern on a daily basis and little did we know at the time, but she was pregnant as well.

NSGEU President Maclean has reached out to the family and we will be considering naming a scholarship in her honor and of course continuing the fight to ensure safe working conditions for frontline staff.

(loss of Navy Abigail Cowbrough and the loss of the 3 year old boy -Dylan Ehler, missing from his grandparents backyard. – Snowbird, Capt, Jennifer Casey)

Our thanks to all Union leadership across the country as they sent condolences throughout that time.

Reopening

As many provinces are in the stages of reopening, we too will see a major change on Friday June 5, for all services and business including Hair salons, dentistry and the restaurants in house dining. Schools are finished on this day and the plan for Day Care reopening is June 15. We remain under Emergency Measures Act until then as well.

CLC Webinar, Women Work and COVID19

I attended this webinar and was reminded that Woman will face some of the biggest challenges are we attempt to recover. The return to workplaces without the supports of child care, Family, public transit etc. will have some of the biggest impacts. It is available to watch as a recording and it was informative.

**Support Front Line workers – “Thank you Frontline Workers ...NSGEU “
Lawn Sign Campaign**

I was able to get out a few times in the province to meet with members in the NSLC parking lots to distribute signs, they were are hit throughout and even the public was supportive of this ongoing campaign.

NBU/NUPGE

Sister Sylvia Melanson reported.

Women's Committee / NBU 2020 Biennial Convention

Women's Committee had a telephone conference call in February to discuss organization of the Women's Caucus at our October 2020 NBU Biennial Convention in conjunction with NBU's 50th anniversary as well our committee attending the Domestic Violence Conference in Halifax, NS, March 25th, 2020. Unfortunately, both events were cancelled due to Covid-19 restriction of all large gatherings. Our union President, Executive & Board of Directors are in discussions & planning to see how we may be able to hold a meeting either virtually or otherwise in order to deal with essential union business, Resolutions & Bi-laws, elections, etc..

Negotiations/Bargaining

All contract negotiations were put on hold due to Covid-19. We are looking at resuming negotiations and any other type of meetings through Zoom or a similar platform. We have agreed we are willing to give it a try in order to move forward.

Covid-19

All provincial government was advised full shut down with exception of essential services by the end of the day March 16th. NBU successfully negotiated a Mobility Agreement with government which would allow the deployment of government workers to other essential work as necessary. Government has begun to call all staff back to work as of approximately 1.5-2wks ago. Many had been set-up to work from home & continue to do so while many others have fully returned to their work locations looking very different with many strict guidelines, social distancing, masks, sanitizers, etc.

Most daycares closed during the government & economic shutdown except for some to ensure child care for essential service workers. As cases recovered & we moved forward in new phases, daycares were given the green light to reopen effective May 19th with many restrictions to follow and thus allowing people that were able to return to work requiring child care to do so.

As our province shut down work, businesses & borders & limited contact with others in the early onset of the pandemic in our province, we encountered relatively low number of confirmed Covid cases. As cases moved forward & fully recovered, the province also moved forward in new phases of expanding "bubbles" to others and gradually reopening the economy. Sadly the Restigouche region in northern NB has had some recent Covid outbreaks due to a doctor who crossed into Quebec & returned to the province but did not self-isolate for the 14 days as required now our province has gone from fully recovered & no cases to now having daily reported new cases. That area has been isolated & has gone back to previous lock-down Phase.

Pay Equity

Participated on two on-line NB Pay Equity Coalition meetings via Zoom where discussion held on organization's business, Covid-19 & its global effects, and a plan to change their annual convention schedule for June 2020 to a virtual.

Other

New NBU television ads with the focus of thanking essential workers in the province for their hard work, dedication, and perseverance during the crisis of the pandemic. The new ads can be view on New Brunswick Unions website at www.nbu.ca.

OPSEU/NUPGE

Sister Susanne Fairweather reported.

COVID-19

All OPSEU offices closed the second week in March. Staff continue to work remotely supporting the membership.

Bargaining, pay equity, grievances and planning for future conferences/events are still going on through ZOOM meetings for the most part.

The Ontario government has promised a temporary pay increase of 4.00/hr and bonus of 250.00 if you work 100 hours or more each month for essential frontline workers. OPSEU worked with the government to identify all essential workers that should benefit from the pay increase. Ontario issued an Order in Council which restricted workers to working in only one congregate care service agency.

While PPE's issue is mostly taken care of there are still a few problems around attaining supplies.

OPSEU supporting our staff who inspect LTC facilities, bringing the same concerns forward again that the military revealed in the recent reports.

Videos made by President, 1st Vice President and Regional Vice Presidents for Convention as it was postponed. Video on history of OPSEU released in May as well.

OPSEU PWC

We have not met since January. At that time, we all attended a gathering of all Equity committees and caucuses where we drafted resolutions to take to our 2020 Convention. The PWC drafted a resolution around menstrual hygiene products to be made available at all OPSEU regional offices and membership centers and a resolution to continue to financially support the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care. These were sent directly to the board before convention because we believe they are a priority and need to be addressed sooner than later.

The PWC representatives continue to work in each of their regions, promoting food drives, menstrual hygiene, and toiletry drives. As well, fabric face masks are being made for workplaces and community members.

The PWC engaged in the Islamophobia and Anti-Black Racism training and is committed to having these important conversations.

MGEU/NUPGE

Sister Terry-Lyn Gagnon reported. Sister Gawronsky provided verbal highlights.

Since January, the MGEU Women's Committee had been very busy. We met Feb 11, March 5 and 6th. On March 6th we attended Manitoba Federation of Labor International Women's Day breakfast followed by more prep for our bi-annual women's conferences.

Due to the pandemic our conferences, has been temporary rescheduled for November 2019 from April of 2019. The conferences was "Empowered Women Empowering Women" which was aimed at connecting, empowering each other. Workshops will focus on challenges and obstacles facing female leaders, understanding technology and how it can make us more vulnerable (smart homes) and exploring gender dynamics and emotional labor.

Since Covid MGEU continues to press the government for appropriate PPE, job safety, job security, and slowing the closure of Dauphin's correctional center.

Our government offices spoke about reeducation of civil services 30%, after five weeks of MGEU repeatedly calling on the Pallister government to provide concrete details about is proposed reductions. Five unpaid days before the close of this fiscal year, with the threat of 400 plus layoffs. On June 1, 2020, the union agreed to the five unpaid days even though MGEU had submitted proposals that would allow three unpaid days with the same cost savings, but the government was not interested. MGEU did secure a no lay off clause for this fiscal year.

Covid restrictions has made it difficult to meet with members. Meeting such as local, area and most standing committee meetings, which is on hold, which affects several operations including elections for our convention that would have been October 2019, which has been moved

SGEU/NUPGE

Sister Lynne Guicke reported.

On March 5/6, the SGEU Women's committee held their biennial conference celebrating International Women's Day. The conference was a huge success with 50 attendees from all over the province. The evening of the 5th was a banquet with guest speaker and 160 persons in attendance. At the fundraising dinner we held a silent auction and with generous donations we raised just over \$3000 for Shelwin House Women's Shelter in Yorkton Saskatchewan. There is no doubt we can and do accomplish so much when we work together.

The Women's committees next project we were preparing for was the Bread and Roses awards luncheon at our annual SGEU convention April 2020 when Covid 19 put a stop to all gatherings within the province. As to date no plans have been set for SGEU convention for 2020.

Saskatchewan's Covid19 numbers are low which is a blessing. The province is slowly opening back up with phase 3 to start June 8,2020. Will we ever get back to what we called normal? I do like the slower pace of life these last months.

At the Moose Jaw Women's Shelter we have been terribly slow as far as clients are concerned. Just before the lock down our last client moved out and our phones quit ringing and in the last 11 weeks, we have only had 4 clients with only 1 staying for a week while the other 3 left the next day. We have no explanation for no calls or clients except people may be afraid of communal living. It is not only our shelter; I am on the advisory for PATHS and have zoom meeting weekly and all shelters numbers are down. As a frontline worker I still go in for my shifts as shelters are crisis lines and open 24/7 the rest of our staff who work outreach are working from home reaching clients by phone. On top of our regular guideline questions for admittance we have implemented Covid 19 questions. No clients from outside the province or out of our jurisdiction area. Our

The news media is reported numbers are up which is not the case so not sure where the media is getting their stats from.

A good read and explanation are Domestic Violence Baytoday.ca.

There is also a new commercial on television from Women's Shelters Canada which is incredibly good. If you have not seen it, it is 2 females face timing and the one lady makes a hand sign closing her fingers over her thumb with her partner in the background. Meaning all is not well.

All the best to you throughout the summer. I especially hope you are staying safe as we face the many challenges posed by the Covid 19 pandemic.

HSABC/NUPGE

Sister Mandi Ayers reported.

HSA's Women's Committee hosted its annual Women's Day Workshop on March 5, 2020. The focus of the event was focused on building an inclusive organization through diversity. About 35 members attended and the content was well received and impactful.

The workshop was the last event that our union hosted because the pandemic hit soon after. The COVID-19 pandemic has completely changed our way of life and doing business.

The Board of Directors decided to postpone our annual convention scheduled for April 1-3, 2020, just days before the provincial health officer issued orders to ban gatherings of over 200 people. And now with the shelter in place orders and the ban on non-essential travel in the province many of our employees are working at home. Our bustling office is working with just a skeleton crew. All board meetings are being done virtually and all education sessions have been postponed.

HSA has been fortunate that most of our members have continued to work throughout the pandemic. One of the first things HSA did was establish a COVID hotline to allow members to contact the union with questions and concerns regarding the pandemic. The major issues that our union faced for our members was through Occupational Health and Safety and protocols and policies regarding personal protective equipment. We along with NUPGE commissioned Dr. John Murphy to do a paper on PPE. It was well received in academic circles. Our government doesn't agree with the findings in the paper and persists in believing that COVID-19 is droplet spread only. HSA is adamant that we need the best protection possible for our members and this protection is utilized in the safest possible way. To say our employers were not prepared for the scope of this pandemic is an understatement.

Some of the other issues our staff worked on were:

Child care – to ensure our members have access to child care, in particular those with school aged children. The union worked to ensure members with school-aged children were able to access the child care being offered at the schools.

Wage replacement pay – Members that had to be away from the worksite due to self-isolation guidelines received general paid leave and did not have to access their sick or vacation banks.

Accommodations - an expedited process was looked at to deal with members that needed workplace accommodations due to the pandemic.

Single Site Order – The provincial health officer issued single site orders for BC. Workers were required to only work at one healthcare site. This impacted the long-term care sector mostly. Workers who had worked at more than one site had to register their

preferred site. The government also leveled the wages so that all long-term care workers were paid the same no matter what worksite.

HSA was successful in negotiating \$5,000,000 dollars from the provincial government to offer \$4.00/hr. straight time pay top up for some members for the month of April that we as a union would have to administrate. When the federal government announced a pandemic pay cost share with the provinces, we went back to the provincial government and along with the other healthcare unions negotiated a 16 week top up of \$4.00/hr. of straight time for all health-care workers. We were very happy to see it include all health care workers not just members of HSA. This new plan is going to be administered by our employers.

BC is now starting the re-opening process so it will be interesting to see how that goes.

"This is our time to be kind, to be calm, and to be safe." -Dr. Bonnie Henry

BCGEU/NUPGE

Sister Joanna Lord reported.

Provincial Executive Women's Committee

Many members participated in International Women's Day events with Labour Councils around the Province.

We had to cancel our April 8th meeting due to COVID-19, so we are now having a special-edition virtual meeting on June 9th. The meeting will include hearing from frontline workers about their experience during the pandemic, mapping out what a feminist and gender just recovery plan could look like, and making recommendations to the provincial executive committee of the union for political engagement moving forward.

COVID-19 Response

At our regularly scheduled Provincial Executive meeting, Mar 10th and 11th, the decision was made to postpone all in person and non-essential BCGEU gatherings of more than 10 people effective immediately and until at least May 2, 2020 and then was later extended to June 30th. Our Executive Administrative committee started meeting daily (remotely) as a COVID-19 Response Working group to triage member concerns and manage the union's operations. On March 18, after the BC government declared a Public Health Emergency followed by a Provincial State of Emergency, our Provincial Executive voted unanimously to lockdown BCGEU offices and require all non-essential staff to work from home. A COVID-19 microsite and a dedicated email for members to email their specific questions to health@bcgeu.ca were created. We made difficult decisions to postpone our upcoming Constitutional Convention from June 2020 to June 2021 and cancel all our in-person Activist Appreciation Events until the end of the year. We pivoted our Organizing and Research and Interactive Services departments to work with Component VPs to offer outreach support to identified groups of members. BCGEU personal non-medical masks have been ordered for all of our members.

Many of our members work in healthcare, child care, seniors care, community and social services and many of these workers are women and from other marginalized groups. These groups were also disproportionately affected by the closing of daycares, K-12 schools and moving online of post-secondary courses. And we've heard that the number of domestic and sexual violence calls and reports have been increasing.

On June 2nd, our President Stephanie Smith, said to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services in the 2021 BC Budget Consultation that the key lesson of this pandemic is "government matters".

Because of government:

- BC went into the pandemic in an exceptional fiscal and economic position and having already embarked on an ambitious policy agenda in critical areas like seniors' care, child care, poverty reduction, and worker's rights.

- Our province went into this pandemic more resilient and less vulnerable than our neighbours to the east and south in ways that have contributed significantly to our comparatively successful pandemic response to date.

Political Issues

Our Provincial NDP government, along with our Provincial Health Officer, have shown clear leadership and calm direction through this crisis and we have been consistently flattening the curve in BC. As of June 1st, we have a total of 2,597, of these 224 cases are still active and 2,207 (85%) have fully recovered.

We continue to see issues with supplies of PPE getting to those on the frontlines who need them and we have an ongoing concern about the BC Nurses \$4 working short premium.

We have had some significant gains including:

- Presumptive Coverage for Covid-19
- Temporary Pandemic Premium Pay programs, this one is a win for about 40,000 of our 80,000 members, but unfortunately it didn't reach all workers including those essential workers in child care our government liquor stores, and LifeLabs, to name a few, and we're still fighting for these members and more to be included in the program.
- Single site orders for staff working in care facilities with Labour Adjustment terms including hourly wage rates equivalent to the applicable HEABC collective agreement for the duration of the single worksite restriction.

Minimum wage increased on June 1st from \$13.85 to \$14.60.

We know that minimum wage earners are disproportionately women, Indigenous workers, new immigrants, people of colour, people with disabilities and young workers. And he said that increasing the minimum wage is an important part of ensuring BC's economic recovery works for everyone.

The BC Federation of Labour has released a set of proposals for a fair economic recovery titled *Rebuilding Our Economy for All*, available at bcfed.ca/recovery-for-all.

In BC we are in Returning to Safe Operation – Phase 2 with the re-opening of child care, Education (K-12), Arts and Cultural Centres (Museums and Libraries), in person counselling, parks, personal services, restaurants, cafes and pubs.

Organizing and Bargaining

The BCGEU is continuing to organize the unorganized despite the pandemic and bargaining is continuing virtually as well. We welcomed new members from SPR Traffic Services, Dogwood Initiative, LifeLabs Prince George, Elizabeth Fry Society, Elements Casino Victoria, and YMCA/YWCA Kids.

Supporting Labour

On Wednesday June 3rd, Unite Here Local 40 are organizing a Car Caravan in downtown Vancouver.



NATIONAL UNION OF PUBLIC AND GENERAL EMPLOYEES

- B. C. Government and Service Employees' Union (BCGEU)
- Health Sciences Association of British Columbia (HSABC)
- Health Sciences Association of Alberta (HSAA)
- Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union (SGEU)
- Manitoba Government and General Employees' Union (MGEU)
- Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU)
- Canadian Union of Brewery and General Workers (CUBGW)
- New Brunswick Union of Public and Private Employees (NBU)
- Nova Scotia Government and General Employees Union (NSGEU)
- PEI Union of Public Sector Employees (PEI UPSE)
- Newfoundland & Labrador Association of Public and Private Employees (NAPE)

The National Union of Public and General Employees is an affiliate of the Canadian Labour Congress and a member of Public Services International.

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