**Atlantic Council Women’s Committee**

**November 13, 2015**

Present:

Angela Decker, Rhonda Doyle LeBlanc, Colleen Hodder, Shanny Doucet, Debi Buell, Allyson Garrison

Staff Advisor: Mary MacNeil

Guest: Jeannie Baldwin, REVP

Sister Angela assumed the role of chair for the meeting.

The committee welcomed new member, Sister Allyson Garrison, Director for Young Workers, to the committee.

The meeting started by giving Sister **Jeannie Baldwin, Regional Executive Vice-President a warm welcome of appreciation**. The women were proud of the great work that Sister Jeannie did in running for the Member of Parliament for the Avalon Peninsula in NL. The committee talked about the hard and excellent work that our sister did during interviews, etc. Afterwards, Sister Jeannie thanked the committee and shared with the committee some of the lessons learned. She shared the unfortunate poverty that seniors go through, and the children with autism. She is looking forward to getting back to work because we have a lot of work to do, starting with lobbying of our new MPs.

A discussion about the defeat of Harper took place. The national women’s committee had “**Defeating the Harper Government**” as the number one priority in the last cycle, so we can check that one off of our list. We discussed the impact of “strategic voting”, it definitely got rid of the conservatives, but unfortunately we lost a lot of amazing NDP MPs as well. So far there are a lot of great promises that the liberals have made, so it is up to us to hold them accountable to their promises.

**Child Care**:

Child care still remains a high priority on the women’s agenda, and we need to continue the fight for a national child care program.

Sister Rhonda shared some of the activities that PSAC women did on the child care campaign: PSAC developed a three year child care campaign in coalition with the CLC and affiliates. We held “Kitchen Table Conversations” to share the child care stories and organize for change. Workshops on child care were organized at the regional and National Women’s Conferences. In 2014, PSAC sent a 20 person delegation to the Child Care 2020 Conference and developed a video on our vision for quality child care. PSAC members also participated in the *Spring into Action for Child Care* events that were organized across the country in 2015 and made child care an election issue.

A request was made for speaking notes on child care that members can use for informing others. Sister Shanny indicated that she has a brief on child care and this information already exists in the PSAC lobby kit on child care. Updated information to show what the Liberal government is offering compared to what we are fighting for and how the proposed recommendations on the Liberal platform are not enough to solve the current child care problems. We also need statistics on how much it will cost to implement and how much would go back into the community, etc. Sister Rhonda will contact Sister Andree Cote to ask for this information on behalf of the committee.

**Regional Women’s Committees (RWC):**

Regional women’s committees continue to serve an important role of educating women activists, increasing participation of women activists and leaders and working on the important issues that matter.

Although there still remains a couple of struggling RWC’s, overall, they have been busy in their areas. Some activities include participating in a childcare sector task force in order to keep child care in the forefront. Angela attended National vigil put on by the Native Association Women’s Network. The Rocky Harbour RWC hosted a Women’s History Month event commemorating the founding members of the women’s committee. Some attended the Sisters in Sprit activity in Halifax on October 4. Two aboriginal women spoke and they both come highly recommended for future human rights activities. Sister Colleen is to provide the contact details to the REVP to take back as a recommendation for the National Equity Conference. Plans are starting for the next International Women’s Day event on March 8, 2016 and December 6, National Day of Action and Remembrance on Violence against Women is coming up quickly. Sisters discussed the importance of the event and shared updates of planned upcoming events to commemorate the event. In addition to vigils and activities taking place, suggestions were made to use the Red Dress Project or the silhouettes from the Silent Witness Program. All council members are encouraged to attend events in their area.

**Four priorities from the 2015 National Human Rights Women’s Committee:**

1. Child care – Lots of work is still required in this area.
2. Inquiry into the Missing & Murdered Aboriginal Women – The Liberals have promised that they will conduct an inquiry into the missing and murdered aboriginal women, we need to hold them accountable. There was a request to provide more details on this so that members can better explain to women the need for this inquiry, statistics, etc.
3. Women in Leadership – We need to continue to foster and support the development of women’s leadership in politics and in the labour movement. Discussions have taken place about what elements should be included in women’s leadership training such as reviewing the issues, public speaking, talking with the media, work/life/union balance as well as gender stereotypes and barriers to women. Femtoring (feminist/female mentors and leaders).
4. Domestic Violence Against Women in the Workplace - The initial findings of the domestic violence at work survey was shared at the National Human Rights plenary with the theme of the survey being “Can Work Be Safe, When Home Isn’t?” There will be a Forum on Domestic Violence at Work that will take place December11-13, 2015 in Ottawa. Women of the NHRC, NAPC and AEC will be invited to attend to do brainstorming on how we can help our members in crisis.

**PSAC Atlantic Women’s Conference**

We will probably have another $90,000 budget which is what we had the last time. Budget decision will be made in December as allocations are based on regional factors. If possible we would like to have 100 women (all who applied) participate again. The Atlantic Women’s Conference is scheduled to take place in Antigonish at St. FX, June 3 to 5, 2016.

**National Equity Conference**

The National Equity Conference is scheduled to take place March 24 to 28, 2017. It will be the same format as the last time. Merging the equity conferences allows for more members to participate. Sister Jeannie said that over 700 participants were in attendance. This was a discussion at the NHRC Women’s Committee meeting and the usual comments were shared about not being able to attend all equity activities that members identify with. A recommendation came out of the national committee that the Resolutions be held at different times so that participants can attend all of the group debates that they identify in.

Other important dates:

Atlantic School – May 11 - 15, 2016

Atlantic Racially Visible Conference – September 23 - 25, 2016 in Halifax

Atlantic Health & Safety Conference – April 22-24, 2016 in Halifax

National Health & Safety Conference – November 18 – 20, 2016, Sheraton, Montreal

**Roundtable**:

Sister Rhonda shared with the committee her experience sitting on the NSFL Human Rights Panel. She was there to represent women. She learned a lot from her fellow panelists and was happy to be part of it. Sister Colleen added that it was an excellent panel. They both shared the details about the exercise on privilege that took place during the event and how the message quickly gets across with many reactions. The NSFL Women’s Committee raised $1634 selling tickets and through the silent auction at the convention and then the NSFL matched the contribution. This will go to the Cape Breton and Halifax chapters of the Silent Witness program.

Sister Debi shared the JLP webinar that she attended and that they have removed the blue eye/brown eye exercise and have now included Islamophobia. Sister Debi recently attended the PE federation of Labour Convention.

Sister Allyson shared that the Young Worker committee of the NL federation of Labour are hosting a breakfast on the 16th during the NL Federation of Labour Convention, at which time discussions will be held about young workers’ issues and getting their message out.

Sister Shanny shared that she was selected for member responsible for the women’s portfolio at the NB Federation of Labour.

Sister Angela thanked everyone for their participation. Following the Council Meeting she is going to the NL federation of Labour Convention as a delegate and also as the NLFL Women’s Committee Chair. Sister Angela also plans to attend the Young Worker breakfast on the 16th.

Sister Jeannie mentioned the article about the woman, Mona Louise Parsons, who lived in Wolfville when she died. She was born in Nova Scotia and was a Canadian actress, nurse, and member of an [informal resistance network](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dutch_resistance) in the Netherlands from 1940 to 1941 during the Nazi-occupation. She became the only Canadian female civilian to be imprisoned by the Nazis. They are building a monument in Wolfville to show what she did and they are currently trying to fundraise the $15,000 required. The committee made a recommendation to contribute $500 from the women’s committee. Sister Colleen lives in that area and could present on behalf of PSAC.

Ammendment

Angela also noted a piece in the weekend edition of the Chronicle Herald about an event being hosted by the Student Organization of McGill University on its 15th anniversary. The event is entitled “Women in House Conference”, the first of its kind, and is focusing on encouraging more young women to get interested in political life. Monika Dutt, federal candidate in the recent election, will be speaking at the event to discuss her experience and to encourage others to get involved. Angela noted how the Conference ties directly into to one of the PSAC National Human Rights Women’s Committee.

Respectfully Submitted,

Angela Decker and Rhonda Doyle LeBlanc

Co-Chairs, Atlantic Council Women’s Committee