



# BCFED WOMEN AND GENDER RIGHTS STANDING COMMITTEE

## Minutes

**Date of meeting:** October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2022

**To:** WGRC Members

**From:** Cassandra Cordero, Director, BCFED

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**Present:** Barb Nederpel HEU, Angela Marcakis BCTF, Christy Slusarenko MoveUp, Sheryl Burns CUPE, Marion Pollack BC FORUM, Lisa Flesher LiUNA, Sabrina Prada UBCP/ACTRA, Andrea Matthews FPSE, Cassandra Cordero BCFED

- 1) Land Acknowledgement
- 2) Introductions
- 3) Adoption of Agenda and Previous Minutes
- 4) Committee Report and Recommendations to Convention  
Please see attached report with recommendations
- 5) Resolutions and priority orders  
Please see attached spreadsheet
- 6) Adjourn

KC/mp  
*move***up**  
1330-22min-kc-wgrc-oct7

The [BCFED statement on harassment](#) applies to all our events.

# Women's and Gender Rights Standing Committee Report to Convention 2022

Over the last two years the Women's and Gender Rights committee has worked to respond to the pandemic pressures on women while pushing for policy change at a provincial level. The committee changed its name to the Women's and Gender Rights Committee (WGRC) to make it clear that the committee welcomes as members anyone who identifies as a woman, transgender, non-binary or gender non-conforming and is comfortable in a space that centres an intersectional feminist lens and issues that centre women's experiences and femme perspectives. This work is just a step in the direction of being more inclusive of other genders on the spectrum outside of Cis-men that experience marginalization.

The three pillars of the work of the committee are safety, leadership, and economic participation and well-being. It is with these three main goals in mind that the committee has engaged in its work over the 2021-2022 term.

## Safety

Indigenous women, two-spirit people, racialized women, women with disabilities and trans women are without question most impacted when it comes to gender-based violence in BC. The committee recognizes this first and foremost and continues to follow the lead of the Human Rights Committee and the Indigenous Workers Caucus on this issue, while ensuring that we advocate for Indigenous communities and Indigenous-led organizations to be at tables where policy affecting the lives of Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people is being discussed. In our participation in the BC government roundtables on gender-based violence, the BCFED brought the voices of labour to the discussion while focusing on centering voices of Indigenous, Black, and racialized community members, people with disabilities, migrants with precarious or lack of immigration status, and gender-diverse people. The BCFED also made sure to advocate for consistency between the response of the justice system, service sector and Workers' Compensation Board to gender-based violence claims in the workplace.

Part of safety for people who do not identify as cis-men, including women, two-spirit, trans and non-binary people, is access to the mechanisms of justice and healthcare that need to happen after experiencing violence. This is why the WGRC continued its campaign on ten days of paid leave for workers experiencing the effects of sexual and domestic violence. A worker should be safe from losing their job for taking time off to access necessary justice system mechanisms, healthcare and wraparound services. The committee was pleased that the BC government announced paid leave in November 2021, but was disappointed that the leave provided was only five days. The committee continued to lobby on ten days of paid leave into 2022, including our lobbying with MLAs and government representatives (see "Economic participation and well-being," below), and will continue to do so until this minimal threshold is reached.

Another aspect of safety is the safety of the people who join our spaces and our movement. For this reason, the committee collaborated with the Human Rights Committee to organize a training on creating gender-inclusive spaces. Adrienne Smith from Adrienne Smith Law provided this training for both committees at the end of November 2021. This training was well attended by Executive Council members as well as members of both committees. This work is part of an ongoing program of outreach and education on gender inclusivity at the BCFED.

We are deeply concerned over access to safe abortions, which for our friends across the colonial border on the 49th parallel is a right that has been placed in jeopardy by the June 24, 2022 repeal of Roe v. Wade, a landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision that stated that the US constitution protects a pregnant person's right to have an abortion without excessive government interference. A key concern for this committee is the expression of solidarity with US comrades and support for those who may need to cross the border to access safe abortions.

Another goal of this committee is the lack of access to free and safe abortions, pre-natal or perinatal care for people who are already in Canada. The people who face this reality in BC are migrant workers who either are without migration status, have tourist status or other precarious temporary status, or have newly arrived in Canada and are not yet eligible for Medical Services Plan benefits. We will continue to do this work until access to free and safe abortions is a reality for everyone who lives in and visits this province.

### **Economic participation and well-being**

In late 2021 and early 2022, the committee lobbied on pay equity, pay transparency and the gender pay gap as well as for 10 days of paid leave for workers experiencing sexual and domestic violence. We discussed equal pay for equal work and equal pay for work of equal value in lobbying meetings with government representatives, and raised pay equity as a mechanism that, if put in place effectively, could pave the way toward change on all three issues.

The committee suggested to the provincial government that all employers, regardless of size, be required to report the wages of all employees publicly. This practice could place social pressure on employers to ensure that they were paying all of their workers fairly. As well, if implemented correctly, it would create the public data necessary to examine discrepancies between what people are being paid, and how their socio-economic demographic — especially race, gender or ability — is affecting their pay. At the time of the writing, the BC government has announced it intends to implement pay transparency legislation and is engaging in consultations as to what that legislation should look like. The BCFED wrote a submission to those consultations, including a roadmap to pay equity. We look forward to pushing for pay equity in the coming term.

Economic participation and well-being include women, trans, and non-binary people who do sex work for a living. The BCFED has created a subcommittee of the WGRC and the HRC to talk

about sex workers' rights. At this table members of both committees are joined by organizations representing and working with sex workers including Living in Community, WISH Drop-In Centre, SWAN, PACE and PEERS. This subcommittee meets every two months.

## **Leadership**

The committee continues to play a planning role in the Western Regional Summer Institute for Union Women (SIUW) and continues to be active on the International Planning Committee. In 2021, the SIUW was held online via Zoom, and included not only the Western Region but all regions in one institute. In 2022, the summer schools went back to the regional model, and while the Western Region school was online, it was fully focused on the communities that make up the western region, from Alaska and BC down to Southern California, and from Alberta to the Oregon Coast.

Another aspect of our leadership work is our lobbying efforts, described above. Our late 2021 and early 2022 lobby days started with lobbying training with the BCFED government relations director, Denise Moffatt, and leadership and staff at the Canadian Labour Congress via Zoom. At each of the lobbying meetings, which were also held via Zoom, different committee members were invited to take the lead on speaking to issues, which served as a leadership skill development opportunity and ensured that the committee was represented by a diverse makeup of union members.

This is just a high-level view of the activities of the Women's and Gender Rights Committee over the past two years, and the committee looks forward to engaging in much more work in the coming years that upholds and protects the rights of women, two-spirit, trans, non-binary and gender-nonconforming people in the province of BC.

## **Recommendations:**

1. Continue the work of reconciliation at the women's and gender rights committee through inclusion of Indigenous content, history, perspectives, and voices in gender rights spaces.
2. **Lobby the BC government to:**
  - a. **Make a strong statement in support of protecting reproductive laws *including universal access*;**
  - b. **Improve access to good quality abortion care all over BC by removing geographic barriers; and**
  - c. **Increase the number of abortion providers by making training on how to deliver abortions mandatory for all clinicians.**
3. Advocate for the Ministry of Education to take bold action to address peer-to-peer sexual assault and sexual harassment, including:

- a. To develop and promote public awareness/education campaigns to combat peer-to-peer sexual assault and sexual harassment, and to include bystander training;
  - b. To include sexual violence/misconduct (including assault and harassment) among the listed “Services and Information Topics” on the homepage of the ERASE website and any other key resources used by the province to promote student safety and wellness; and
  - c. To develop and implement mandatory comprehensive sexual health content curriculum about sexual consent for all students, including grades Kindergarten to 12.
4. Continue to support the implementation of the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC’s \$10-a-Day Child Care Plan
  5. Continue to work with sex workers and sex-worker-led organizations on the decriminalization of sex work, and on furthering sex workers’ rights as workers’ rights.

## Women’s and Gender Rights Standing Committee

Crystal Braunwarth, **IATSE 891**  
Amanda Bronswyk, **IATSE 891**  
Sheryl Burns, **CUPE 1936**  
Tara Cavanagh, **USW**  
Heidi Collins, **HEU**  
Kassandra Cordero, **BCFED**  
Audrey Curran, **UA 170**  
Christy Dixon, **IAMAW 764**  
Michelle Fedosoff, **UFCW 1518**  
Lisa Flesher, **CSWU/LiUNA 1611**  
Dayna Gill, **IBEW 258**  
Katie Guerin, **UFCW 1518**  
Agnes Jackman, **BCFORUM**  
Stephanie Jang, **IBEW 213**  
Coleen Jones, **CUPW Pacific Region**  
Cara Kerins, **ILWU 502**  
Rysa Kronebusch, **MoveUP 378**  
Miranda-Lee Kurucz, **UA 170**  
Angela Marcakis, **BCTF**  
Andrea Matthews, **BCIT FSA**  
Raven McMahon, **UA 170**  
Kari Michaels, **BCGEU**  
Sharryn Modder, **HEU**  
Barb Nederpel, Co-chair, **HEU**  
Amandeep Nijjar, **CLC**  
Joulene Parent, **ILWU 500**  
Judy Phipps, **BCGEU**  
Regie Plana-Alcuaz, **BCTF**

Marion Pollack, **BC FORUM**  
Sabrina Prada, **UBCP/ACTRA**  
Lea Serron, **PSAC 20029 UTE**  
Stephanie Shepherd, **ATU 1724**  
Jacklyn Simington, **ILWU-GWU 333**  
Patricia Skalozub, **CUPE 3500**  
Sussanne Skidmore, **BCFED**  
Jill Slind, **HSA**  
Christy Slusarenko, **MoveUP**  
Laura Snow, Co-chair, **BCGEU-CEU**  
Karen Sutton, **PSAC 20045 CIU**  
Angela Talic, **ILWU**  
Ratna Tithh, **HEU**  
Monica Urrutia, **PSAC**

**Resolution: 2287**

**Topic:** employment standards

**Committee** WGRC

Amended  
No Change:

**BECAUSE** survivors of intimate partner violence and sexual assault often experience trauma, along with physical injury, from which it may require time to recover;

**BECAUSE** women<sup>and gender diverse people</sup> who have experienced sexual or intimate partner violence may be faced with protracted court hearings and cannot afford to take time off work;

**THE FEDERATION WILL** lobby the provincial government to provide survivors of sexual and/or intimate partner violence with access to 10-days of paid leave.<sup>from the current 5 days.</sup>

CUPE BC

**Resolution: 2288**

**Topic:** childcare

**Committee** WR

Amended  
No Change:

**BECAUSE** the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed how important childcare work is to society, yet childcare and elder care services have not been adequately prioritized by governments; and

**BECAUSE** strengthening public investments in childcare will

• facilitate women<sup>and gender diverse people</sup> to return to paid work they may have had to leave during the pandemic due to heavy caregiving burdens that men<sup>and partners who aren't principal caregiving partners</sup> have been less likely to take on;

• add millions of jobs to the economy, particularly for women;<sup>and gender diverse people</sup>

• support children's development; and

• provide significant returns to the economy;

**THE FEDERATION WILL** lobby the provincial government to ensure that <sup>the \$10 A Day Plan is</sup> childcare is a key element of all economic recovery plans, including coordination between the reopening of schools and childcare centres<sup>and the unions that represent them</sup> with that of the broader economy.

BCGEU

**Resolution: 2289**

**Topic:** health care - benefits

**Committee** WGRC

No Change:

**BECAUSE** access to birth control and hormones is a right and should be free to anyone who needs them in the form that they prefer; and

**BECAUSE** even with paid extended health and benefits plans some workers are still left having to pay out of pocket for birth control and hormone expenses placing an unnecessary and unjust burden on those who need them;

**THE FEDERATION WILL** work with affiliates to advocate for extended health benefits providers to improve extended medical plans to include all forms of birth control and hormone therapy; and

**THE FEDERATION WILL** continue to work with AccessBC on their campaign for free contraceptives and educate workers about the issue.

BCGEU

**Resolution: 2290**

Amended

**Topic:** health care - gender rights

**Committee** WR

No Change:

**BECAUSE** many hospitals<sup>and urgent care facilities</sup> do not have available Sexual Assault Evidence Kits (SAEK); and

**BECAUSE** many hospitals<sup>and urgent care facilities</sup> do not have nurses or physicians trained in conducting SAEK;

**THE FEDERATION WILL** lobby the provincial government to ensure all hospitals<sup>and other medical facilities that provide emergency services</sup> have Sexual Assault Evidence Kits (SAEK), and that all hospitals will ensure staff are trained to administer the kits.

BCGEU