



# the Rose MAGAZINE



## WOMEN AND GIG WORK

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AN INTERVIEW WITH  
JENNIFER SCOTT  
AND HADIL BAKI

Photo Credit: Workers Action Centre

# WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

The Rose is a magazine from the CUPW National Women's Committee, sent to all Sisters and those who identify as women of CUPW.

## Communication is a two-way street!

We want to hear your stories and concerns – what do you have to say to your CUPW Sisters? You can submit your letters to the editor, opinion pieces, feature ideas and other thoughts to [feedback@cupw-sttp.org](mailto:feedback@cupw-sttp.org) or to CUPW *The Rose*, 377 Bank Street, Ottawa ON, K2P 1Y3.

## CUPW THE ROSE

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## LETTERS POLICY

*The Rose* welcomes letters to the editor. We will print letters from a CUPW member provided it:

- is 400 words or less. Union members may submit longer items for consideration as commentary pieces.
- does not violate CUPW policy opposing discrimination and harassment against women, people of colour, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people, lesbians, gays, bisexual and transgender individuals, people with different abilities, and/or CUPW policies and principles.

- is typed or written neatly.
- includes the author's name, address, local and a phone number where they can be reached if there are problems.

*The Rose* will withhold the author's name if necessary. Otherwise, the author's name and local will appear.

*The Rose* will contact authors if there are problems with their letters.

We accept letters by mail, fax and electronic mail.

## ENVIRONMENTAL PRODUCTION



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# Celebrating International Women's Day

Welcome to the 2023 edition of *the Rose* magazine! Every year CUPW proudly releases a new Rose to coincide with International Women's Day. CUPW is made up of strong, passionate, and dedicated women, who, every day, work to improve the lives of CUPW members either on the workfloor, through Union organizing, educationals, and through various positions locally, regionally and nationally. The Rose is a vehicle not only to honour many of these women, but also to talk about the issues that affect us at work and in life.

For the third straight year, the National Women's Committee is honouring Sisters from across the country for their dedication and service to advancing women's rights in the Union and the labour movement. In this edition of the Rose, you'll meet nine inspirational women representing each region and one national representative and read about how they first became involved with the Union and their accomplishments throughout their careers.

This year's Rose also includes a roundtable discussion with women gig workers talking about the issues women face doing app-based work, solutions, and what the future looks like for them. You'll also read about why we need more women in leadership positions, sexual health, and resources to help women, and an opinion piece about Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminists.

The National Women's Committee worked with CUPW staff and officers at the national office to put together this publication. We want to thank everyone for the wonderful comments and feedback we received over the last two years, since we moved from a newsletter format to a new magazine format that you see today. We are always looking for new stories and contributions so please reach out if you're interested in writing for the next edition of the Rose.

*The National Women's Committee*

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## Let's Talk About Sex...

### and pregnancy, and abortion, and health, and...

**Conversations about sex can be sensitive and awkward. For a variety of reasons, whether it be our upbringing, religion, lack of education, stigma etc. many of us don't feel comfortable talking about sex even if silence could mean risking our health. If we aren't talking about sex, we aren't talking about our sexual health, and if we aren't talking about sexual health, then we are missing out on important information.**

The term *sexual health* covers a range of different topics, from sexually transmitted infections (STI), to contraception and family planning, to abortion, and to intimacy and relationships.

When we do decide to have these conversations, resources are often limited. The country is facing a health care crisis; many people don't have family physicians and walk-in clinics are overwhelmed. People must find other ways to access safe, easy, and confidential information about their sexual health.



# Access Line Overview

*The Access Line provides sexual health information and connects people to the services they need, including abortion services.*

*The Access Line team is made up of staff members and trained volunteer members who provide compassionate and non-judgmental support.*

*The line can be reached 7 days a week by calling 1-888-642-2725 during the hours of 9:00AM and 9:00PM ET. After hours, voicemails can be left and will be returned the following day.*

*Prefer texting? Text 613-800-6757*

*Texts will be answered between 9:00AM and 9:00PM ET*

*You can also send an email at [access@actioncanadashr.org](mailto:access@actioncanadashr.org)*

One of these ways is through the Access Line – a 7-day a week, toll-free, confidential phone and text line run by Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights. Anyone can call the Access Line to ask questions and receive information about sexual health, pregnancy, abortion, and safer sex. Action Canada can also provide referrals to clinics and hospitals that provide reproductive health services including abortion, anywhere in Canada.

Action Canada is a progressive, pro-choice charitable organization committed to advancing and upholding sexual and reproductive health and rights in Canada and globally. It has seen a steady increase in the number of calls to the Access Line over the last year, and demand regularly outstrips its capacity. The number of calls increased by 264 percent between 2021 and 2022. Half of all callers need information or access to abortion, while the other 50 percent need general sexual health information, including how to avoid transmission of STIs, safer sex, where to get tested, available treatments, and how to disclose to partners or navigate stigma especially around HIV and HSV.

In April 2022, Action Canada received two-years of funding from the federal government's new Sexual and Reproductive Health Fund, which allowed them to hire a full-time staff member to work on the Access Line. Prior to this, calls were answered by two staff members in addition to their full-time duties.

Action Canada is a charitable organization that relies on grants and donations to provide its services, including the Access Line. A member of Action Canada spoke about their work and advocacy during CUPW's National Women's Committee (NWC) meeting held in October 2022. Following the meeting, the Committee made two recommendations to the National Executive Board, which were both adopted. The Committee recommended that CUPW make a financial donation to Action Canada or a community organization doing similar work, and that Locals would be encouraged to make financial donations under section 9.37(r) of the National Constitution to support the work of Action Canada or a community organization doing similar work.

Groups like Action Canada are doing tremendous work to protect sexual and reproductive rights and to make sure that everyone is equipped with information or resources concerning their sexual health. We deserve to live in a world where people control their own sexuality, reproduction, gender expression, and health in a safe community.

# Leave Related to Miscarriage or Stillbirth

The Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) represents over 60,000 workers in Canada, including letter carriers and processing and delivery workers at Canada Post, retail post office workers, and many cleaners, couriers, and other logistics workers at private sector employers.

The Union has been at the forefront of the fight for maternity leave. On June 30, 1981, CUPW led its members into a strike to win improved maternity leave benefits. The strike, which lasted 42 days, won 17 weeks of paid maternity leave and set a new standard for parental benefits that all workers would soon access.

The following year, federal clerks; members of the Public Service Alliance of Canada, and Bell telephone workers, members of the Communications Workers of Canada, negotiated paid maternity leave.

Unions didn't stop at maternity leave. Adoption leave, paternity leave, and parental leave – available to either parent – were routinely negotiated with employers. In response, the federal government has continually improved the maternity and parental benefits offered through its Employment Insurance program.

CUPW supports the Government of Canada's intention to introduce legislative amendments to the *Canada Labour Code* to further support federally regulated employees whose pregnancy ends without a live birth.

## Definition of Pregnancy Loss

Pregnancy loss should be considered as any situation where the pregnancy does not end in a live birth. This is the definition used by many, including Alberta.<sup>1</sup> CUPW is concerned that the proposed leave is only being made available to people who experience miscarriage or stillbirth and does not take into consideration employees who have abortions.

In 2020, 74,155 abortions were performed in hospital and clinics in Canada.<sup>2</sup> Only 10.7 percent of the reported abortions done in hospital are for medication abortions. Most abortions using Mifegymiso are not reported and are prescribed primarily by clinics and doctor's offices.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, we know that the number of people who have abortions is higher than what the statistics report.

As noted in ESDC's discussion paper about the topic of pregnancy loss, "for some, the psychological experience of a pregnancy loss can be overwhelming. Without proper rest and recovery, some individuals could be at risk of developing prolonged mental health problems such as clinical depression, anxiety disorders, and post-traumatic stress disorder."

These same feelings and issues can be felt by those who have abortions, and they shouldn't be denied leave entitlements because their experience isn't properly defined in the legislation.

## Inclusive Wording

There are numerous ways in which a pregnancy can end – stillbirth, miscarriage, termination for medical reasons and abortion – Each situation is unique and nuanced, and the words we choose can have a big impact on the people affected.

For example, there is often an assumption of loss when someone has an abortion, but the end of a pregnancy isn't always felt as a loss. However, the person may still require leave to recuperate physically and emotionally.

In instances of stillbirth or perinatal death, there is a lack of acknowledgement of the death of their child. The child has not been lost; they have died.

Qualified recommendations on the use of language from medical and bereavement professionals is necessary to make sure the *Code* is amended using the most inclusive and appropriate language.

## Eligibility

### Minimum Employment

On principle, CUPW believes all employees should have access to needed supports regardless of the length of time at the job. Since this isn't the norm, we strongly believe the minimum employment should be lowered to one month.

### Period

Everyone's fertility journey is unique, as are their needs when a pregnancy ends without a live birth. During the ESDC consultation meeting held Tuesday, October 11, 2022, it was clarified the leave could be used multiple times in a calendar year, to reflect, for example, people who experience multiple miscarriages. This language needs to be strengthened and made clear in the actual amendments to the *Canada Labour Code*.

People should be able to use their leave according to their own needs. The end of a pregnancy whether it be a stillbirth, miscarriage, or abortion, requires different things for everyone, and as such, people should be able to split the leave, use half days, etc., depending on their needs.

## Documentation

An employer should not have the right to require documentation to support the reason why a person is using leave related to the end of a pregnancy. Employees have a right to their privacy and employers should not be entitled to know more than they need to know. In principle, documentation for such a short leave creates unnecessary stress for a person who is already experiencing a difficult situation. It's often difficult for employees to get doctor's notes and it is usually at a cost. Given that our health care system is already stretched to the brink, it is unnecessary to add needless paperwork and extra appointments to an already overburdened health care system.

## Accommodation

When a person returns to work after the end of a pregnancy that ends without a live birth, they may require certain accommodations to go back into work, whether that be working from home, time off for medical appointments, etc. and these accommodations should be met and respected by employers.

## Job protections

Bill C-3 does not include job protections for employees who take up to eight weeks of leave after the death of a child or a stillbirth. CUPW believes that the job protections included in ESDC's discussion paper should be included in the amendment to the *Code*. These protections include:

- The right to be reinstated in the same (or comparable) position at the end of the leave;
- The right to be informed of training opportunities while on leave;
- The right to accumulate benefits while on leave; and
- A prohibition for employers from dismissing, suspending, laying off, demoting or disciplining an employee because the employee intends to take or has taken a leave, or taking such an intention or absence into account in any decision to promote or train the employee.

## Timeframe for implementation

The new leave should be implemented immediately after the *Code* is amended, but employers can be given a maximum of six months to implement.

## Interaction with other leaves

CUPW has concerns about the interaction between the proposed new leave and existing maternity and medical leave. Currently, employees who experience a pregnancy that doesn't end in a live birth are entitled to either maternity, medical, or personal leave. We must clarify how the new leave entitlements affect other types of leave. The amendments to the *Code* need to clearly state this new leave is an addition and not something employees can be forced to take instead of other leave. For example, an employer cannot force employees to use the new eight-week leave over the up to 17-week maternity leave for people whose pregnancy ends during or after the 20<sup>th</sup> week of pregnancy.

## Conclusion

It's important to acknowledge the people who helped make this leave possible. The enactment of Bill C-3 came to be after years of lobbying by bereaved parents who also fought to include all the parents involved (birthing, non-birthing, adoption).

No one wants to be in a situation where they must utilize this type of leave. Of the more than 3,000 stillbirths in Canada, it is estimated that 30 percent of these babies could be saved.<sup>4</sup> The government should enact the recommendations presented to the House of Commons in February 2021,<sup>5</sup> and implement a national action plan to reduce preventable stillbirths in Canada.<sup>6</sup>

For the amendments to the *Canada Labour Code* to be applied in an inclusive way, it will be important to listen to medical experts to help with the wording and the application. Employers should also undergo training and education to properly implement the leave without stigmatizing those who will be using it.

1 Government of Alberta. 2022. Bereavement Leave. Available here: <https://www.alberta.ca/bereavement-leave.aspx>

2 Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada. March 28, 2022. Statistics – Abortion in Canada. Available here: <https://www.arcc-cdac.ca/media/2020/07/statistics-abortion-in-canada.pdf>

3 Ibid

4 Petition to the Government of Canada, e-2467. Oct. 7, 2020. Available to read here: <https://petitions.ourcommons.ca/en/Petition/Details?Petition=e-2467>

5 Ibid

6 Canadian Collaborative for Stillborn Prevention. Call to Action. 2022. Available to read here: <https://www.cc4sp.ca/national-action-plan>

# trailblazing WOMEN OF CUPW

In 2020, the National Women's committee launched an annual campaign to recognize and show gratitude to some of the trailblazing women whose expressions of feminism and trade unionism have made a lasting impact on our union.

Since then, every year, we have showcased a Sister from each region, sharing their experiences and achievements which helped make the Union what it is today. While the next generation of women

leaders emerge, they too will face challenges and many of the same barriers we've fought for years. It is only by celebrating our victories against patriarchy and advancing women's rights and gender equity that we have claimed our space over time.

*We are proud to present to you the Trailblazing Sisters for 2023!*

# International Women's Day

## March 8, 2023

**Karen Kennedy • Judy O'Keefe • Nancy Beauchamp  
Sandra Delisle • Cheryl MacMillan • Jane Marsh  
Michelle Johnson • Betty Schelske • Allyson Mayo**

# CELEBRATING WOMEN WHOSE EXPRESSION OF FEMINISM AND TRADE UNIONISM HAVE MADE A LASTING IMPACT ON OUR UNION

# Karen Kennedy

## National

Karen Kennedy is a long-time CUPW activist from the CUPW Edmonton Local. She began her career as a casual PO4 on the midnight shift in 1974 and worked in many positions including as a retail clerk. She became a shop steward in 1976 and served on the Executive in various leadership roles for the next 36 years. She was elected as the full-time Secretary Treasurer of the Local in 1998; a role she kept for about 10 years.

Karen's experiences at Canada Post and in the Union helped develop her feminist views and establish for her the important role of women's committees in advancing women's rights. Karen, along with Brenda Swift and Bena Pattni, re-established the Edmonton Local Women's Committee in 1998 and maintained a very active and involved group who established the annual Equinox women's conference which continues today.

In 2008, the Alberta Federation of Labour awarded Karen the International Women's Day Award for her work as a leader in the labour community. Karen was a delegate to numerous CUPW Conferences and Conventions, and CLC Conventions, where she strongly advocated for women. She represented the Prairies for more than one term as a National Trustee.

Karen is a CLC and CUPW trained educator/facilitator and was active in the Alberta Federation of Labour Education Committee, facilitating courses at numerous AFL/CLC schools in Alberta, Ontario, and British Columbia. Through her work in education, Karen became involved in Adult Literacy and was a member of the CLC Literacy Working Group. She was also part of the CUPW clear language committee.

Sister Kennedy spent considerable time as editor of the Edmonton Local publication *The InsideOut* and her cartoons graced many of their pages and won a Canadian Association of Labour Media award.

As Edmonton Local Secretary Treasurer, Karen assisted many workers with their problems and answered numerous questions. As part of this process, she became well versed in the Canada Post Defined Benefit Pension Plan and our Canada Post benefit plans. Before and after retirement, Karen facilitated pension and benefits courses and assisted members with the retirement process.

Karen Kennedy now uses those skills as an elected retiree representative to the Canada Post Pension Advisory Committee.

# Judy O'Keefe

## Atlantic Region

Judy O'Keefe has worked for Canada post for 30 years. Judy started her career in Labrador City, NL in 1981. When she started there it was mostly women at this location. 1981 was the year of a strike that lasted 6 weeks over maternity leave and not only did CUPW win that, but also 1981 was when Canada Post became a Crown Corporation.

In that year as well, Judy attended a union conference in Halifax, where she found she was the only woman attending. That did not bother her, but she did face many challenges with men trying to exclude her, and she felt she was fighting her own Union. She remembers one of the male members clearly say to her and others, "let them join, they won't last 10 years." Judy said to herself, "well I will be here, I will prove them wrong," and she did.

In 1983 Judy transferred to Edmonton as a casual and worked there for 16 years as a Letter Carrier, then transferred inside for 2-3 years, and then moved to St. John's where she finished out her career.

Judy was a Shop Steward, worked on the Education Committee, the Organizing Committee, and the Health and Safety Committee, which is the one she feels really empowered her. The first time she ran for it, Judy saw it was stacked with men but ran anyway, and two years later she ran again and won.

Judy was always there to help, not afraid to stand toe to toe with management, she was a firecracker. Judy was a strong determined woman who felt whatever a man can do so can a woman. Never tell Judy she cannot do something – she will prove you wrong.

For the last five years she worked as a PO5, the first woman to join this classification.

Judy says overall it was pretty a good career, but not without obstacles and challenges. She retired in 2010 and now lives in Wood Buffalo, Alberta.

# Nancy Beauchamp

## Quebec Region

Nancy Beauchamp began her career at Canada Post in 1995 as a Rural Route Mail Courier. Since then, it can be said that she has gone places.

In 2002, she plunged into the world of labour by becoming Organizer in the Rural & Suburban Mail Carriers' (RSMCs) organizing drive.

From 2004 to 2007, she worked on numerous organizing campaigns while a member of the Executive Committee of Quebec Region's Hautes-Laurentides Local.

In 2007, she transferred to Montreal where she became President of the Montreal Local's Women's Committee. That year, she was elected Alternate Union Representative for the Metro-Montreal Region, and then served as Regional Union Representative from 2010 to 2019.

She sat on national negotiating committees in 2008, 2012 and 2016, and in 2018, she became the first RSMC to hold the position of Chief Negotiator for the RSMCs bargaining unit, a position she held again during the 2021-2022 round of Bargaining.

In 2019, she was elected National Director by the Metro-Montreal Region, and she made history as the first woman elected to this position within the region, and as the first RSMC within CUPW to be named to such a position.

Nancy was instrumental in the efforts to unionize the RSMCs in 2003, and in the work leading up to the agreement on pay equity. Among the many proud achievements of CUPW in its long history, the unionization of RSMCs and the pay equity agreement are its proudest. From 2016 to 2018, Nancy sat on the RSMC Pay Equity Committee and also participated in the documentary, *Justice and Dignity for All: Stories From the Struggle for Pay Equity*, the inspiring tale of the forty-year effort by the RSMCs to finally gain the most significant pay equity settlement in Canadian history.

Still very active, she is now involved in the RSMCs Hourly Rate Committee and is Vice-President of the Sainte-Thérèse Local's Executive Committee. Furthermore, she wishes to bring her expertise to the table of the National Women's Committee where she sits as a newly elected member since November 17, 2022.

She remains available and provides invaluable support to her peers, sharing her experience in organizing, grievances and arbitration, and negotiation, as well as in being a member of numerous committees including women's committees.



**Karen Kennedy**



**Judy O'Keefe**



**Nancy Beauchamp**

# *Sandra Delisle*

## *Metro-Montreal Region*

Sandra was a postal clerk in various sorting facilities in Montreal before transferring to depots and becoming a letter carrier. Her union journey began shortly after joining the postal service, in 1995. Appointed shop steward in 1997, she became alternate steward in 1998, a position she held until the end of 2000.

Sandra was not only a steadfast defender of her rights, but she defended others' as well. During her time as a letter carrier, she became a reference in matters related to work measurement. She inspired a few coworkers to become observers, even going as far as gathering them over dinner, for discussion and problem solving. Sandra was an observer during the implementation of the modern post in Winnipeg, and helped members prepare to its introduction in Montreal's facilities.

Sister Delisle was elected Chair of her local education committee in May 2012 and was acting 2nd vice-president in charge of all matters related to work measurement. She trained members on the LCRMS and the duties of union observers.

Once elected 1<sup>st</sup> Vice-President of the Montreal Local, Sandra represented members before the employer and the Quebec Occupational Health and Safety Board (CSST), and, in the process, became an expert in workplace accidents. She also participated in union-management meetings where she was known for the thoroughness of her preparation and her in-depth knowledge of the issues.

Sandra cared deeply about others. She could be uncompromising, but only to bring out the best in others. She was fun, genuine, hardworking and caring. Those who were close to her knew a dedicated and faithful Sister who would do anything to protect them.

Her untimely passing leaves a void in our daily lives and in the organization in which she inspired so many.

# *Cheryl MacMillan*

## *Central Region*

Cheryl began her career at Canada Post in 1984, working as a letter carrier in Scarborough. In 1989, she left the post office, but returned 11 months later, this time in Lindsay, Ontario, where she continued to work as a letter carrier. Today, she works as a Letter Carrier Assistant.

Sister MacMillan became active in the Lindsay local 564 in 2002, and over the years held the position of secretary-treasurer, shop steward, and vice-president. She was also twice elected President of the Lindsay Local. She is currently the grievance officer.

Cheryl has participated in many educational, including the Union Education Program in 2006. She has mentored many members throughout the years and has had the great privilege of being a Level 2 facilitator for the Central Region.

Throughout her career, Sister MacMillan sat on many committees including the National Constitution Committee, the Resolution Committee for her Region, the National Women's Committee. She walked many picket lines for CUPW and for allies, and even picketed with Jean-Claude Parrot.

Cheryl is the proud mother of Kim, an RSMC in Lindsay, and Kevin, a PO 4 in Peterborough, and wife to Bryan, a rock star.

Many Sisters have inspired Cheryl to go forward in the Union. She especially thanks Sister Gwen Holmes for her organizational skills, and Sisters Maddie Cleroux-Abbas and Lori Hacking for their leadership and kindness.

*Jane Marsh  
Toronto Local*

In 1979, Jane Marsh took a full-time job at Canada Post, working as a sorter at the Gateway plant in Mississauga. She soon became involved with the Union because the workplace was toxic and sexist, and women workers needed to fight to improve their working conditions.

In 1981, she participated in her first national strike where she spent 41 days on the picket line fighting for paid maternity leave. She strongly believed that there was no reason for women to suffer financially for having children. At the time of the strike, Sister Marsh was working in a Canada Post transportation depot in a mixed-union workplace. Most of the workplace was represented by another Union and most of those workers were men. On the first day of the strike, Marsh and six other CUPW members, all young women, all participating in their first strike, set up picket lines at their depot and went about disrupting the work. They were threatened with violence but held their ground.

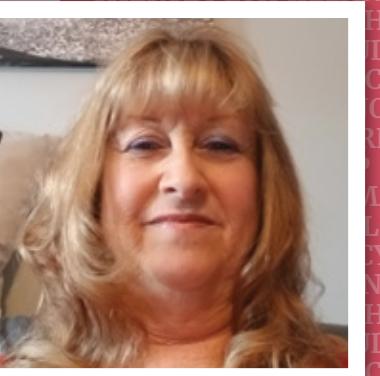
Sister Marsh has been a strong force on every picket line since.

Jane has worn many hats within CUPW: shop steward, chief shop steward, Toronto Local President, Secretary-Treasurer, and most recently two terms as the Fourth Vice-President. She is a true activist in every sense of the word. She is on every picket line, at every rally, demonstration and march fighting for women and worker rights. Jane volunteers her own time to educate workers, mentor youth, and fight against anti-worker governments.

Jane has incredible integrity. Her decisions are always based on what she believes is best for the membership. She puts CUPW members and their needs above everything else. Her life and career of activism is dedicated to workers.



# Sandra Delisle



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# Jane Marsh

# *Michelle Johnson*

## *Ontario Region*

Michelle Johnson joined Canada Post in September 1980 and retired in November 2017. During her 37-year career, Sister Johnson actively defended the rights of members at CUPW, while also fighting for all workers as well as members of the community who seemed to be the underdogs in our society. Anyone who knows Michelle knows how hard she works and how dedicated she is to all the causes that she takes on. Over the years, she has made connections with allies far and wide. Whether in the labour movement in Windsor, or at CUPW, she mentored workers and advocated for the future of this great Union.

Michelle held numerous positions at the Windsor Local 630 over the course of her career including steward, recording secretary, First Vice-President, and President. She also chaired her local women's committee, was part of the 2005 National Constitution Committee, and chaired the National Policy Committee for the 2011 National Convention. She also helped oversee CUPW's Childcare Project.

She is passionate about education and graduated from the Union Education Program in 1999. She then became a regional facilitator for the Human Rights course as well as the Basic Shop Steward course. She also taught the joint CPC Appendix DD and HH Human Rights and Health and Safety Course until her retirement in 2017. Sister Johnson also participated in two international solidarity trips to Cuba and Ecuador.

In 2008, she created the *Save Sandwich Post Office* committee, which, with the help of the NDP, was successful in saving the post office in Sandwich, Windsor. The Committee then morphed into the *Save Canada Post* committee. They held town halls, produced flyers and helped elect three NDP candidates in the 2015 federal election.

Sister Johnson held numerous positions within her community including the Windsor and District Labour Council, the Windor Health Coalition, Making Waves Windsor Essex, and the provincial and federal NDP party.

# *Betty Schelske*

## *Prairie Region*

Betty Schelske is a long-term activist in CUPW, and before that with the Edmonton Large Credit Union Coalition. In 1989, she was elected as the first Regional Education and Organization Officer for the Prairie Region, a position she held till 1996. During her time as REOO, she served on the National Women's Committee and National Health and Safety Committee. She also facilitated numerous conferences and education seminars for the Canadian Labour Congress and for provincial federations of labour. When she returned to her position as a letter carrier, she became active in the Winnipeg Local. She served as a shop steward and sat on the local executive in various positions.

Sister Schelske was twice elected to represent the Prairie Region on the Constitution Committee for the 1996 and 2000 National Conventions. She also represented the Union at the CLC on what was previously named the Lesbian and Gay Working Group and was part of the organizing committee for the CLC's first Lesbian and Gay National Conference.

Outside of the Union, she was active in various groups including "Choices" a Winnipeg Solidarity Group, the Unemployed Help Centre, and the Winnipeg Gay and Lesbian Resource Centre.

Sister Schelske currently resides in Medicine Hat, Alberta with her partner Arlene.

*Affyson Mayo  
Pacific Region*

Allyson Mayo is a retired activist from the Victoria, British Columbia Local who is a vocal supporter of women's rights.

A long time PO4 and retail clerk in Victoria, Allyson never hesitated to mentor and be mentored by her Union Sisters and to advocate for justice and fairness. Allyson held several positions in her local including shop steward, recording Secretary, and Second Vice-President.

Allyson joined the post office in 1974 with no Union background whatsoever. She describes it as being thrown in the deep end of a pool and having to decide which side to swim to for support. That same year, as a result of workfloor mobilization, union pressure, and strikes, CUPW won the right for coders – who were predominantly women – to be paid at the same rate as postal clerks who were predominantly men. This gave Sister Mayo a clear reason to become a Union activist. This was solidified in 1975, when part-time inside postal workers, who were mostly women, were integrated into the collective agreement for inside workers.

Allyson argued that paid maternity leave should be a bargaining demand locally and regionally. She was a strong advocate that women should not lose money when they went on maternity leave. She is still proud of her participation in the 1981 CUPW strike which fought for paid maternity leave and remembers it as an exciting time. Throughout the tumultuous 70s and 80s, women's voices at CUPW were loud, strong, and at the forefront of major fights for recognition and equality. Allyson's voice was part of this movement as she participated in all these actions and events.

Sister Mayo knows that committees are an unsung strength of any organization and believes that Union committees are an opportunity to listen, learn, plan, and act. She lobbied and argued for women's rights and women's committees at CUPW regional and national conferences and conventions. She was one of the first representatives to sit on the CUPW National Women's Committee. Her work on this committee helped guide many women and made the committee a place where women could share their ideas and gain new skills. Allyson knew that creating strong CUPW sisters would strengthen the entire Union.

Allyson maintained contacts with women CUPW members from coast to coast to coast because she knows that we share the same struggle regardless of where we live. Throughout her 37 years of Union involvement, she credits the strong women in her local and the early women in the Region and National, who were breaking barriers and leading by example, for forging her activist path.

Allyson has a great sense of humour and she brought that into all her work. Her warmth and easy laugh helped make her a great ally for many women in the Union. In her retirement, Allyson advocates for the rights of seniors in long term care.



# Michelle Johnson



Betty Schelske



## Allyson Mayo



# WOMEN AND GIG WORK

Gig workers are a growing part of the Canadian economy. A 2022 Statistics Canada report estimated about 1 in 10 Canadians in the workforce are gig workers. That's 1.7 million people. And many are women. But women and the issues and concerns they face working for app-based delivery companies have been, for the most part, left out of the conversation about gig work.

As the topic of gig work continues to make headlines throughout the country and around the world, we brought together two women couriers from Toronto to talk about what it's like being a woman doing gig work, the issues they face, and their hopes for the future.

Jennifer Scott is the president of Gig Workers United and has been delivering for apps in by bicycle or walking since 2017. Hadil Baki started delivering food and groceries through apps three years ago, by car and more recently on e-bike. She is also the Membership lead for Gig Workers United.

Photo Credit: Workers Action Centre

## **What is one of the biggest misconceptions about gig work?**

### **Jennifer Scott:**

The biggest misconception is actually a narrative that gig bosses use to get away with mistreatment and misclassification of workers. It's the narrative that gig workers are just people who deliver for fun on the side. That we're just making a few extra dollars here and there. The reality is that the majority of the work that is being done every day, the work that bankrolls these apps, is done by full time workers and that those full time workers are the people who get the least amount of financial promotions or incentives because app employers are able to continue to misclassify us by selling this narrative that we are just people driving or delivering on the side for fun.

### **Hadil Baki:**

Another misconception is the flexibility. People think we have the flexibility to work any hours, that we can turn the app on or off whenever we want, but that is untrue. For example, over the holidays, I wanted to spend time with my family and friends, but that was when I could make the best money, so I wasn't able to control when to work and when not to work. The amount of money I made that day was controlling me. There are days when I have great energy and I want to work, but there are no orders, so the situation doesn't allow me to work or make money. Flexibility is something people think we have. The apps manipulate us to work whenever they want us to work.

**JS:** And in the spirit of talking about women, there's a bias written in the algorithm. The times when you can make money will be lunch orders, dinners, and late at night, on Thursday through Saturday. As women, that's a dangerous time for us to be working. If we have children, it may not be possible for us to be out at those times, so as women, we tend to not earn as much because there is a bias in the algorithm that it's not safe or not possible for us to work when the pay is higher.

**HB:** Where I'm from, we don't have labour rights. You can't say anything to your boss, it's unsafe; you don't have the right to say no. When I first came to Canada, I made a delivery to a man late at night. He was drunk, topless, aggressive, speaking loudly but not making any sense. It was COVID

and he wasn't wearing a mask and it was difficult to keep my distance. He was implying/asking for something else. I was scared. I felt like I was in horror movie. I went home and I thought about it all night. I couldn't sleep. I felt powerless and felt like I could do nothing about it. And that's not right. I shouldn't feel powerless. That man shouldn't feel ok making me feel unsafe. I needed to do something about it.

Being a migrant worker, you don't know your rights. I had no idea I had rights. Jennifer is the one who let me know I had rights. So of course, after that I wanted to learn from her. She had the knowledge and experience. It was amazing for me because back home I didn't have that.

### **JS:**

Once of the biggest things I've learned in organizing from Foodora up to now is what organizing really is. Yes, organizing is about filing to certify and winning our vote and negotiating a bad ass collective agreement, but it's also not. Organizing, I think, at its core, is how we help each other grow and learn, and witnessing and celebrating each other's growth. When I first joined Foodsters United, I never thought I'd be the president of our Union and now I am. I still get a little embarrassed about that, in the way you get embarrassed when everyone in the room sings happy birthday to you. The nature of organizing and the nature of having a Union is that we, through being in this struggle with each other, through witnessing the injustice in our workplace, through witnessing the courage and our commitment to our Union, we become better people and we get to do that together and not isolated or alone. That is my favourite thing about the Union.

## **We touched on how you got involved in the Union, but can you describe how you became an activist? What prompted you to want to fight for change for gig workers?**

**JS:** I was delivering. I was having a really bad day. It was the end of lunch shift and I'd only made half of what I'd hope to make, and I was stressed. I stopped to take a break, and this other worker approached me, and he does street outreach, the same tactics we use now. I gave him my information, I got added to group chat, and I came to events. When I went to the tax clinic organized

by Foodsters, it was the first time that I'd been in a space with gig workers where there were other women and that made me so excited. I spoke with different women. I met some of the folks who were organizing, and they told me about the work that was being done to create a women and trans committee and I was sold! There was a meeting of that Committee and things snowballed after that and I got pulled into organizing my Union.

**HB:** For me, I had an issue with my work permit. Before it expired, I applied for a new work permit, and in that in between phase, I had what's called Implied Status which means I can legally work. But during that period, the delivery platforms told me I couldn't work anymore, even though legally I could. I'd leased a car just to work on the app platforms. If I lost my income, then I can't pay my car, my rent. At that time, I didn't know anyone. I felt very lost. I didn't know what to do so I got in touch with Gig Workers United. I spoke to Jennifer. I still remember our first call, when I first heard her voice, she was a woman, it was an extra for me. I felt safe. I felt like I had a family. And this made me want to give it to others. I don't want others to suffer. That's the moment when I knew I was going to work to help others. I'm not just going to say it, I'm going to work for it. To make my and other workers working conditions better.

### **How does unionization not only help gig workers, but help the women in gig work?**

**HB:** Personally, I look young and I'm short, so a lot of customers and restaurants ask me about my age, ask me if I'm even allowed to work legally. Being a woman, you're going to face things that men won't, but I didn't know I'd be criticized for how I look doing my job, like I was doing something wrong. I felt like an outsider.

**JS:** There's a risk that they will complain to the apps and you will lose your job.

**HB:** It's happened. I've had to confirm who I am to the apps after people complained. It's time consuming. I just want to do my job. And because I'm a woman, people seem to think they have the right to complain. It makes me feel bad about myself, about my body. I'm just trying to do my job, to put food on the table.

**JS:** Courier work is dangerous work and Hadil has talked about the harassment, and that kind of violence. As a bike courier, there's road violence, and my experience with that is gendered. There are also dangerous situations with customers. And because of the misclassification, there's nothing we can do about it. The way the system is currently set up, there's no way to say, "hey, this customer exposed himself to me." Unionization isn't just about ending misclassification; it's about having a union that can bring grievances forward and work to implement all the things that are needed for people to be safe in the workplace. The safety issues that women experience, there are versions of that for migrant workers, for racialized people, for trans workers.

I think that women in this sector are hidden. People don't think that many women do this job, but a lot of women do this job. It's overwhelming sometimes to me how many women do this job and do not believe that they are entitled to say that they are an employee, to be part of a union, who don't see themselves as real workers. And I think the real change we can bring through unionization in this sector – it's not just ending misclassification and getting good wages – but making safe spaces for women to be the broad collective voice that I think is missing in worker spaces and app work. Women need to be a part of the decision-making process.

### **Does it feel that way in the Union as well? How can we make gig work more inclusive as well as the Union that represents them more inclusive?**

**JS:** I think we do that by being willing to grow, willing to learn. Organizing is really about learning and growing together. The men in our union can see the things that Hadil and I and other women go through. They witness that and can grow and act a bit differently tomorrow than they do today just by the nature of being in this struggle with us. On a more structural level, we must make space and hold boundaries for women, and ensure that we have a physical space and structural opportunities for women to contribute to the Union. I'm excited about where our Union could be in a year; what it could look like with more women participating and being elected. Two is not enough.

**HB:** When I first joined the Union, it was very important for me to feel safe and to feel understood. It's also important to have open discussions and to work on solutions not just the problems. Jennifer always talks about how we can improve the Women and Trans Committee. We're always thinking about making sure that we've created a safe place because we want people to be comfortable. The Union needs to be a place where you feel better. When life hits you hard, when work hits you hard, you have place to go.

**JS:** It's my dream that one day we'll host our GMs in a big hall and folks will bring their children, and we'll have child minding services. So many of our members have children and cite child minding as a reason why participating in a three-hour General Meeting is difficult.

### **What is the future of Gig Workers United? What would you like it to look like?**

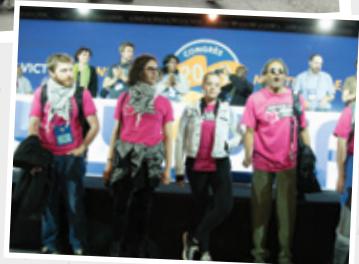
**JS:** Obviously we're going to win our certifications! When I think about what Gig Workers United can be, it's through the scope of precarious workers, who through building our union and winning our union, ideally feel less precarious. Coming from the lens of precarity, what do we bring into our union. For us that's community, child minding, sharing food, safety is a big one, I hope it doesn't always stay that way, what I mean to say, the community aspect of our union being more tangibly robust. How does our Union fill the gaps in our lives? Folks unite to fill those gaps.

**HB:** I see our union as a diverse place for everyone, for people who felt unwanted. I want it to be a place for everyone and to work on always making our work conditions good, and wages where people don't suffer.

When I first got involved in unionizing, I had a call with someone who really affected me. She changed something inside of me. She was a single mom, and we were talking about the work conditions and how she was doing. And she told me "Hadil, I'm a single mom and I can't afford milk for my baby." When she told me that, I couldn't believe it. It's bad. "I have to take care of my baby and I have to take her to work sometimes." When she said that to me, I thought "this is unacceptable" because it's not just the employees suffering, it's



Gig Workers at the 2019 CUPW Convention



also the kids because of these bosses who don't care about their employees. When we certify, it's going to happen, I trust that we're going to make it, I don't want to see people suffering this way. I want us to take care of workers. Because that woman broke my heart.

### **Final thoughts, anything you'd like to add to this conversation?**

**JS:** There's something that I hope that posties know. It's obvious to gig workers why gig workers are part of CUPW. Even out on the street doing outreach with someone who's never heard of Gig Workers United before, when we tell them we're a part of CUPW, and that postal workers nationwide stand with us, their response is "that makes sense." What the gig economy and what apps are really doing in Canada is a response to the strength of CUPW and Unions like CUPW. I wish I could have more in-depth conversations with postal workers about how much it feels like home to us to be a part of CUPW; to be standing with unionized workers who do a lot of the same work we do and whose work is being challenged or changed in a lot of the same ways our work is.

**HB:** Right now, so many of our rights are hidden and the app bosses don't tell us. As a migrant worker, as a woman, you're always worried. I want people to know their rights, and then I want to create new and better rights.

## TERF; a nuclear acronym

### TERF- Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminist

If you believe in full social, economic, and political equality for women, then you are probably a feminist. If you think the rights of women, girls and gender diverse people should mirror those of the rest of society, then congratulations, call yourself a feminist.

But if you call yourself a feminist and you don't believe in trans women's rights, then I suggest you consider yourself a TERF.

Debate about the use of the acronym TERF can be found in most feminists and gender diverse groups. Some feel the term TERF is derogatory and a slang, while others feel it is essential to separate these transphobic views from feminist language and struggle.

Although most of us can agree it is important to be well informed on the issues facing marginalized groups, some allies choose to simply be better informed, while others find the struggle to achieve a better world is only found through advocacy and the pursuit of solutions. But what happens when we're stuck on a solution?

Pare that down to a micro level and ask, what then do we think should happen to the important rights of those individuals, if in fact a person or a group of people don't agree on the fundamental principle that motivates said marginalized folks?

Exploring the fundamental principles of feminism is an important part of this debate.

Demanding justice and solutions to gender inequality are at the core of feminist teachings. The pursuit of corrections to the patriarchal teaching and society in which we all live and grow, which suit the ongoing male dominated power structures, is prioritized in feminist ideologies and teachings. Full stop!

### So how did we end up here?

TERF describes a small group of feminists who do not believe trans women are legitimately women. The term grew out of 1970's radical feminist circles, with the thought that there needed to be a way to separate radical feminists who support trans women and those who don't. The short hand, or on-line description, was popularized in 2008 and credited to Viv Smyth, a trans-inclusive cisgender radical feminist blogger, who used the acronym in her response to a debate about access to a small summer music festival.

The Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, or MICHFEST, was a music festival in Michigan focused on women (or womyn, for those who have historically opposed the use of the "e" because of the visual connection to "men").

The event's "intention" suggested that anyone not assigned female at birth and who has not always been perceived as a girl and a woman, including in the present, and conceivably in the future, should not attend.

Viv Smith wrote about the festival and described TERFs as a means to separate their views from that of other feminists. The organizers of the festival, she argued, were trans exclusionary radical feminists - TERFs.

TERFs argue that gender derives only from biological dependent sex, which is dependent on a person's chromosomes at birth and thus, they claim, is binary and irreversible.

TERFs often make claims about the encroachment of transgender women into women's spaces and rights (e.g., participation in sports and restrooms). This rhetoric is harmful as it marginalizes and excludes transgender women. Although these arguments may come from real concerns about violence towards women, they are misguided and reek of subtle microaggression.

Some attacks on trans women don't need to pass a subtle sniff test, they downright reek of full-frontal transphobia. Take for example the career ending tweetfest of author JK Rowling, which began in June of 2020. Not only did the author very publicly shame trans women she then doubled down on her stance when called out, sparking massive numbers of fans to question her motives. Rowling publicly tanked her base support by offering up misinformation about not only gender dysphoria, but medical treatments, including hormonal therapies.

In September of 2020, her then new book Troubled Blood sparked the next round of outrage. The book follows a detective on the hunt for a cis male serial killer who dresses as a woman in order to hunt and murder cis women. The Telegraph's review of the book summarizes the plot as: "Never trust a man in a dress."

## Identifying TERFs in Online Spaces

As is the common thread with most hate speech, on-line spaces are often the most difficult to navigate, but work is being done to isolate on-line aggressors and an effort is being made to create a dataset of language by researchers at Dartmouth College and the University of Michigan. This research, called the subtle language of exclusion: Identifying the Toxic Language Used by TERFs, introduces two models to lessen the impact of TERF language and behavior.

The first model identifies TERF users in social media, recognizing that these users are a main source of transphobic material that enters mainstream discussion and whom other users may not desire to engage with in good faith. The second model tackles the harder task of recognizing the masked rhetoric of TERF messages and introduces a new dataset to support this task. Finally, researchers examine the ethics of deploying these models to mitigate the harm of TERF language, arguing for a balanced approach that allows for restorative interactions. This approach would tackle the language head on and try to change the narrative by influencing the writer, and hopefully have an impact. <https://aclanthology.org/2022.woah-1.8.pdf>



## Next Steps

As active stewards, guardians and allies for the queer and gender diverse community; feminists like myself will continue to walk hand in hand with trans folks and carve out safe spaces and networks that are inclusive. We have to expand our solution tool kit with ongoing education, training, and advocacy. Identifying and actively listening and participating in on-line spaces, that support trans folks is so vitally important. Systematically, we can change the narrative and fight back against transphobic language.

So, box up your J.K Rowling collection of Harry Potter books, talk to your kids about why, and re-write a new version of the tale. Like the Michfest, which lost so much sponsorship and support the organizers needed to pull the plug in 2015, new festivals that celebrate inclusion, diversity and comradeship are popping up everywhere, join one. In that same vein, so too shall we celebrate that JK Rowling has lost custody of our darling Harry, Hermione, and Ron. The heroes of wizardry prevail, the Harry Potter we created together, without JK Rowling. And we know that's the version that matters in the end.

As women, including those who identify as such, we understand gender oppression, we understand how sexism and patriarchy have harmed every generation of women that has come before us. Trans exclusionary language is a symptom of that oppression, not a cause. The work we have ahead of us will include fighting patriarchy, we've done it before, and we can do it again. It's as easy as riding a bike, and if you can't ride a bike, ride a 2-wheeler and let's get moving.

*Julee Sanderson is a postal worker from Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, who has long been involved in the broader social justice movement. She was elected 1<sup>st</sup> National Vice-President of CUPW in 2019.*



# Women Leaders

## Why electing women to leadership positions is essential to advancing our goals.

Women in leadership are said to increase the productivity of an organization for a variety of reasons. They are better leaders because they are not afraid to take initiative, to be resilient, to seek improvement and to be results-oriented. They are not afraid to demonstrate integrity and honesty. Here are the reasons why companies would benefit from increasing their female workforce.

Women are a source of unity and collaboration. They bring teams together and inspire people to help one another. They are good communicators, helping to resolve conflicts and improve the day-to-day operations of a business.

Women are apt at creating healthy work environments. They are generally empathetic and open to others. They are aware of the needs of those around them and better understand the need to maintain personal and professional balance. The integration of more women leaders would therefore create a better work-life balance.

Women foster a sense of belonging in companies, which makes it easier for women managers to encourage the commitment in their team members. They are caring leaders. They embrace a growth mindset and focus on learning from their failures, making room for continuous learning and improvement. Their caring approach creates a psychologically safe environment for employees.

When facing major crises and challenges, women are persistent and do not give up easily. They tend to fight for their ideas until all alternatives are exhausted. They are physically and psychologically resilient and handle pressure well.



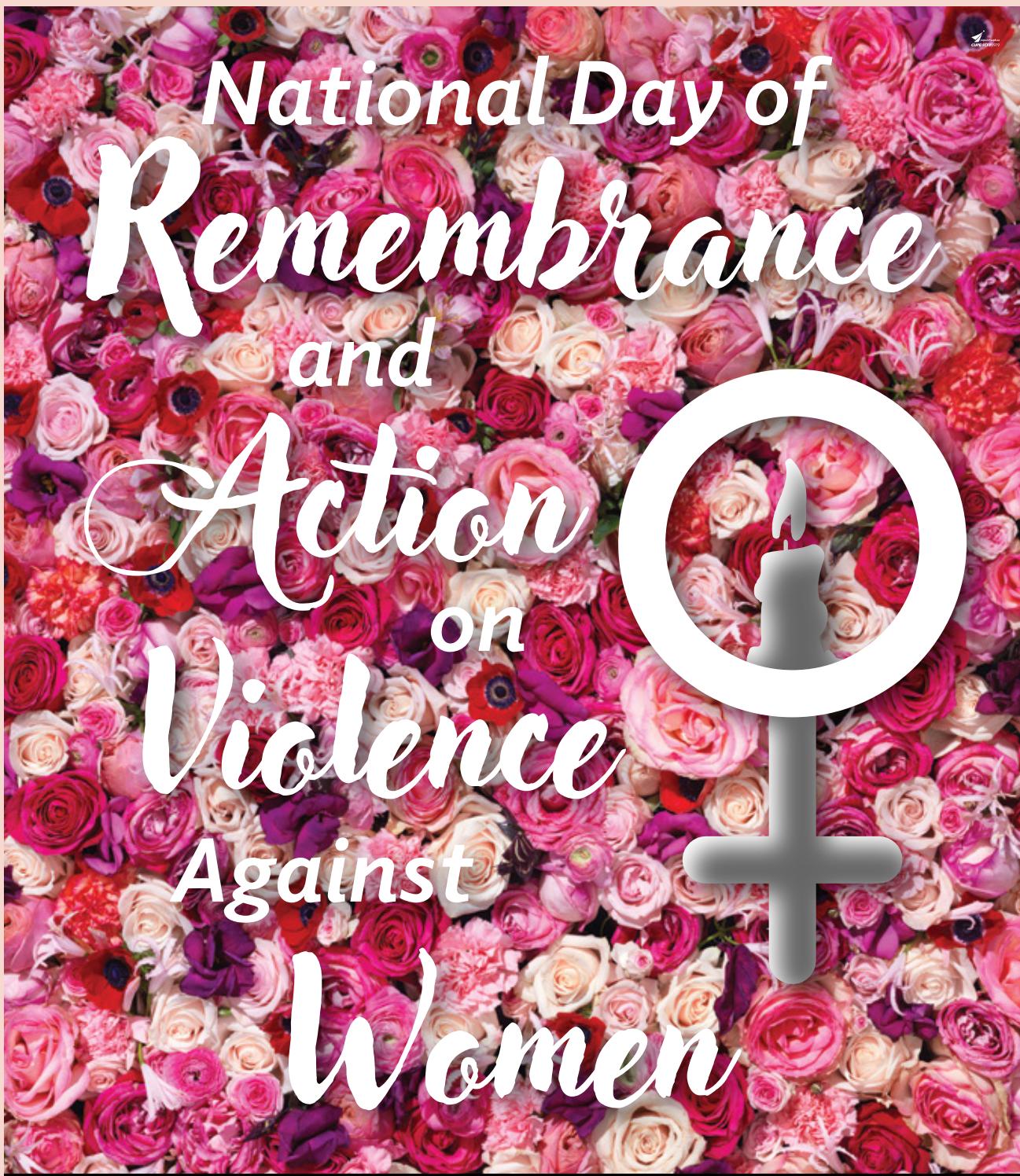
Women have a knack for handling several situations at the same time. They are mothers, daughters, wives, students, workers, housewives and more. This gives them a distinct advantage because they have the ability to deal with various situations at the same time.

Valuing the potential of women would be of substantial benefit to companies. Women are just as competent as men and are often more demanding of themselves. When parity is respected, decisions are more balanced and varied. It is proven that a diverse work team will be more creative and more conducive to innovation. A mixed team brings a greater diversity of opinion, thus more in-depth debates.

Finally, by hiring women leaders, companies will be able to find more thoughtful and effective solutions to their problems. Women leaders will multiply possibilities, maintain a solid base and a fertile ground to develop in a sustainable way. Companies have everything to gain by investing in women.

*Ann Girard has been working for Canada Post for more than 28 years. She is a relief letter carrier in Terrebonne, a social steward and a member of the National Women's Committee.*





*Say their names. Remember. Take action.*

*December 6, 1989*

*Geneviève Bergeron – Hélène Colgan – Nathalie Croteau – Barbara Daigneault  
Anne-Marie Edward – Maud Haviernick, – Barbara Klucznik-Widajewicz  
Maryse Laganière – Maryse Leclair – Anne-Marie Lemay – Sonia Pelletier  
Michèle Richard – Anne St-Arneault – Annie Turcotte*



Women have struggled for equality against oppression for centuries, and while some battles have been won, women are still disproportionately affected by all forms of violence and discrimination in every aspect of our lives. Women can make magic when they work together, and CUPW recognizes that together we are stronger. The idea for a Resource Booklet fist came out of the Atlantic region and grew with contributions from the National Women's Committee. The final Resource Booklet is filled with key dates, information about creating a local women's committee, and excerpts about women from the National Constitution. We hope you make good use out of the information found in this booklet.

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