



**International Women's Day 2017
#Be Bold For Change
#Rise up for Change**

In 1908, the seeds of International Women's Day were sown when women from the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union went on strike and demanded not just better wages and benefits, but better working conditions as well. Their demand for "Bread and Roses" has become the international theme for the women's movement around the globe.

Unions have played a key role in elevating the status of women in Newfoundland & Labrador (NL) and in our country.

No doubt about it: women need unions!

The fair wages that unions negotiate delivers almost \$574 million, every week, into local economies across Canada. Unionized women in NL spend \$13.9 million more, every week, earning on average \$8.46 an hour more than non-unionized women.

Collective bargaining gains have made a huge difference to union women, their families and our economy.

Equally significant is the fact that unions need women.

Union women have been essential to collective bargaining and in making unions more inclusive and democratic.

Today – there are more women in unions in Canada than men. This is due to the high number of women who work in the public sector, which is largely unionized.

We understand that unions are part of a broader movement for social change, and that our struggle for equality extends far beyond the collective bargaining table.

We understand that union women must join with the broader women's movement and our like-minded partners.

Never has this been more important than right now! Inequality, sexism, misogyny and gender-based violence are prevalent everywhere in our society.

In Canada, according to a recent report released by Statistics Canada, women working full-time still only make 74.2 cents compared to the 100 cents that full-time male workers make. Despite our efforts, this wage inequality has barely moved over the past two decades, even though women are more educated than men



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This places Canada in a shameful 35th place in the World Economic Forum's global gender gap rankings.

NL has the largest overall pay gap of all, with women earning 66% of male salaries. Jobs where women are concentrated are generally valued, and paid less. More and more women are working in part time, contractual and precarious jobs. Too many women are trapped in low-wage sectors and without a living wage. These same women are further marginalized in times of economic uncertainty.

Austerity Budgets do not work for women!

We know, and research shows us, that austerity budgets disproportionately hurt women, some doubly, as public sector workers and as consumers of public services. Cuts to the public sector impacts the jobs of many women who earn decent wages – money that they spend in the economy.

Women in the private sector are impacted by the multiplier impact of job losses in the public sector.

But the effect of public sector cuts on women is about more than job loss. Cuts to public services has a greater impact on women. Women are the largest users of public services. Women are the lowest paid. Women do the bulk of unpaid labour and care-giving already. Women will be left to handle the deficit in public services.

An attack on our public service is an attack on women and a huge step back from gains that women have made.

We need strong public services and a strong public sector to deliver those services and maintain and grow our economy.

Federally, we have a Prime Minister who has committed to gender equality and feminist principles. But is that enough?

While gains have been made, including a gender parity cabinet, and the beginnings of a national inquiry on missing and murdered Indigenous women, more must be done. Women are mobilizing for those issues that are important to equality and the economy; such as pay equity, a national child care program, and federal domestic violence at work legislation.

In NL, we are making gains around provincial domestic violence at work legislation, and we call upon the Liberal government to commit to other policies, laws and measures that improve women's lives and will benefit our economy and all citizens. Things such as



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child care, pay equity, sustained funding for women's programs, gender-based budgeting, strong public sector and services, and a minimum wage that would help narrow the gender gap for women and our most vulnerable citizens.

The challenges are many. Our call to action is urgent!

Together we must work towards ending the growing shameful statistics that makes our province the highest on intimate partner violence.

We need to fight to change systems and attitudes that continue to victim blame and victim shame.

We need to pressure the NL government to bargain fairly with public sector unions, and to denounce austerity budgets as an irreparable, harmful solution to our fiscal situation.

We need to compel Prime Minister Trudeau to walk the walk.

Globally, we commit to working against the politics of fear and hatred, and we recognized that when any of us are under attack, we all suffer. Their struggle is ours.

International Women's Day is a time to reclaim, honour and foster our feminism, recognize the important role of unions to make a difference, and recommit to building solidarity in our unions and with our allies in the struggle.

Through our collective struggles, may we build a fairer and more equal world – a world where violence, and racist and sexist norms are no more, where women have choices and control over their bodies. A world with better laws, access to justice for women, pay equity, and strong social programs like public child care. Where women have respect and space, a world where women don't die just because they're women.

As we recognize the challenges ahead of us, let's look for the joy in the struggle. Let's turn our anger into hope, and recognize that our biggest victory lies in our ability to use our collective voices, passions and energy to rise up, act up and be bold for change.

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