



# ATU CANADA GENDER EQUITY

## Report and Recommendations

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# Executive Summary

## Overview

The ATU Canada Gender Equity Report identifies widely-felt concerns of ATU Canada women regarding barriers to inclusivity and equity in their workplaces and their union. This initiative seeks to understand these issues in order to address and remedy them. The Report articulates key themes and patterns gathered from members' participation in the Gender Equity Survey (2019) and related communications. It aggregates member insights and suggestions, academic research, and best practices from Canadian labour unions to make recommendations for actionable next steps for ATU Canada to create a Gender Equity Strategy. In so doing, ATU Canada's leadership has an opportunity to gain forward momentum, to improve women's position in ATU Canada, and to build power for the union.

## Methodology

The Report seeks to understand the state of gender dynamics and recognize the nature and scope of gender inequality for women in ATU Canada. The preparations for this Report fall broadly under three categories:

1. Consulting with members via the Gender Equity Survey, one-on-one follow-up conversations, as well as group video-conferencing sessions.
2. Interviewing women in the union movement like organizers, women's committee leaders, executive members, or equality program coordinators from prominent Canadian Unions to learn from their experiences with Gender Equity programming.
3. Conducting academic research regarding gender dynamics in unions and transit, with a focus on the Canadian labour movement.

## Themes and Patterns

Survey respondents shared concerns about workplace policies and union cultures that impact their safety and wellbeing, their relationships with colleagues and management, and their feeling of belonging and appreciation in the union. The top concerns identified by survey respondents are:

- 1. SAFETY CONCERNS:** Survey respondents identified that physical and psychological safety on the job is a major concern for female transit professionals. Many identified physical assault, passenger aggression, and verbal abuse as one of the top issues experienced by women in ATU Canada workplaces.
- 2. SEXUAL HARASSMENT:** Survey respondents frequently identified sexual harassment by passengers, management, and union members as a top concern. Some women expressed the opinion that sexual harassment is accepted because management and union officials do not take complaints seriously.
- 3. ACCESS TO WASHROOMS:** Survey respondents are concerned about access to washrooms, including washroom cleanliness, availability of adequate washrooms along routes, and allocated time to using the facilities while on shift. Some female respondents shared that this lack of access impacts their ability to obtain and change menstrual products, as well as has caused (or exacerbated) existing medical conditions.
- 4. LACK OF REPRESENTATION BY WOMEN:** Survey respondents noted the lack of representation by women in the transit industry, in management, and in union leadership. The survey responses suggest that in some ATU Canada locals, women's participation in union activities and elected positions is disproportionately lower than their female membership.
- 5. OPPRESSION AND DISCRIMINATION:** Survey respondents pointed to stereotypes and stigma, broadly based in immutable characteristics, such as race, sex, age, and physical appearance, as significant issues in their workplaces and union. Some respondents feel that there are different and unfair standards for women in the industry.

## Recommendations

Recommendations are informed by participants' feedback and ideas, as well as successful practices identified in the literature review and jurisdictional scans of other Canadian labour unions.

**A: Identify ATU Canada's capacity for resource sharing and correspondence with members.**

There is significant potential for ATU Canada to provide information, educational campaigns, and resources to the locals, and interact directly with members.

**B: Develop a Gender Equity educational curriculum and delivery plan.**

Members requested more training opportunities on the topics of anti-oppression, leadership training, and union education, and for these opportunities to be available at the local level.

**C: Prepare a "Women's Issues" guide to use in bargaining.**

ATU Canada locals can address several health and safety concerns, especially those by which women are disproportionately impacted, through union advocacy and contract negotiations.

**D: Develop a Sexual Harassment Policy for all union activities and locals.**

ATU Canada can take a stand against a culture of gender-based violence and harassment by developing, in collaboration with locals, a Sexual Harassment Policy.

**E: Invest in women's programming and women's representation initiatives.**

Members identified that increasing the presence of women in positions of leadership should be a priority for ATU Canada, at the local and national level. Developing a meaningful network of women's structures, such as local women's committees, women's leadership training, and a women's national caucus, may encourage positive change for women in ATU Canada.

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*Women need to know they have a place in ATU. (#3)*

*I'm pleased to see my Canadian ATU finally recognizing we need to address this issue. Our voice has been quiet too long. We need to be seen as an asset not a threat. (#4)*

*I wish it wasn't a struggle. My hope is that within my lifetime this will change. (#32)*

*This is a first step to help all our sisters and to know that we are not alone with our issues "we" as women face every day in this job. (#125)*

*This is a terrific start, one I am happy to see after spending the better part of 10 years with ATU, and never being asked these things before. (#126)*

*Thank you for asking and initiating a conversation in which we can speak openly and freely without fear of judgement. (#134)*

*Thank you for your choice to bring women's issues forward in ATU - my first day on the job, a male driver introduced himself, shook my hand & said..."what's it like taking a man's job?" - this was in 2008. (#148)*

*I feel it is a shame to have to still be discussing these issues in 2019. We aren't supposed to be harassed at the work place or our union and it is running rampant. (#158)*

## Introduction

The quotes above are a sampling of the various responses provided by rank-and-file women of ATU Canada to the Gender Equity Survey (2019), upon which this Report is based. These responses capture a common thread emerging from this survey that sustained progress is required to promote gender inclusivity and equity in the union. Furthermore, an analysis of responses indicates that while there is a perception among respondents of relative inertia at the ATU Canada National Level to identify and address gender discrimination issues in the past, there is also growing optimism that positive change can happen moving forward. There is an expectation among respondents that ATU Canada will take meaningful action to advance women's status in the union; specifically, through the creation of a Gender Equity Strategy.

This project was initiated and directed by ATU Canada members who have expressed discontent with the existing state of female representation within the organization's leadership. At the ATU Canada Annual Conference in Newfoundland (2018) members passed a motion intended to increase inclusivity in the union for female members, along with other groups including language groups and groups by geographical representation.

With this motion passed, the leadership of ATU Canada launched an inquiry into the nature and prevalence of gender inequalities present in ATU Canada. On the direction of the ATU

Canada Executive Board, Internal Organizer and author of this report, Madelin Burt-D’Agnillo, designed and administered the Gender Equity Survey (2019) with the goal to understand gender dynamics and identify any challenges present within ATU Canada workplaces and unions that disproportionately and negatively impact women. Data was gathered from written survey responses, follow-up telephone interviews, and facilitated video-conferencing workshops with members.

A literature review of women in unions and women in transit indicates that issues of gender-based discrimination experienced within ATU Canada is not unique to transit, nor in fact to union life in general. A review of equity and equality initiatives in Canadian unions, and conversations with female leaders in the Canadian labour movement, points to a progressive trend in unions to address gender-based discrimination through women’s participation, representation, and increased agency and decision-making power.

The reported lived experience of women in ATU Canada demonstrate a need for action against the structural and cultural forces that keep female members from experiencing authentic inclusivity in ATU Canada. Based on consolidated data, and in consultation with members, the document herein summarizes key themes and patterns and offers recommendations that are opportunities for the ATU Canada Executive Board to move toward remedying gender inequalities in ATU Canada, with a goal to achieve Gender Equity.

## Research and Background

Evaluating women’s participation, investigating women’s representation, and understanding women’s quality of life in unions has been researched by academics and examined by Canadian labour unions and organizations. The literature indicates that unions, like other institutions and organizations, can perpetuate beliefs and practices that systematically disadvantage women.

“Unions can be just as discriminatory as employers, just as discriminatory as tax laws, just as biased in favour of men as the rest of society.”

- Grace Hartman, President of the Canadian Union of Public Employees in 1975, first female president of a major Canadian Union.

There are certainly moral reasons why women should be included in unions, and practically, unions must include women as a means to building power. There is a strong case for women’s increased participation in unions, including research demonstrating that “women are the key to union renewal” as they are the most likely new source of membership in the Canadian labour



“Unions in Canada have played a significant role in promoting women's equality, yet evidence suggests that equality issues have still not moved into the mainstream of union culture. Unions are institutions that can either push forward on social change or hold it back.”

- OFL Sister to Sister Report, 5.

women prevent a high-participation, high-functioning union for all. In removing barriers to full union participation for women, more members will participate in union work, meaning that there is more power to win!

These sentiments are littered throughout the response to the Gender Equity Survey. As further evidence, a group of women gathered at the ATU Canada Conference (2018) in Newfoundland to discuss a strategy for increasing women's participation in the union. In a summary (Appendix D) written for the Exec Board, facilitator Cindy Watson wrote:

There was a shared desire to make the ATU the best it can be, and to find ways to more meaningfully allow full inclusion and participation of women both within the organization and for purposes of organizing and otherwise. If we are successful in this regard, the benefits to the ATU could be many, including greater depth for community organizing initiatives and campaigns, bargaining unit organizing drives and, of course, increased morale and solidarity within the ATU generally and ATU Canada in particular.

Having said this, the burden of striving for Gender Equity must not be endured exclusively by women. Men must be engaged as supports. Men in ATU Canada have a significant and important responsibility to learn about, reflect on, and stand up against gender-based discrimination in the workplace. While many inequitable practices have become status quo, and a small minority of men perpetuate and defend these practices, all men must stand together to end gender-based discrimination and harassment.

*I really feel that in order for women to become more involved in these issues it starts with men stepping up and educating other men about sharing obligations and encouraging women to get more involved. (Female-identified #8)*

market (Yates, 103). As members of a labour union, moreover, women's structures may act as change agents within the trade union setting to “attract and involve female members, and for encouraging a greater sense of union ‘ownership’ among women” (Parker and Foley, 288). Women's full participation in unions can be instrumental, too, in building relationships between Canadian unions and progressive movements, thereby “initiating the trend toward social movement unionism” (Briskin, 231).

Simply put, a union suffers when women are not engaged. Barriers experienced by

*This is been very difficult for me as I resonate and reflect upon the subject matter. I say this because I really have no idea what a woman goes through from day to day in our union or in any work life. I'm a firm believer in the phrase you don't know what you don't know, and I want to learn and I want to help. (Male-identified #14)*

Notably, ATU Canada has no direct influence over the employer's hiring practices; the employer chooses our members, and then exploits division and difference in the workforce to systematically keep workers divided. Seen in this way, any form of gender oppression and exclusivity is advantageous to, and in solidarity with, the employer.



The impact of raising women's status in ATU Canada can be positively experienced by all union members; it is an act of union solidarity to increase the union's power by prioritizing inclusivity and standing together to defy the employer's attempts at keeping us weak and divided.

## Methodology

The preparations for this Report fall broadly under three categories:

1. Consulting with members via the Gender Equity Survey (Appendix A), one-on-one follow-up conversations, as well as group video-conferencing sessions.
2. Interviewing strong women in the union movement including organizers, women's committee leaders, executive members, or equality program coordinators from prominent Canadian Unions to learn from their experiences.
3. Conducting academic research regarding gender dynamics in unions, with a focus on the Canadian labour movement.

The survey was designed deliberately with open-ended questions to illicit a wide variety of responses. The survey is titled "ATU Canada Sisters Speak" which is meant to amplify the voices of women and to learn about the issues as they experience them. As an initiative that is also focused on inclusivity, the survey was open to responses from all genders.

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### EQUALITY AND EQUITY: DEFINED

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"Gender equality tends to focus on ensuring that men and women have the 'same' opportunity to access jobs, programs, and decision-making, but often ignores the fact that people differ in their capacities, interests, and experiences in obtaining those resources.

Whereas gender equality is concerned with equality of opportunity (i.e. a man and a woman being interviewed for the same job), gender equity seeks equal outcomes (i.e. a corporate board with as many female executives as male)." - UFCW Canada

The survey was made available as a PDF copy, as well as electronically through Survey Monkey, and was distributed first through the National Office to all local presidents, with direction to share widely with members. From January 11 to March 31, 2019, a total of 190 responses were received. While this sample size is relatively small compared to the number of female members in ATU Canada, the responses identify significant trends that are addressed in this Report.

There were barriers to full participation, including low accessibility of the survey at the local level. This may demonstrate a lack of resources, a need for better instruction, or it may allude to the perceived value of the initiative by local presidents.

*We were never even informed of this survey by our union president. The way we found out was a female operator took the shop steward course and it was brought up there and she posted for the female operators to see. Another form of control is not being able to get info out there. (#158)*

Another barrier was anonymity. Providing personal details on the survey was optional; some individuals remained anonymous out of concern for their job or their relationship with their union. Many individuals requested written assurances that their information would remain confidential.

*Don't want kick back and not ready to trust that I could talk freely at the moment. That speaks volumes doesn't it. (#70)*

In other cases, anonymity provided some respondents a means to critique the survey, ATU Canada's intentions, and feminism in general.

*Instead of pursuing the gender inequality myth maybe focus on workplace safety. (#11)*

*Why do we need Gender Equity? Equality of outcome? Not a good strategy, keep this ideology out. Empower women to make decisions based on their interests, not your ideology. (#156)*

Some respondents were concerned about how their input would be used.

*My fear is when the survey is through, information compiled [will become] a long list presented to our locals then in turn, the employer demanding change which will affect all members. As long as it's done fairly and justly, then I have no problem. If solely to achieve a PhD or something, just consider both sides. (#42)*

Notably, there are several voices who are not represented by this survey. The survey was translated to French, however no responses in French were received.

Every effort has been made by the author to capture members' responses, their varied experiences, and survey themes accurately in this Report. This is a member-driven initiative, and these are the concerns and ideas that came directly from the members. Members' voices and narratives are represented in this report in italics. Some of the quotes have been slightly edited to add grammatical clarity.

This Report has not employed, to the fullest extent possible, the equity-seeking practice of applying an anti-oppression lens to include considerations of race, class, age, religion, sexual orientation, and ability. Further investigation into the intersections of these identities and ATU Canada member's experience may be a supportive next step in the process of increasing inclusivity and union power.

## Themes and Patterns

Survey questions were open-ended. As such, the responses reflect varied experiences and perspectives of the participants, including age, years of service, gender identity, relationship to the union, and local history and situation, to name a few. In short, women surveyed do not all share the same point of view nor have the same concerns; some respondents identified few or no concerns on their survey responses. The varied qualitative responses from the Gender Equity Survey were analyzed to identify the themes, patterns, and insights, and have informed the recommendations to follow.

Survey respondents identified challenges and frustrations that impact their safety and wellbeing, their relationships with colleagues and management, and their feeling of belonging and appreciation in the union. Many of these concerns are not exclusive to female members, but are, in many instances, exacerbated by existing patriarchal (male-dominated) infrastructures and austerity (budget cutbacks) measures.

The top five concerns identified by survey respondents are:

### 1. SAFETY CONCERNS

Survey respondents identified that physical and psychological safety on the job is a major concern for female transit professionals. Many identified physical assault, passenger aggression, and verbal abuse as one of the top issues experienced by women in ATU Canada workplaces. Some respondents pointed to a lack of personal defense training or self-defense options as causing them to feel unsafe, as well as stating that often there is no protection from potential violence in the form of a bus shield or barrier. Some particularly vulnerable times that are cited are "end of line" locations with passengers still on the bus, as well as late night runs (including getting to one's personal vehicle at night after a shift).

*If safety [was] not an issue of being a bus operator, I believe there [would] be more women working in this field... My spouse and I are both working in Transit as Bus*

*Operators for less than a year. We would love to make this our long-term career. The only thing that makes us think twice about it are the issues about safety. My wife already encountered 2 instances in less than 6 months. I try my best to encourage her to stay, but a big part of me is scared every time she is out there driving. If on those 2 instances her buses were installed with shields, she [would] not feel so much threatened. I really hope shields will be mandatory to all buses across Canada. (#48)*

*When we call a coordinator, HE NEEDS to respond. I had an incident one night it was - 32C... I called for a new bus, the coordinator told me to "light a match." (#139)*

*We are concerned about having to carry our car keys between our fingers when we walk to our vehicles lest we be assaulted. We are concerned about our underpants being used in court as a credible piece of evidence as to why we "deserved what we got". We are concerned that every time we allow an intoxicated customer into our workplace that we could be harassed and assaulted to no avail. (#152)*

## 2. SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Survey respondents frequently identified sexual harassment by passengers, management, and union members as a top concern. Specific complaints include excessive comments about appearance and physique, inappropriate touching, and jokes of a sexual nature. Sexual harassment also manifests as insidious and consistent belittling, de-valuing, paternalizing, humiliating, objectifying, and ignoring women. Some women believe that sexual harassment is accepted because management and union officials do not take complaints seriously. They shared that women are seen as 'naggers' when complaining of sexual harassment and are shamed by male colleagues if they speak up. In some cases, survey respondents note that their experiences of sexual harassment, and the way these experiences were handled by the union representatives, have negatively coloured their relationship with the union.

*Education that a "joke" of a sexual nature... is not always FUNNY and can be offensive. Even if both parties are not always easily offended. (#9)*

*I have been off work for over two years with a diagnosis of PTSD due to several at work assaults (as a bus driver) by passengers. I also experienced sexual harassment in the workplace and worked in a poisoned work environment. (#21)*

*I find that if I were to report a male driver for "touchiness" [I would be] blacklisted by other members. (#29)*

*Recognizing that there is member to member sexual harassment and assault so calling all members on the inappropriateness whether brother against sister (vice versa) or brother against brother or sister against sister. Our local [is] all up in arms [about*

*harassment] but laughs and sweeps under the carpet member on member. #MeToo situations should NEVER be swept under the carpet. (#70)*

*I've been having some medical problems the past year and a half, and one brother asked how I was doing, then instead of just stopping there, he proceeded to say, "is it from too much sex or not enough?" I can joke, but sometimes it's exhausting. It is a workplace not your house. (#120)*

### 3. ACCESS TO WASHROOMS

For transit operators, a chief concern is access to washrooms, including washroom cleanliness/hygiene, availability of washrooms along routes (which can be limited or strictly inaccessible), and allocated time to using the facilities while on shift. Some female respondents suggested that lack of access impacts their ability to obtain and change menstrual products, as well as has caused or aggravated existing medical conditions, such as bladder infections. Further, some respondents are uncomfortable using co-ed washrooms.



*[They] don't take our period in to consideration with the washroom. Washrooms is the major thing for us. We can't just whip it out and go. (#56)*

*Not being able to hydrate because you never know if you are gonna have the time to use a restroom or even have a bathroom at the end of the line. Which in return drivers end up having health issues due to lack of [...] drinking plenty of water, [and] using a cup to go to the washroom. (#127)*

*Gender neutral washroom sharing serves more purpose to the men than the women bus operators, as there are more men bus operators. We have been complaining for many years to have more women washrooms and to have them cleaned more frequently. (#133)*

### 4. LACK OF REPRESENTATION BY WOMEN

A significant misgiving expressed by survey respondents is the lack of representation by women in the transit industry, in management, and in union leadership. This was articulated with various idioms, including not having a voice, not being heard, and not having a seat at the table. The survey responses suggest that in some ATU Canada locals, women's participation in union activities and elected positions is disproportionately lower than their female membership. In many instances, respondents pointed to low membership of women, a culture of exclusion, "toxic masculinity," and "being dismissed by brothers" as barriers to full engagement in union life.

*It can be frustrating trying to "fit in" as a female. You don't want to be too accepting of the "boy's club" atmosphere at work, you also don't want to rock the boat by being "too sensitive". I can assure you that most at my transit office would be surprised to see my comments. (#9)*

*Unfortunately, I feel it is going to take an enormous effort to change the "old boys club" that is predominate in the ATU. It's difficult to get women Gender Equity in leadership if we don't encourage it. (#14)*

*Women acting like "men" because it's a man's world. These women are screwing other women over in the name of their careers and simply acting like our shitty leaders who cover for each other. (#103)*

*I was on an accident committee for a couple of years and it was a struggle. I was the only women. They would make fun of me at every opportunity. They were very biased on their opinions. They didn't like when I told them that everyone needed to be treated the same. (#124)*

*Working with men who think they are superior because of their race and having an executive board made up of men except for one position and they are bullies you don't agree with them or stand up to them you are then ostracized and made to feel uncomfortable. (#158)*

## 5. OPPRESSION AND DISCRIMINATION

Some survey respondents pointed to stereotypes and stigma, broadly based in immutable characteristics, such as race, sex, age, and physical appearance, as significant issues in their workplaces and union. Additionally, a few respondents pointed to concerns about pregnancy, parental leave, as well as accessibility of daycare and shifts that can accommodate caring for young or elderly dependents. Some respondents noted that they feel that there are different and unfair standards for women in the industry.

*Driving skills being questioned because I'm a woman. Customers don't respect female drivers. They get on the bus straight without paying and letting the driver know. (#49)*

*Many women are now caring for aging parents so things need to change so as not to burn out women. (#52)*

*Top manager favours males. If a male does something wrong, they get little discipline. If a female does something wrong, they get disciplined harder. (#93)*

*Being told I should have a baby instead of working on my career by union stewards. (#103)*



*Work is seniority based but 24 hr daycare is a freaking unicorn (#131).*

*Coworkers thinking you aren't strong enough, or capable enough to do the job you were hired to do. Managers, or senior staff not listening when voicing opinions, asking questions, or voicing legitimate concerns. (#134)*

## MISCELLANEOUS

In addition to the five overarching themes identified previously, there were several gender-specific concerns that appeared frequently in the survey responses:

**Uniforms.** *Uniforms are men's styles (#7). Uniforms for ladies not available or selection minimal (#12). Uniforms issued are mostly men's cuts (#126).*

**Women's health.** *No paid sick days for that specific time each month I feel too ill to come in (#90).*

**Ergonomics.** *Equipment built for men (ergonomics are wrong) (#7). Seating on bus is conformed to a 6ft male (#10).*

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To be clear, these themes are not meant to encapsulate all women's experiences and concerns. Instead, identifying these frequently mentioned concerns enables ATU Canada to consider priorities to improve the workplace for all members.

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## Recommendations

The Report presents a compilation of members' responses, experiences, and perspectives about barriers to Gender Equity at ATU Canada. To advance the forward momentum achieved by hearing directly from members about the barriers faced by women in the union, this section of the Report offers recommendations for next steps, positive change, and improvement. The following recommendations, informed by member suggestions and the author's research into existing practices and programs from Canadian labour unions, are respectfully presented for the consideration of the ATU Canada Executive Board.



In video-conferencing workshops in February 2019, facilitated by the author, participants identified the values they would like to see reflected in all related actions moving forward. These values can be summarized as: inclusivity of diverse voices, connectivity with members across the country, and recognition that ATU Canada members are family members, caregivers, and parents. The complexity of members' experiences and lives can inform the implementation of equity-seeking practices.



With the benefit of increased awareness of the key themes and widely-felt concerns, ATU Canada now has an opportunity to initiate positive change. This process will, no doubt, require deliberate and thoughtful decision-making to create strategy and guiding principles by which ATU Canada can move forward. In order to foster sustainable momentum, it will be necessary to meet locals “where they are at” and to be transparent about ATU Canada’s current capacity for change. The following recommendations will require resources and time, as well as buy-in and commitment from members. Recognizing that the ATU Canada Executive Board will ultimately decide next steps to initiative positive change, the following recommendations may inform Board considerations and conversations around potential future action and strategy.

A: Identify ATU Canada’s capacity for resource sharing and correspondence with members.

B: Develop a Gender Equity educational curriculum and delivery plan.

C: Prepare a “Women’s Issues” guide to use in bargaining.

D: Develop a Sexual Harassment Policy for all union activities and locals.

E: Invest in women’s programming and women’s representation initiatives.

### **Recommendation A: Identify ATU Canada’s capacity for resource sharing and correspondence with members.**

*To feel supported by not just our local but also the national. There is very little content that relates directly to Canadians within the monthly magazine. Also, it would be beneficial to know what opportunities are available. Openness and transparency would be great! (#176)*

Members see great potential for ATU Canada to provide information, educational campaigns, and resources directly to the locals, as well as serve as an entity with which members can interact directly.

In speaking with ATU Canada members, multiple women requested that ATU Canada commission a research initiative to study ways in which transit work affects women’s health, including stress management and *“mental health, reproductive/ gynecological health in relation to long hours in the seat [and] lack of access to washroom breaks.”* (#5)

Some women expressed a great deal of confusion about their rights in the workplace and requested that ATU Canada provide more legal education.

*Offer a guideline statement of how to deal with employers from a legal stand point. How does a woman stand up to a supervisor without fear of discipline? How does a woman enforce the need for time (monthly visitor) during bathroom breaks? How does a woman make the employer understand a sick day due to women’s issues? (#3)*

Members prefer different mediums of communication, such as a monthly email, pamphlets, or a resources section available on the ATU Canada website. Regardless, members would like to see images of women celebrated in transit and to feel that their unique struggles and contributions to the industry and the union are recognized and valued.

*Emails and articles showing equal fair treatment and workplace equality. It needs to be well known that women are as valuable as men in the workplace and as leaders. (#30)*

Some members further expressed interest in having a more direct avenue to share complaints and concerns with the National Office. They requested an anonymous channel for submitting feedback on an ongoing basis. Many respondents requested a direct contact at the National Office, with whom they can address specific issues, to “*have someone we could talk to who would acknowledge and work on the issues we have as a team*” (#158) as well as a person “*dedicated to helping women in this field where we are the minority when dealing with issues and members can contact when needing extra support and or help.*” (#125)

### **Recommendation A: Considerations**

What is ATU Canada’s capacity to gather or produce research and resources about health, legal rights, and other topics of interest to members? Could ATU Canada dedicate a staff liaison to be a direct point of contact with members? Can ATU Canada create channels for members, union staff, and leaders to report conflict quickly, before it escalates, without having to resort to formal mechanisms?

### **Recommendation B: Develop a Gender Equity educational curriculum and delivery plan.**

*Educate the ATU Canada delegates and leadership about what gender inequality looks like and how we continue or discontinue it. (#14)*

Reflecting an “awakening” of consciousness in popular culture and Canadian society, members are looking to increase their own awareness of gender-based issues in the workplace, as well as to increase their colleagues’ understanding (and by extension, behaviour and ways of interacting) through education and training opportunities.

Members asked for more training opportunities, and for these opportunities to be accessible and available at locals. There was a trend that members would like to see a consistent culture

of education, rather than one-off workshops at conferences. This may mean offering frequent training, refresher sessions, or facilitating regular discussion groups.

Broadly, topics members requested are:

Anti-oppression, anti-sexual harassment, mental illness sensitivity training, and “respectful workplace” training.

*Equality and mandatory training for acceptance of everyone regardless of gender, age, or race. (#89)*

Leadership training for women to encourage confidence and greater participation, including public speaking, assertiveness training, and how to advance as a female leader.

*There should be a conference for women who want to advance in their jobs. We need to learn what we need to do to get that promotion. Confidence, education and motivation. (#124)*

General union education, regarding labour laws, human rights code, and workplace related legislation.

*Education is key. We should be creating pamphlets / programs to educate members, on unionism, community, activism and equality. (#64)*

Although infrequently requested, some members identified an interest in self defense training.

*National training on de-escalation of violent issues and recognizing when it won't work. (#186)*

Some concerns identified with this kind of training is that it gets laughed off or ignored by leaders. In this regard, one member requested “*holding the leadership accountable to A) attend B) lead in those workshops C) pay attention D) bring it back to their locals and in everything they do.*” (#14)

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Canadian unions include training and education as a component of all women’s programming. Many unions offer in-house training on topics ranging from networking and public speaking, to consent culture and self-care practices. Unions often partner with labour councils and labour educators to provide training, as well. Some organizations that provide training are the Canadian Labour Council and the Prairie School for Union Women.

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ATU Canada does not currently have the infrastructure to engage in this kind of training and advocacy, therefore the Executive Board may prioritize collaborating with other labour unions and federations to receive training. It would be advantageous for ATU Canada to partner with other unions and educators to bring this training into local unions.

## Recommendation B: Considerations

What is ATU's capacity to dedicate resources (time, staff, expertise) toward education programs? How can these topics get added to existing training; for example, shop steward training sessions, new president's training, and at conferences? Can some of this training be facilitated remotely using video-conferencing software? Can ATU Canada offer educational scholarships to support women in accessing external training opportunities?

## Recommendation C: Prepare a "Women's Issues" guide to use in bargaining.

*[Management is not] understanding and responsive to women's issues and responsibilities both at home, at work, as well as in the community. For example, parental duties both to young and elderly, [and] issues that require special medical attention or support. (#114)*

As the adage goes, "women's issues are worker's issues." ATU Canada locals can address several health and safety concerns through union advocacy and contract negotiations. For example, addressing operator assault with safety measures, such as bus shields and increased penalties for operator abuse, can benefit all operators. Likewise, ensuring "permanent, clean and safe washroom facilities at the end of the line on all routes" (#50) will serve all members.

Addressing the reasons that women are disproportionately impacted by these workplace conditions requires applying a gender lens to current practices and addressing these concerns in the next round of negotiations with the employer.

"Unions need to shift the lens with which they see the workforce, so that they reveal the complex ways in which gender shapes workplace experience, relations with co-workers and employers, and labour market needs and concerns." (Yates, 112)

In this regard, as ATU Canada locals are fighting for better working conditions, wages, and benefits, they can specifically fight to improve women's working conditions.

Recalling the concerns identified above, ATU Canada locals can address these concerns with frequent advocacy and contract negotiations. Some remedies that could be considered are the following:

**Uniforms.** *Have ATU attire that better suits women (#52). Ensure proper/plentiful uniforms (#12).*

**Ergonomics.** *Work with bus manufacturers to make the operators cabin more adjustable so it can be ergonomically correct for people from 5 feet tall to 7 feet tall (#7). Ensure workplaces are ergonomically designed to support women (#54).*

### Family Responsibilities.

*Ensure appropriate communication tailored to all genders & hiring more women instead of discriminating against them due to their need for maternity leave, family illness & caretaker issues that inherently are more women's responsibilities. (#54)*

*Childcare options and availability for people that work odd hours outside of the typical 9-5. (#87)*

*Help people identify how shift work generally associated with Transit has a negative impact on family life. (#106) Fight for flex hours/leave of absence for women with small children (#148).*

Canadian unions have introduced "Gender Equity" bargaining resources specifically for negotiations with employers, for example: UFCW has a document for negotiations regarding Domestic Violence Leave. Likewise, CUPE uses a Bargaining Equality kit.

## Recommendation C: Considerations

How can ATU Canada work with locals and IVPs to develop a gender equity bargaining guide that can ensure gender-specific language, including pronouns, is built into negotiations? Can ATU Canada encourage locals to engage more women in the bargaining process? Can ATU Canada create an assessment to audit collective agreements based on their attention to gender-specific concerns?

## Recommendation D: Develop a Sexual Harassment Policy for all union activities and locals.

*Even with current policies which I find are pretty clear about zero tolerance, 'sisters' are still subjected to discrimination and harassment. (#159)*

Sexual harassment is a worker's issue. ATU Canada can take a stand against a culture of gender-based violence and harassment. By developing, in collaboration with locals, a Sexual Harassment policy, ATU Canada can work to prevent and deal appropriately with instances of sexual harassment in workplaces and within the union. This may require an audit of existing policies, as well as an assessment of strengths and weaknesses of these policies.

*Apply and support strong discipline and/or dismissal of members proven to have participated in any form of harassment. Educate every member so they are aware of the forms of harassment that will not be tolerated by either the union or the employer. (#38)*

*Put mechanisms in place to hold people accountable in the union for these actions, consequences including removal from office and penalties against running for office. (#132)*

One challenge identified by some survey respondents is that the union shop stewards and union leadership are often all male, making some women feel unsafe or uncomfortable reporting their complaints. A possible solution to increased reporting of sexual harassment may include venues for support for women who have experienced

sexual harassment. This may include an accessible and confidential reporting system, a peer support network, and other support for survivors of sexual harassment to understand their rights.

“Sexual harassment weakens unions. When unions don't take harassment seriously, they send a message to women that the union is not the place for them. This discourages women from both joining a union and becoming active within the union.”

- “The Top 10 Things Unions Can Do Right Now to Address Sexual Harassment in the Workplace”

*Encourage them to report sexual harassment issues. Tell them the legalities of follow through of the human rights process. So many of our sisters are in a position with fellow men workers and passengers.... But they don't know where to turn. They don't know how to proceed. They're afraid of discipline (#3).*

*More ways for women to speak up if sexually-harassed in work place. I am embarrassed to tell anyone (#112).*

These recommendations require a recognition that not all men commit sexual harassment, but that the ones who do stain the reputation of all men. Leaders need to openly reject the “boys will be boys” mentality regarding sexual assault accusations, resist defending “conduct unbecoming of a member of the union,” and address member-on-member harassment. In order to eliminate sexual harassment, leaders must create a union culture that prioritizes safe spaces, accountable leadership teams, and safe workplaces that are free of sexual discrimination.

Programs such as Unifor’s Women’s Advocate program can support women in male-dominated workplaces find support. A Women’s Advocate is a “specially trained workplace representative who assists women with concerns such as workplace harassment, intimate violence and abuse.”

### Recommendation D: Considerations

Can ATU Canada assist locals in developing a Sexual Harassment Policy that is action-orientated, impactful, and sustainable? Can ATU Canada encourage local unions to encompass protections against sexual harassment and retaliation the union’s by-laws? Can ATU Canada make recommendations to IVPs to include sexual harassment prevention and response training within collective agreements?

### Recommendation E: Invest in women’s programming and women’s representation initiatives.

*Women in positions of leadership need to be valued, not just entertained. (#113)*

Women’s intervention in traditionally male-dominated positions in ATU Canada can be a powerful means to achieve Gender Equity in ATU Canada workplaces. Overwhelmingly, survey respondents identified that increasing the presence of women in positions of leadership should be a priority for ATU Canada, at the local and national level. However, the means by which to achieve greater female representation vary.

Some respondents suggest “organic” measures, such as mentorship, role modeling, and leadership training for women in order to empower them to take on leadership roles.

*I would like to see and hear of more women given the opportunity, training, confidence, and care, that would allow them to go into leadership roles. (#134)*

*Regardless of the numbers of women in official positions, the women who DO successfully attain office have to be treated respectfully by their male counterparts at union events and included in conversations. Inclusion, especially for the sake of education and solidarity, will cause our sisters who attend conferences and seminars to return to their locals, and spread the word that the effort to run and represent is indeed worth it. (#143)*

Other respondents suggest that having local women’s committees, as well as women’s structures that can serve as liaisons with a national women’s committee, would have the greatest impact.

*More involvement with the Women’s Committees. To see the Committees across the country be informed and connected through knowledge. To create a National Women’s Caucus similar to the International level (#64).*

*I would create an ATU Canada Women's Committee and hold a 5-7 day conference [with] training around politics and education as well as empowerment/encouragement roles of the union. Have the locals send their full eligible delegation to each - this gives the women of our union the opportunity to learn and grow without intimidation from the men on executive board-- and a chance for all women not just the ones that president favors. (#66)*

*Have a Women's Caucus that meets just prior to the annual convention. Education for the sisters. Collecting issues to bring to the Executive Board. The possibility of bringing resolutions to the floor of the convention if appropriate after that Executive Board report. Definitely bringing a report to the floor of the convention regardless of resolutions or not. (#70)*

*Women's caucus is a space for vulnerability, space to vent, and be candid. (#113)*

“Key to strengthening women's place in unions are the formal, and sometimes elected, national, provincial and local women's committees mandated by union constitutions and by-laws.”

- How to Revitalize Union Women's Committees



And further, some respondents are seeking direct action from the National Office to mandate gender representation on local and national executive boards through positive discrimination programming.

*Unfortunately, the optics of a women's group or counsel isn't the same as a seat at the table. We need more women on the executive and sadly we've done an awful job of doing it democratically. So we need to take a different approach. (#116)*

*I would encourage our sisters to get more involved in the union. With a quick look, I see the ATU executive board is only men. I would want to encourage sisters to try and participate more, and maybe enforce a rule along the lines of having to have at least one executive board member be a female. I know this could be complicated because of voting, but what I've seen in my local sisters aren't nominated, it's a boys club. (#120)*

*Though not popular, Affirmative Action works. More women need to be appointed to pivotal positions, and locals need to be encouraged to empower women to run for executive positions. (#126)*

Developing a meaningful network of women's structures, such as local women's committees, women's leadership training, and a women's national caucus, can manifest positive change for women in ATU Canada. While the majority of women expressed interest in creating or reviving local women's committees, in many cases respondents were wary of the social repercussions of organizing women's-only programming.

*It would only segregate women making the problem worse. In order to fix this, we must all work together. Its not 1954. Grow up. (#17)*

*Not sure it will help because women's committees are usually viewed as just another committee with no power. (#32)*

*Its going to give us a stigma with some males and that is what we are trying to avoid. Why should we have a*

## Benefits of Women's Structures

**Excerpts from Parker and Foley's (2010) "Progress on Women's Equality within UK and Canadian Trade Unions: Do Women's Structures Make a Difference?"**

Source of mentorship and knowledge transfer within unions for new and existing female unionists.

Raises awareness among, politicizing and mobilizing women to challenge identity-based inequalities in their union.

Spaces where women can feel safe to develop their confidence and union skills.

Helps women to redress a personal sense of impotence in geographically-isolated and male-dominated locals.

Senior female officials help pave the way for women to more easily attend union education and other events (by encouraging their union to provide childcare allowances, special funding to enable women to attend union events).

*committee? Why do we have to spend time and energy when its a male problem?  
Maybe have a male committee to deal with the men who can't handle it???* (#95)

In conversation with women organizers and leaders from some of Canada's labour unions, it was apparent that despite the challenges encountered by local and national women committees, their impact in the union can be significant. Women's activism and leadership can foster Gender Equity. Education programming raises expectation around what women can do. Onboarding women through women's programming is a powerful way to get them on the leadership track.

TABLE 1  
WS Types in Canadian Unions

Union Level	WOMEN'S ...																					
	Committee			Conference			Course			Network		Virtual Network		Seminar / meeting			Section		Working / task / support group / caucus			
	Int'l	Nat	Other	Int'l	Nat	Other	Int'l	Nat	Other	Nat	Other	Nat	Other	Int'l	Nat	Other	Nat	Other	Int'l	Nat	Other	
<b>UNION</b>																						
CUPE		•*	••		•	•		•										•	•		•	•
CAW		•	•		•	•		•	••		•	•	••		•	•		•	••		••	••
USWA		•	•••		•			•	•			•	•		•	•					•	•
Teamsters (IBT)	•	•	•	•	•	•			•					•	•	•				•		•
SEIU		•	•		•			•	•						•	•		•	••		•	••
CUPW		•	•		•	•		•	••									•	••		•	••
IAMAW	•	•	••		•			•	•		•					••					•	
COPE			•																			
CFNU		•	•																			
Total	2	8	13 <sup>≥</sup>	1	7	4 <sup>≥</sup>	0	6	8 <sup>≥</sup>	0	2	3	3 <sup>≥</sup>	1	4	6 <sup>≥</sup>	4	7 <sup>≥</sup>	1	7	9 <sup>≥</sup>	

Source: First Canadian survey. Union n = 8, WS n ≥ 95, where Int'l = international, Nat = national, D = divisional.  
\* Double or triple dots in a cell indicate more than one WS at national or sub-national levels.

Source: Parker and Foley (2010)

Canadian labour unions are at various stages of advancement in their women's and equity strategies, but all recognize the value of opening spaces for women, educating women through formal training and mentorship programs, and providing dedicated support from the national level. Unions, regardless of trade, identify gender inequalities and are attempting to remedy them. ATU Canada can certainly follow in the lead of these organizations. ATU Canada has an opportunity to invest in women and to realize increased representation of female leaders for the benefit of all members.

## Recommendation E: Considerations

What capacity does ATU Canada have to support Local Women's Committees? Where can the Executive Board create equity-focused infrastructure that is sustainable? Is the timing right for ATU Canada to consider leadership succession planning with a focus on increasing diversity? How can ATU Canada empower women to take on organizational and leadership challenges?

## Conclusions

*I'm very thankful for this survey and initiative. The fact that there is even an attempt by the national to look more into this means a lot. There is this overwhelming sense of the union being a "boys club" (at least my local), and it is extremely frustrating. Having the opportunity to be heard and to volunteer to help out in anyway (even if I'm not needed) gives me the sense that things may change. (#120)*

The Gender Equity Survey was a valuable and meaningful first step in uncovering the issues and identifying the challenges to Gender Equity in ATU Canada workplaces and union structures. This Report is an awareness-raising tool, highlighting concerns and offering suggestions for how to move forward. While challenges were revealed, the overall tone of this initiative was one of optimism and hopefulness. Members appreciate the opportunity to engage in sustained dialogue about the topics that matter to them. There is, most certainly, opportunity for ongoing dialogue, progressive and informed problem-solving, and even action-research moving forward.

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**Participants across the country have engaged in the conversation and have expressed a desire to make the union a better, more inclusive one that benefits all its members equally.**

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## Thank you

Thank you to the women and allies of ATU Canada for entrusting me with your stories and knowledge throughout this initiative. Thank you for your vulnerability, your authenticity, and your courage.

Thank you to representatives of United Steel Workers, Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, and United Food and Commercial Workers for sharing resources and insights that help to inform the recommendations in this Report.

Madelin Burt-D'Agnillo



## Appendix

### *Appendix A: Gender Equity Survey Questions*

What are the top three issues facing our sisters in ATU workplaces today?

What changes would you implement, at a national level, if you were the president of ATU Canada to support our sisters?

What does it look like to have true gender parity in the ATU?

Aside from transit or workplace issues, what are other women's issues that require attention in your community?

Does your Local have a Women's Committee or a Gender Equity Strategy?

If yes, please provide details for charting purposes:

How many people do you have on your committee? Structure? Meeting schedule? Campaigns? Goals? Does your committee attend the ATU Women's Caucus? Please also supply contact information.

If no, are you interested in having a women's committee at your Local?

Would you be willing to speak confidentially with Madelin to discuss your priorities and goals for this initiative? If yes, please provide contact information.

Would you be willing to provide guidance and feedback about the creation of a Gender Equity strategy at the national level? If yes, please provide contact information.

Is there anything else? Comments or suggestions?

(Optional) Please provide your contact information.

*Appendix B: Annotated Bibliography*

Existing literature about women in unions in Canada provides context for some of the barriers to full Gender Equity that are present in ATU Canada. The broad field of scholarship is based in labour studies and feminist studies. It is important to understand the cultural and political landscape in which ATU Canada's gender strategy is emerging and gather lessons from organizations' and unions' programs which have already undergone evaluation by the academic community. We can look at studies from the community and academia in order to learn successes and failures in past and ongoing struggles.

Briskin, L. (2014). Leadership, Feminism, and Equality in Unions in Canada. *Labor Studies Journal*, 39 (3), 223 - 233.

Briskin's project brings together union women from dozens of Canadian unions to capture "the current practices, climate around, and attitudes to women, feminism, leadership, and equality" (223). This study is a wealth of insights, highlighting that union women are facing common rather than individual problems, including a culture of harassment and disrespect; women leaders are often silenced or dismissed and women's equality issues are sidelined by unions. This article, in conversation with the author's three companion articles written in *Our Times* magazine in 2013, provides guidance in addressing current practices and attitudes that are alienating to women as well as accounting for them in any potential programming facilitated by ATU Canada.

Parker, J. & Foley, J. (2010). Progress on Women's Equality within UK and Canadian Trade Unions: Do Women's Structures Make a Difference? *Industrial Relations*, 65 (2), 281 - 303.

This article claims that women's structures, broadly defined as women's conferences, committees, courses, meetings, caucuses and networks, "may act as change agents within the trade union setting" (281) and that they do, indeed, make a difference in trade unions. The authors found that radical anti-discrimination measures and affirmative action initiatives, including women's reserved seats in existing union structures, were powerful mechanisms to help women overcome systemic barriers in the union. The potential for positive outcomes of women's structures, especially those which reject a gender neutrality approach to workplace issues, are particularly encouraging in union cultures in which "women's formal progress has been slow and uneven" (282).

Proudman, C. (2018). Feminism and the Labour Left: a Perfect Political Union? *Renewal* 26 (1), 62 - 77.

This article specifically identifies the complexities of socialism and feminism, that "gender inequality has not always been at the heart of left politics" (63), and argues that they have the potential to be reconciled using an intersectional feminist approach. This article is important for

calling on legal theorists and feminist thinkers, Catherine McKinnon and Kimberle Crenshaw, whose thoughts on gender, labour, and oppression contribute significantly to current gender theory. Although this work focuses on the political program of Britain's Labour Party, the insights are relevant for ATU Canada in understanding the potential tensions of promoting labour unionism without regard to intersectional feminism.

Yates, C. (2009). Women are Key to Union Renewal: Lesson from the Canadian Labour Movement. In P. Kumar & C. Schenk (Eds.), *Paths to Union Renewal: Canadian Experience* (pp. 103-112). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

This chapter demonstrates that women are the “most likely new source of union membership in Canada” (103) despite often having fewer opportunities to join than men. It emphasizes that unions must apply a gender-lens to understanding women's position in unions and in the labour market generally in order to best serve this population and grow the strength of the union. From an organizing perspective, Yates' research demonstrates that there are distinctly gender-based tactics and strategies which can positively influence organizing outcomes in female-dominated workplaces—this is powerful information for ATU Canada to consider when planning organizing campaigns and mobilization actions.

## Appendix C: Resources Mentioned

### Article Series in “Our Times” Magazine

- Briskin, L., Genge, S., Mcphail, M., & Pollack, M. (2013). Making Time for Equality: Women as Leaders in the Canadian Labour Movement. *Our Times*, 32 (1), 30-37. <http://womenunions.apps01.yorku.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/OT1-pdf.pdf>
- Briskin, L., Genge, S., Mcphail, M., & Pollack, M. (2013). Under the Rainbow: Equality during Times of Austerity. *Our Times*, 32 (2), 39-44. <http://womenunions.apps01.yorku.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/OT2-final.pdf>
- Briskin, L., Genge, S., Mcphail, M., & Pollack, M. (2013). How to Revitalize Union Women’s Committees: Six Challenges and Six Strategies for Change. *Our Times*, 32 (3), 26- 35. <http://womenunions.apps01.yorku.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/OT3.pdf>

OFL Sister to Sister Report <http://ofl.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013.04.08-Report-OFL.Womens.Summit-Web.pdf>

### SFL Prairie School for Union Women: One of a Kind (Report)

[http://www.sfl.sk.ca/public/images/documents/Events/Annual%20Schools/PSUW\\_Report\\_-\\_March-2012.pdf](http://www.sfl.sk.ca/public/images/documents/Events/Annual%20Schools/PSUW_Report_-_March-2012.pdf)

### Women and Gender Equity: United Food and Commercial Workers’ Website

[http://www.ufcw.ca/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=46:women&catid=8:women&Itemid=142&lang=en](http://www.ufcw.ca/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=46:women&catid=8:women&Itemid=142&lang=en)

### Domestic Violence and the Workplace a Bargaining Guide (UFCW)

[http://www.ufcw.ca/templates/ufcwcanada/images/women/publications/Domestic-Violence-and-the-Workplace-A-Bargaining-Guide-EN\\_V4.pdf](http://www.ufcw.ca/templates/ufcwcanada/images/women/publications/Domestic-Violence-and-the-Workplace-A-Bargaining-Guide-EN_V4.pdf)

Bargaining for Equality Guide (CUPE) <https://cupe.ca/bargaining-equality-kit>

The Top 10 Things Unions Can Do Right Now to Address Sexual Harassment in the Workplace <https://medium.com/@FuturesWithoutViolence/top-10-things-unions-can-do-right-now-to-address-sexual-harassment-in-the-workplace-8a3904818959>

### Unifor’s Women’s Advocate Program

[https://www.unifor.org/sites/default/files/documents/document/unifor-wa-broch-eng\\_final\\_web.pdf](https://www.unifor.org/sites/default/files/documents/document/unifor-wa-broch-eng_final_web.pdf)



*Appendix D: Cindy Watson's Report*

Re: ATU Canada's Women - meeting of July 28, 2018

As promised, here's a quick follow up to my meeting with the ATU women on the last day of the ATU Canada conference in Newfoundland. We had a great turnout, with most of the women delegates showing up for the meeting. I'm happy to report that the overall tone of the meeting (with only one brief exception) was very positive, productive and hopeful. There was a shared desire to make the ATU the best it can be, and to find ways to more meaningfully allow full inclusion and participation of women both within the organization and for purposes of organizing and otherwise. If we are successful in this regard, the benefits to the ATU could be many, including greater depth for community organizing initiatives and campaigns, bargaining unit organizing drives and, of course, increased morale and solidarity within the ATU generally and ATU Canada in particular.

Given the tight timelines available that morning, we opted not to discuss specific items or experiences of concern, but rather, to look at the more 'high level' priorities shared by the group in attendance. While it was obvious at this conference that there was a high degree of concern by the women delegates about perceived lack of meaningful inclusion of women within the ATU generally, and ATU Canada particularly, it was agreed that at this stage, the 'high level' discussion would be more productive. This allowed us to focus on positive proactive steps for moving forward, rather than getting bogged down in past grievances/concerns. As noted above, this allowed for a creative brainstorm about necessary next steps. Obviously, in the limited time available, this was just a preliminary review of first steps. There was consensus that further communications would be necessary to come up with more fulsome plans for future initiatives. Overall though, this was a great start, with a great group of dedicated, committed ATU women who are excited about the prospect of opportunities to participate in new initiatives in this regard.

Some of the key agreed-upon takeaways were as follows:

1. Unanimous desire for the creation of a **women's caucus** through ATU Canada for ATU women across the country (run by and for ATU women).
2. Desire for **representation by ATU women on committees** for/about/or dealing with women's issues. There seemed to be a consensus that at the moment there are male delegates representing women on these committees and that it is not enough that these male delegates seek 'input' from the ATU women, but rather, that the women have representation to speak for themselves on issues which affect them.
3. There was a strong consensus that women need to be able to **choose their own representation** within the ATU. This concern arose as, notwithstanding the best intentions, at this conference there were a number of suggestions by male delegates about the prospect of appointing a woman in some capacity to represent the interests of women, and yet it seemed that the intention was to appoint a woman put forward by

male delegates without input by the women in attendance about their preferred choice. The women want to be able to choose their own 'chair' of the women's caucus, etc.

4. There was agreement that it would be a good idea to initiate a '**commission**' or **survey** of sorts, to canvass ATU women across Canada (in a completely anonymous and confidential process) to determine the current concerns and experiences of women within the ATU that may need to be addressed.
5. There was agreement that it would be beneficial to initiate and offer **education programs** (across Canada) for women on women's issues, and also for both genders on effective ways to work towards 'bridging the gender gap' (both within the organization and generally).
6. An idea was put forward (with positive response from the group) that some efforts should be made to encourage **ATU women in the trades** and to explore the barriers that currently exist for women in the trades and work to redress these.
7. There was a suggestion to explore possible **retreat(s)** at the Prairie School for Union Women (a facility located in Saskatchewan to develop leadership and solidarity among women workers) or other such facilities.

Thanks for the opportunity to speak with the women. I think it was a great idea to host the meeting that morning as tensions had been high and this allowed an opportunity to diffuse the tension and focus instead of positive opportunities to move forward. Recent studies consistently show that organizations fare better on all fronts when women are included in meaningful ways.

I am happy to help in any way that you would see fit. While I think the Women's Caucus should be run internally, by and for ATU women, I am happy to facilitate a kick-start of that process if you'd like (although I also think that can be achieved internally as well). Either way, as I indicated at the conference, I'm certainly happy to offer educational programs (per #5 above) for ATU women (I currently have programs on Women on Purpose, the Feminine Art of Negotiating on Purpose, Confidence Boosting, Stepping In To Your Feminine Power, Women Working Together) and also for men and women together (I currently have programs on Bridging the Gender Gap: Why it's important and how to do it). These programs can be offered in various forms, including short presentations, full or multi-day workshops and/or retreats. I'm also happy to facilitate a confidential commission/survey process (per #4 above) and to prepare a report for the Executive Board based on the findings if that is something of interest to the ATU. I believe this could be an important step to determining the source and scope of gender-based tension and concern within the organization so as to be able to redress the issues at the front end before they fester and become institutional problems. In my experience, early recognition and acknowledgement can go a long way to easing tension and can allow meaningful and effective targeted action plans.

I'm happy to discuss any of these points in further detail if you'd like.

In solidarity, Cindy Watson

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“Women should never accept the back of the bus behind men. It is one of our traditions that there should be balance between men and women. That doesn’t mean we should always be in front of men, but that there needs to be a balance. Women need to know that they can succeed.”

- Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond. First Aboriginal Canadian woman to serve on The Court of Queen's Bench for Saskatchewan.