



**OSSTF/FEESO Provincial Status of Women
Outreach Workshop (Toronto) Report**
Submitted by Theresa Watt and Jessica Harnish
D17 Simcoe
Spring 2010

Speaker: Shelley Carroll
Toronto City Councillor; former TDSB trustee

Shelley Carroll spoke passionately about the need for more women in local politics. With municipal elections approaching, she spoke of varying ways for women to become involved from participating at the school level, volunteering for campaigns, and running for positions. Carroll referred to her experiences when encouraging women to take risks in order to get results in a male dominated sector. She discussed the importance of grassroots organizing and campaigning. The Provincial SWC made a donation to the organization of Carroll's choice.

Workshop: *Viewing Member Issues through a Gender Equity Lens*
Margaret McPhail, Executive Assistant

The workshop demonstrated the need to approach varying issues in education from a variety of perspectives, including gender. Attendees were encouraged to analyze issues and how they may impact or disadvantage women differently, identify current issues and/or problems or gaps in the workplace, and to decide what changes are needed to provide greater equality and opportunity at a local level. Areas highlighted for review included the collective agreements, the bargaining process, grievance and arbitrations, pensions and benefits, and specifically health and safety in the workplace. Each attendee had the opportunity to provide feedback on issues related to their BU and District.

Workshop: *What's Your Next Step? Building Status of Women Locally*
Provincial Status of Women Committee

Barriers that limit local SWCs were identified, followed by discussing successful approaches that are working in other Districts. Some suggestions included:

- creating Dec. 6 Speaker's notes to provide to school to raise awareness around the event
- SWC sorts and distributes ribbons for White Ribbon campaign in December
- SWC representative to attend "New Member Nights" to recruit and inform membership
- creating own website, Facebook or Twitter account for SWC
- combining Human Rights Committee with Status of Women (increases interest, can plan events together, increases funding available)

- movie nights
- community involvement (e.g. *Take Back the Night*)
- survey membership
- include photos of SW committee members in report to AGM
- childcare/mileage compensation for committee members
- wellness workshops (e.g. *menopause, yoga, healing drumming, naturopathy*)
- information sessions/workshops on pregnancy/maternity/paternity leave, financial planning
- providing treats and/or wine at sessions/events
- providing scholarship for students, from the SWC
- organizing “*Pink Day*”

Attendees were encouraged to choose one issue or new event to implement, and strategically create an action plan for implementing it.

Workshop: *Beyond Meetings: Using Electronic Communications to Build your SW Network*

Kara Hiltz, D19

Varying mediums of electronic communication for members were discussed, but most of the emphasis was placed on encouraging District SWC to create their own websites for members. Templates currently provided by Provincial Office should be seen as optional, and are not officially ready for use as of yet. Time was given to experience using www.weebly.com, a free, online website builder. A website for D17 was created at www.swcdistrict17.weebly.com for use, if desired. Another website, under a different address, may be created if preferred. SWC members would be able to monitor and update their own page, and link it from their own District website.

The importance of creating an email database of interested members was highlighted. Caution should be used when emailing members; allowing for an “opt-out” of mailings options, as well as always using the BCC function.