

Women of Steel Building Equality



Working Women
Working Union



USW Local 2020 members Sandra Kuula, Jessica Emslie and Karen Clancy working at Xstrata metallurgical research centre in Sudbury.

About this publication:

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WOMEN OF STEEL

Building Equality

1.	<i>Membership Growth and Density</i>	6
2.	<i>Finding Unity in Diversity</i>	8
3.	<i>At the Bargaining Table</i>	10
4.	<i>Education and Mobilization</i>	13
5.	<i>Political and Legislative Activism</i>	16
6.	<i>What Women of Steel Can Do To Build Power</i>	22
7.	<i>Resources</i>	23

CONTENTS



Mother and baby celebrate International Women's Day at the USW Women's Day Breakfast in Toronto.

Introduction

Women's Struggle for Equity, Democracy and Social Justice

Women have struggled for equity, democracy and social justice over many decades. None of the progress made has come easily. Women – and the men who support our struggle for women's equality – have worked in our unions, in our communities, in politics and in our personal lives. Together we have made our voices heard. Together we have demanded an end to injustice.

Unions play a significant role in advancing women's equality. While women earn only 69% of men's earnings, women who belong to unions make 35%

more than non-unionized women. Unions give women better wages, better benefits and pensions and more access to flexible work arrangements to better deal with the challenges of balancing work and family responsibilities.

We are making our union better and stronger, ready to tackle the challenges we still face on the road to achieving equality for women.

The USW is building women's power in our union. We introduced the Women of Steel Development course to develop women leaders within our union. We have strong policies against harassment and to prevent violence against women. At the 2005 USW International Convention, the Steelworkers adopted a constitutional amendment requiring all local unions to establish women's committees. Women of Steel are proud of our achievements while recognizing we still face many challenges on the road to equality.

This guide looks at women's equality through five main areas important to union activists: membership growth, diversity, bargaining, education and legislative and political activism. What are our successes? Where are our challenges? Measuring our progress shows us where gains have been made and highlights where there is more work to do. Our successes motivate us to work on the challenges. A section on Moving Forward provides ideas for activists to involve more women and build our movement for women's equality.

Throughout our union we are educating, empowering and mobilizing sisters through Women of Steel initiatives. Together with our supportive brothers we are making our union better and stronger, ready to tackle the challenges we still face on the road to achieving equality for women.

About Women of Steel

Unions need women and women need unions. The USW is a leader in developing women activists and recognizing women's issues as workers' issues.

Women of Steel gives female workers the tools and skills we need to fight for and achieve equality and take leadership roles in our workplaces and in our union.

The USW has strong policies to challenge workplace harassment, prevent violence against women and balance work and family responsibilities. We have developed programs on human rights, pay equity and the Women of Steel Leadership Development Course.

Women of Steel: sisters building power and making a difference in workplaces, communities and in our union.

1. Membership Growth and Density

Union density is the level of unionization within an employer, industry or community. It is directly related to our members' ability to bargain and to participate effectively in political action. A lower percentage of unionization at any of these levels makes it a lot tougher for unions to bargain and to have an impact on the political climate.

Women can count among our successes the fact that a majority of women are now in the paid workforce in Canada and a majority of women are employed full-time. We still face challenges: women of colour are less likely to be in the workforce. They also earn less than other women on average.

Within the USW, the proportion of women members is growing. With roots in the steel industry, manufacturing and forestry, our membership in our early years in the 1940s was largely male. Through growth, diversification and mergers, today the USW's



Carol Landry, USW International Vice President At Large, being sworn into office by USW International President Leo W. Gerard.

members work across a broad range of industries. Women now make up 20% of the USW membership. In 2008, Canadian Steelworker Carol Landry became the first woman to serve on the USW's International Executive Board as International Vice President At Large. Landry is also a member of the Executive Committee of IndustriAll Global Union.

The United Steelworkers is committed to strategic growth through organizing the unorganized, pursuing mergers and entering into strategic alliances.

With self-employment, contract and part-time work on the rise, the USW is finding ways to give more workers a voice by offering our support and expertise to independent contractors and associations.

Seventy percent of part-time workers are women and one in four would rather be working full time.

The USW has entered into service agreements with an association of realtors in Quebec and two groups of taxi workers in Ontario. These agreements allow workers without a traditional employer-employee arrangement to improve their employment situation, gain confidence and a stronger voice at work and address unfairness with the backing of a strong partner, the USW.

Successes

Women in Canadian Unions

- Women's union membership is growing: in 1977 women made up 12% of unionized membership. Today, women make up more than 50% of Canada's 4.3 million union members.
- Women employees are more likely to be unionized than men. Of all Canadian female employees, 31% are unionized. Only 28% of all Canadian male employees are unionized.
- It wasn't always this way: until 2005, men were more likely to be unionized in Canada than women.
- Many of the USW's recent organizing victories are in female-prevalent workplaces: universities, credit unions, banks, call centres and manufacturing.

Challenges

Women's Gains Limited Mostly to Public Sector

- The public sector employs a higher proportion of women than the private sector: over 60% of public sector workers are women.
- Of all women employees, 30% are in the public sector. Only 19% of all male employees are in the public sector.
- The public sector is more unionized: 71% unionization, compared to only 16% in the private sector.
- Privatization threatens to erode these gains.
- Women workers are still far behind in the private sector, where one in five men are unionized, but only one in seven women belong to unions.



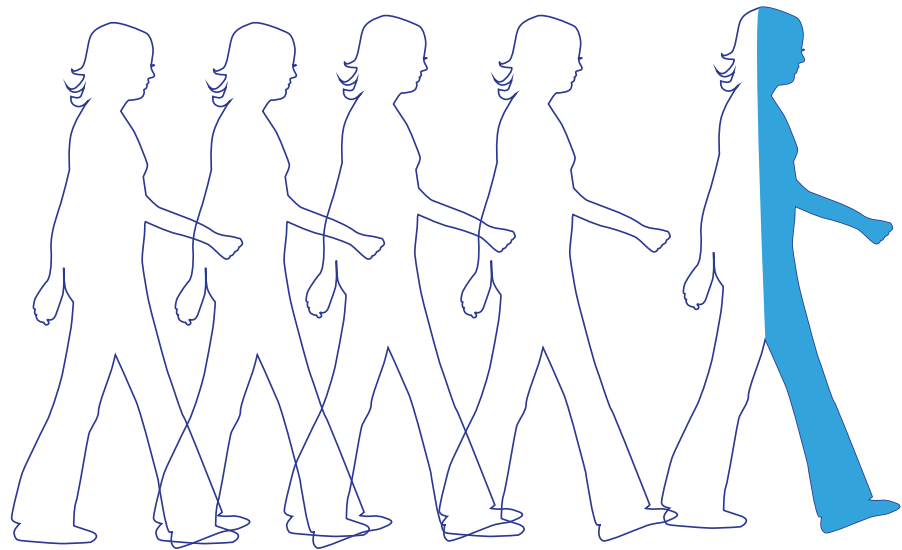
Large and Systematic Pay Differences Remain

- Women tend to be concentrated in lower-paid jobs such as clerical, sales or service-sector jobs.
- Three-quarters of young working women are in clerical, teaching or nursing occupations.
- The highest-paid occupations in which women make up at least half the workforce are in the public sector, in particular health care and educational services.
- In every sector, women on average are still paid less than men. Wage gap statistics are listed in section 3, At the Bargaining Table.

2. Finding Unity in Diversity

Recognizing diversity is key to building a strong movement. It means more than being aware of our differences. It means recognizing different women have different experiences and needs. It means each woman takes on the different struggles of women as their own. Young women, older women, women of colour, immigrant women, aboriginal women, lesbian women and women with disabilities all have distinct experiences and needs. A singular idea of what women need threatens to exclude these women.

In the private sector only one in seven women belong to a union.



Women and Occupations – percentage of women in:

Management positions = 37%

Senior management = 32%

Professional jobs in maths, sciences, engineering = 22%

Professional jobs in business and finance = 51%

Physicians = 36%

Directors at Canada's top 500 public and private companies = 13%

Younger women

Young workers are better educated than a generation ago, but are paid less and saddled with higher student debt. The gap between youth and adult wages has widened steadily. Real wages for young workers (under 25) have dropped by 20-25% from a generation ago. The youth unemployment rate is more than double the rate of the rest of the population. Young workers of colour experience even higher unemployment and longer unemployment, lower salaries and fewer promotions.

Older women

Women over 65 are twice as likely as men to have incomes below the low-income cutoffs.

Women with disabilities

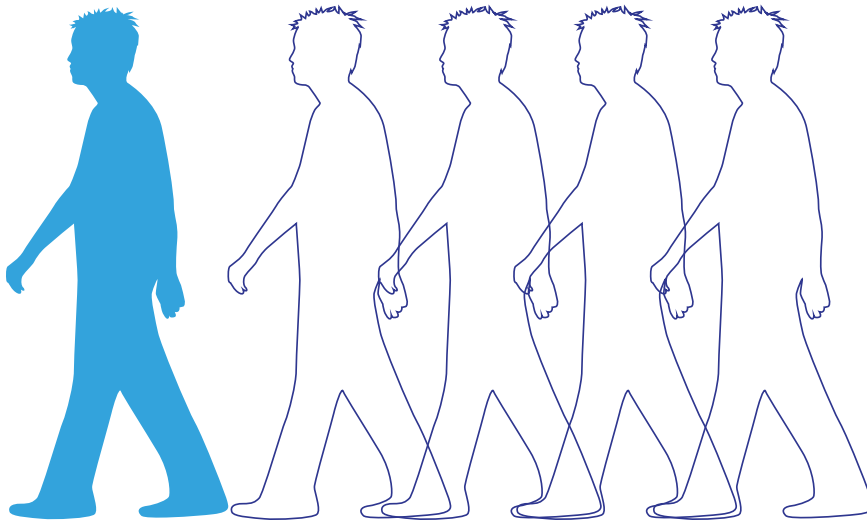
Women with disabilities are half as likely to be in the paid workforce as other women.

Women of colour

Visible minority women are more susceptible to unemployment, and they earn more than 20% less than other women on average. These women also face racial discrimination, which is a real barrier in hirings and promotions. They are more likely to be employed in precarious work and live in substandard housing. They are also more vulnerable to violence (racialized and sexualized).

Immigrant women

Immigrant women between the ages of 25-44 tend to have a higher level of education than Canadian-born women, yet their poverty rates are 5% higher. They confront barriers to gaining recognition of their prior learning, skills, training and experience. New immigrants face higher unemployment levels.



In the private sector one in five men belong to a union.

Women and Contingent Work

Contract, seasonal and temporary work is on the rise, and is now a reality for more than one in eight workers. These jobs typically come with little or no benefits or job security and poorer working conditions.

Contracting out is on the rise. Overall, women are over-represented in the groups of workers directly affected by contracting out on both sides of the equation – the stable jobs that are lost and the contract jobs that are created. As an example, consider the food service work that is contracted out by public institutions like hospitals or universities: women lose the stable positions and women are the ones in the contracted-out positions, at a lower wage, with fewer benefits and likely without the protection of a union.

- Since 1997, temporary workers earn on average 16% less per hour than workers with permanent jobs.
- 73% of women workers are in full-time jobs.
- 61% of casual workers, 55% of contract workers and 70% of part-time workers are women.
- Working women are still 2.5 times more likely than working men to be employed part-time. One in four women part-timers would rather be working full-time.

3. At the Bargaining Table

Being at the bargaining table is one of the places where a mobilized union membership has the most influence in its relationship with the employer. Collective bargaining is the basis of everything we do. It improves members' lives and provides workers access to everything the union does outside of bargaining. We negotiate our compensation, our working conditions and our rights, including the right to union leave for conferences, education courses, seminars, conventions and much more.

Does joining a union help women? You bet. Twenty-five years ago, only 22% of women workers were unionized. Today, 33% of women workers are union members.

For women, belonging to a union means better wages. Women in unions make 35% more than women without the benefit of union representation. This is almost three times the 13% union wage advantage for men. The wage gap, the difference between women's and men's wages, decreases for union workers. Unions are a leg up and an equalizer for women, though there is more work to do.

Successes Union Wage Advantage

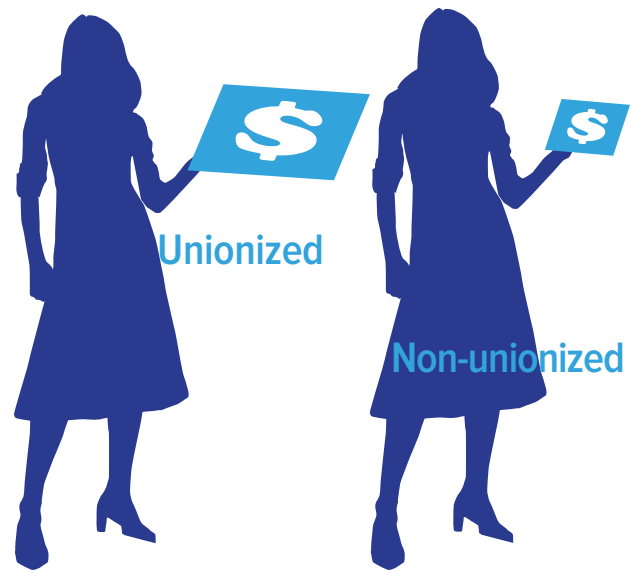
- Average hourly wage:

union	non-union	difference
\$25.24/hr	\$20.61/hr	22.5% or \$4.63/hr
- Union wage advantage: for women, on average, belonging to a union means 35% more in wages than non-union women workers. Women earn \$6.32 more per hour if they are union members. The union wage advantage for men is 13% or \$3.05 more per hour than men who are not members of a union.
- There is less of a male-female wage gap among unionized workers:
 - Average non-union male worker earns 26% more (or \$4.73 more per

hour) than average non-union female worker.

- Average union male worker earns 6% more (or \$1.46 more per hour) than average union female worker.

- Women in unions get better benefits: 69% of unionized women have a pension plan; only 27% of unorganized women do.



Unionized women workers earn 35% more in wages than non-union women workers.

- Union jobs come with dental plans: 72% of unionized women have a dental plan while only 38% of non-unionized women are covered.
- Unions mean more flexibility for women: 35% of union contracts have flex-time; more than 24% have paid leave for illness in the family and 53% have unpaid leave for personal reasons.
- At the bargaining table the Steelworkers negotiate to replace management's gender-biased job evaluation systems so that jobs held by women are fairly compensated, and then assist local union committees to ensure that job descriptions reflect the work that is actually done.
- Steelworkers have negotiated many employment equity plans, including special equity provisions for aboriginal persons in a number of mining sector agreements.

Challenges

The Wage Gap Still Exists

- On average women earn 87 cents for every dollar earned by a man. However, women also work less than men on average. They work 52 minutes for every hour worked by a man.
- Two-tier wage and benefit packages threaten women disproportionately. Two-tier is the introduction of lower benefits, wages or pensions for either new hires or workers with less seniority. On average, women, young workers and workers of colour have less seniority. They are over-represented in the groups most affected by two-tier erosion of collective agreements. More two-tier agreements means the wage gap will continue to grow.
- When added together, all of these factors mean that women's average annual earnings continue to trail those of men. Currently, women workers earn, on average, approximately 69% of what men earn in a year. A significant gender-based earnings gap still exists.
- 75% of people earning over \$100,000 a year are men. The number of visible minority women in this category is so small, the percentage rounds off to 0%.



USW and Pay Equity at the University of Toronto

In early 2011, USW Local 1998, administrative and technical staff at the University of Toronto, signed an historic pay equity agreement with the University of Toronto.

This agreement sought to correct long-standing systemic discrimination in the pay rates at the university, which saw many female-dominated jobs paying less than male-dominated jobs of equal value. Correcting these injustices was no easy task.

Jobs were evaluated through a complex process and assigned scores representing the 'value' of that job followed by a process to reach agreement with the university on each of the scores. The pay rates of male-dominated job classifications went through a statistical analysis to determine an overall 'male wage line.' If a female-dominated job of equal value was receiving compensation below that line, it was adjusted upwards, so that it matched the male wage line.

An 'internal equity' process made sure that jobs were paid according to their value, without reference to the gender of the employees in those positions.

This process resulted in compensation increases for thousands of members of the local in a multi-million dollar settlement.

The union was also able to negotiate retroactivity payments for past injustices. Most importantly, the union secured an agreement on a process to ensure that equity is maintained in the future – a process that will be administered by a joint committee.

After a decade of hard work and determination, USW Local 1998 was able to win important compensation gains that corrected gender-based systemic discrimination in the university's pay grids. The USW's achievements demonstrate how integral pay equity and labour unions are in the overall effort to achieve real equality for women's compensation.

Unions and the Working Poor

- 10% of women live with a low income.
- Getting work, especially in a union job, used to be a long-term ticket to the middle class. Increasingly, mobility is just not there for the poorest of workers. Today, the lowest-paid jobs are less an entry point to an income ladder and more a long-term trap. Women represent over 60% of minimum wage earners.
- Women have higher poverty rates than men, and the majority of the poor are women. Some of the main factors contributing to women's poverty rates are the presence of children, the tendency for 'women's work' to be devalued, cuts to social assistance and inadequate pensions.
- Poverty among workers is especially prevalent for single parents, the overwhelming majority of whom are women. Only 69% of single mothers are employed.
- One-third of all working women are in sales and service jobs.



Pensions

- Women account for half of the membership in registered pension plans.
- The Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) is provided to seniors with limited retirement income, which helps low-income senior women.
- Pensions still penalize women based on working years. Women on average work 75% of their potential work years. Men work on average 94% of theirs. This lower amount of working years affects the amount of the monthly pension benefit.
- Women live longer, which means women live on retirement incomes longer. Of people over 85, 70% are women.
- The average income for women over age 65 is 67% of men's income for the same age group.
- Only one in four non-union working women have a pension.

Maternity and Parental Leave

- All employees in Canada are entitled to leaves of absence from their jobs for pregnancy and when becoming a new parent. The precise rules vary by province and territory, but in general, when combined, these two leaves typically provide workers with a one-year leave from work.
- Eligible workers receive EI benefits for the duration of their maternity or parental leaves. These benefits typically replace 55% of income, to a maximum amount (currently \$468 per week).



4. Education and Mobilization

Union strength comes from an informed and active membership. Members are more likely to get involved when the union provides education and training. Efforts at member mobilization need to build respect, understanding and appreciation for diversity. In particular, this includes paying attention to the needs and interests of women members and members of colour. It means being aware of cultural differences, as well as having and enforcing anti-harassment and anti-discrimination policies.

Education and mobilization efforts should aim to build awareness, connect objectives to the broader goals of the organization and explain to members how their actions can help make a difference. Campaigns and issues are opportunities for education and mobilization. These efforts should recognize the role new technologies play in how members relate to learning and communicating.

The United Steelworkers has developed an Affirmative Action Guide to Local Union Elections to encourage and support workers from under-represented groups to run in union elections. This resource guide is available at www.usw.ca and is distributed to local unions.

- Unions have been successful in bargaining top-ups to this amount. Many collective agreements contain clauses whereby employers will top-up the EI payment so that the employee on leave will receive a greater percentage of their normal salary.
- Many collective agreements allow pregnant women reassignment to other work or the right to not work with harmful equipment such as video display terminals.

Work-Life Balance

- Women report higher levels of work-life conflict than men. Among mothers, 54% report work-life conflict; 47% of fathers report work-life conflict.
- Over half of unpaid work is done by women.
- Work-life conflict is not limited to parents. In 1999, a quarter of all Canadian employees cared for an elderly family member.
- Over the past decade, all Canadian jurisdictions have added a Compassionate Care Leave to their employment standards legislation. This leave entitles employees to a leave of eight weeks to care for a loved one who is dying or at risk of death. EI benefits will be paid for six weeks of the Compassionate Care Leave. The labour movement supports the introduction of such leaves into Canadian employment standards.
- Legislation in most jurisdictions includes the right to refuse overtime, a minimum rest period between shifts, a maximum number of consecutive days worked, limits on split shifts and a minimum notice of shift change.

Women tend to be eager and open to education opportunities. All of us can make these opportunities happen and encourage women to get involved.

Successes

Women and Education and Training

- Women are just as likely as men to attain a high school, college, or university diploma or degree.
- More women are attending university than ever before.
- 37% of women participate in job-related training, which is a higher rate than men.

Women and Union Education

- In 1990, the Steelworkers became the first union to develop a leadership program specifically for women, to be delivered by women: the Women of Steel Leadership Development Program. A special Women of Steel course is also available for visible minority women.
- The USW has delivered anti-harassment workplace training programs to over 40,000 front-line workers, supervisors and managers.

Women and International Solidarity

- A Women of Steel survey showed that more than three-quarters of women felt the union should be concerned about the effect of international trade deals on living standards, as well as the corporate exploitation of women and children in the global economy.
- For more than 25 years, Steelworkers have been bargaining contributions to the Steelworkers Humanity Fund into collective agreements. The fund supports international development projects, anti-poverty, education and social justice work with partners across Latin America and Africa. The fund also supports Canadian food banks and makes contributions to disaster relief efforts. Many of the programs include a gender-equality component.

Challenges

Obstacles to Women's Union Participation

- Although women are interested in educational opportunities, they may be shy about getting involved in their union. This can be for any number of reasons – a busy family life, seeing the union agenda as one that doesn't reflect women's goals and



Members of the Pacan community in Guatemala who received aid from the Steelworkers Humanity Fund following hurricane Agatha in 2010.

priorities, or the lack of a support network or female role models within the union. But one of the main reasons women aren't as involved in our union as they could be is because they aren't asked to participate.

- We need to tackle negative stereotypes about active women, build women's confidence in themselves and ensure that the atmosphere at meetings and events is respectful and welcoming.

- 51% of women report at least one instance of physical or sexual assault over their lifetime; 39% of women have been sexually assaulted over their lifetime.
- Globally, the sex trade generates about \$7 billion per year. Every year, 4 million women and girls are bought and sold into marriage, prostitution or slavery.



Women and Education

- Immigrant women and visible minority women in Canada are less likely than men to attain a university degree.
- Globally, two-thirds of the world's children without education are girls, and two-thirds of the world's illiterate are women.

Harassment and Discrimination

- 6.5% of workers report having experienced sexual harassment or discrimination at work.
- 9% of workers report having experienced racial harassment or discrimination at work.

Women and Violence

- Women are three times more likely to be killed by their spouse than men.
- 75% of victims in reported criminal harassment cases are women.
- The 569 shelters in Canada for abused women and children house more than 60,000 women for at least some period of time during the year.
- Globally, 80% of the world's refugees and displaced persons are women.

Canadian Women and Politics in Canada

- Women won the right to vote federally in Canada in 1919.



Agnes MacPhail

- Agnes MacPhail became the first woman elected as a Member of Parliament in 1921.
- Thérèse Casgrain became the first female leader of a political party in Canada in 1951 when she led the Quebec wing of the CCF, the Parti social démocratique du Québec.
- Audrey McLaughlin, leader of the New Democratic Party, was the first woman to win the leadership of a party with seats in the House of Commons in 1989.
- Kim Campbell was the first woman to be Prime Minister in Canada in 1993 when she won the leadership of the Progressive Conservatives.
- Number of women elected as Members of Parliament in 2011: 76 (25% of all seats).

5. Political and Legislative Activism

Working with our political partners, the USW has helped achieve legislation and employment standards in equal pay, anti-harassment protection and employment equity provisions. More women are running for political office and getting involved in the union in an effort to make change.

We need politicians on our side more than ever before. Workers' rights are under attack by right-wing politicians, their corporate allies and conservative think tanks. Governments are undermining social standards through underfunding, privatization, deregulation and by allowing foreign corporations to buy out and shutter or sell off

We need more women and progressive politicians in office. Getting women involved in our union is the first step to making positive change.

Canadian-owned operations and resources.

In the wake of the economic crisis, unions are under attack and governments are imposing stand-pat agreements that mean workers

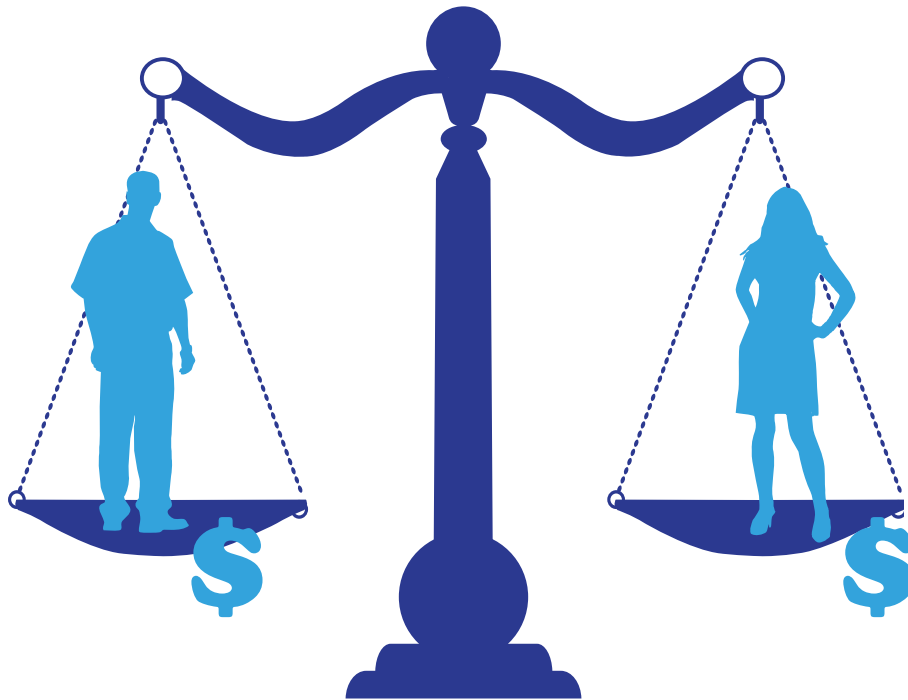
fall behind. Bankruptcy protection laws are being abused in order to undo the gains of collective bargaining and enforcement of minimum standards is being ignored or downloaded onto unions.

Where workers have pensions, employers are pushing workers to give up stable defined-benefit pension plans for unpredictable defined-contribution plans, putting retirement security at an even greater risk.

For women, concessions in wages and pensions are a setback on the road to equality. For a group of workers trying to close a persistent gap, cuts and rollbacks undo the gains we've struggled to achieve.

The political arena is where many gains for women have been made and where we need to be working with our allies to protect our rights and push harder for equality. Through Women of Steel, more women are making the link between unions and politics and politics and women's rights. We need more women and progressive politicians in office. Getting women involved in our union is the first step to making positive change.

The goal of PAY EQUITY...



...is to eliminate gender-based discrimination in wages.

Successes

Progressive Legislation and Rights

- In 1969, birth control was decriminalized in Canada.
- The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms became law in 1982, including equality provisions which have become powerful tools for the women's movement to challenge discriminatory legislation in a number of areas including pay equity, employment opportunity, family law, sexual assault, sexual harassment, sexual orientation, pregnancy discrimination, fair pensions and violence against women.
- In 1988, the Supreme Court removed abortion from the *Criminal Code of Canada* because it violated the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, infringing on a woman's right to "life, liberty and security of person." Abortion is now a medical procedure governed by provincial and medical regulations.
- Between 1951 and 1975, Canadian jurisdictions enacted laws ensuring equal pay for equal work. This meant that employers could no longer pay different 'male rates' or 'female rates' for the same job.
- Gender-based wage discrimination does not only exist within the same jobs, it may also exist between jobs. In the past few decades, pay equity legislation has been passed in a number of Canadian jurisdictions (federal, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Quebec, Prince Edward Island). Pay equity mandates equal pay not just for equal work (the same job), but by looking more broadly at work of equal value (comparing different jobs). Under pay equity, the 'value' of a female-dominated job is evaluated, and if its pay rate is found to be lagging behind a male-dominated job of equal value, the female-dominated job will receive a wage adjustment upwards. Pay equity seeks to eliminate systemic gender-based compensation discrimination at work. Labour

unions are strong advocates of pay equity legislation and have won many important cases before pay equity tribunals.

- The Supreme Court recognized same-sex marriages in 2004 and adopted legislation in 2005.
- Women's rights are protected internationally by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Further protections are provided through international conventions such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Women of Steel Political Activism

The USW's Women of Steel program is increasing women's participation in our union. Women of Steel started with the Women of Steel Leadership Development course and now includes conferences,

resources, networks, women's committees and other efforts to mobilize women members to become active in the USW. As a result of Women of Steel, more sisters are engaged in our union and our communities:

- More women hold executive positions in local unions and are involved in committees.
- The USW has more women's committees and more active women's committees, taking on issue campaigns and getting involved in political action.
- Sisters are taking part and running for area council and labour council executive positions.
- More women are course instructors and designers.
- An increasing number of women are active in lobbying and organizing and working in political election campaigns.



I do feel that women, and women of colour in particular, have to work that much harder to prove ourselves and be heard in Parliament. I absolutely love being a Member of Parliament, and I know how hard it is to get here.

Rathika Sitsabaiesan

*New Democrat Member of Parliament
Scarborough–Rouge River*

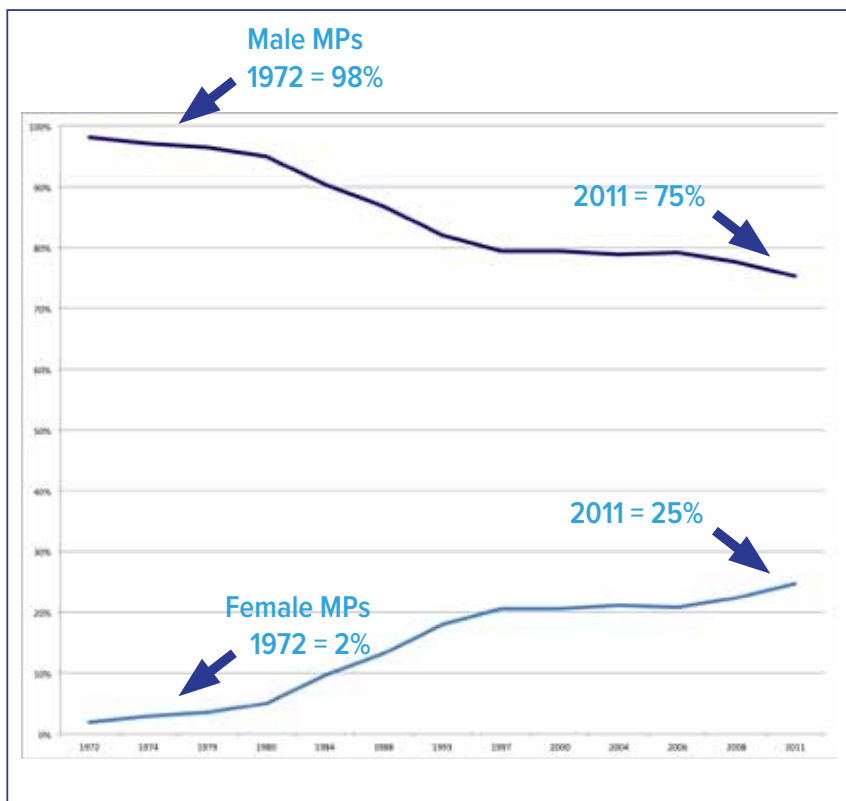
- USW women are running as candidates municipally, provincially and federally
- USW women are attending labour college and leadership development training to equip themselves to be our future leaders.
- Women of Steel are active on issues such as childcare, violence prevention, human rights, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender rights, immigration, welfare, post-secondary education, medicare, social housing, security, pay equity, pensions, labour law reform, steel trade and health and safety.
- About 20% of USW elected officers are women.

Challenges

Women and Political Representation

- Around the world, 11% of elected politicians are women. In Canada, 25% of Members of Parliament are women.

Women in Parliament: Better But Still Not Equal



The Economic Crisis

The financial crisis, the ensuing recession and the ongoing recovery have affected women in different ways around the world. The crisis and recession were devastating to global manufacturing, construction and trade.

In emerging market economies, women make up the bulk of the jobs in the manufacturing sector making products for export. In these countries, women suffered disproportionately with the downturn in manufacturing.

The impact on women in the Western world has been different, as manufacturing jobs in the West tend to be male-dominated. At the start of the recession men suffered more job losses than women as manufacturing was cut back. However, it was not long before government stimulus spending led the manufacturing sector to add jobs. As economies gradually moved out of recession and into recovery, governments ended their stimulus spending and turned to austerity and cutbacks in public spending in hopes of balancing their deficits.

These cutbacks have targeted public sector workers, who have faced job cuts and wage restraint. With public sector jobs so heavily dominated by women in Canada and the U.S., the recession has now exerted its toll on all workers. The recent targeting of public sector workers is a further challenge to female workers' ongoing efforts to achieve employment equality with men.





One child in five has a regulated childcare space.

Childcare

- 70% of mothers with children under six are in the paid workforce. Of all the family types studied by Statistics Canada, “female lone-parent” families had the lowest income.
- There are only enough regulated childcare spaces for 20% of children in Canada.
- One in four regulated childcare spaces is for-profit. The average funding allocation per childcare space: \$3,560.
- Stephen Harper’s minority government cancelled the new national childcare program in 2006, a program the Liberal government had promised during 13 years in power but never fully delivered. The Conservative government scrapped what little work the Liberals had done in favour of the Universal Childcare Benefit which pays only \$100 a month to parents for each child under the age of six. This benefit does not begin to cover the cost of childcare, especially for female lone-parent families.
- About 96% of childcare workers are women. Their average annual full-time income in 2006 was just \$25,100.

- 40% of new parents do not take maternity leave because they can not afford to be away from their jobs.

Child Poverty

- About one in 10 Canadian children live in poverty.
- In the early 1990s, child poverty reached its highest level in Canada when 21% of Canada’s children lived in poverty. Since then, the child poverty rate has been declining.
- Child poverty rates are double for children who are aboriginal, immigrants or from a visible minority.
- One in three children in poverty had at least one parent who worked full time, year-round.
- In a UNICEF study measuring equality of children’s material well-being, Canada still ranks below 16 of the 24 rich OECD countries studied. There is more inequality among children in Canada than in most other rich countries.

Women and Health

- Women in Canada have, on average, 1.7 children each. The fertility rate has steadily declined throughout the twentieth century and has flattened out since 1980. To keep a population stable, a fertility rate of 2.1 children for each woman is needed. Canada's population continues to grow, however, due to immigration.
- A woman dies from complications in childbirth every minute. Globally, 600,000 women die yearly of preventable causes related to pregnancy; 100,000 more die from unsafe abortions; 300 million women in developing countries have no access to contraception.
- Canada has an infant mortality rate of approximately five infant deaths per 1,000 live births. This rate has decreased to half of what it was 30 years ago.
- 27% of positive HIV test reports are for women.

- More women than men live with a disability. The rate among aboriginal women is double that of the national average.
- The privatization of health care hurts women by undoing the gains of unionized women, reducing the quality of care and increasing the unpaid work of women.
- Two-thirds of home care recipients are women; three-quarters of long-term care patients are women.
- Women provide 75% of the unpaid health care in Canada, and would likely provide a majority of the increased need for unpaid work due to health care privatization.

Social Housing

- Given the higher incidence of low incomes and poverty among women, particularly lone-parent women, social housing is a women's issue.



Manon Bertrand, a member of USW Local 1004, working at Asten Johnson in Valleyfield, Quebec.



Joyce Delaronde-Cable, a delegate from USW Local 7106, speaking at the microphone at the USW National Policy Conference.

- For both renters and owners, the cost of housing has increased faster than inflation over the past decade. There is a severe shortage of affordable housing and social housing in Canada.
- A common measure of housing affordability is the shelter-to-income cost ratio, which to remain affordable should be below 30% of income. About 25% of all Canadian households spend more than 30% of their income on housing. Forty per cent of all renters spent in excess of 30%.
- Good housing is correlated with a wide variety of positive social, health and economic outcomes, yet politicians in power have yet to pay serious attention to the need for an affordable housing strategy.

6. What Women of Steel Can Do To Build Power

There are many things Women of Steel can do to move forward and build power. Even the smallest gesture like inviting a sister to attend a meeting for the first time can start the ball rolling.

With our commitment to equality and fairness, women are joining the USW in increasing numbers from the health care, office, social service and university sectors. In addition, the USW is proud to have so many female members working in traditionally male jobs and male-dominated industries.

All of us in the labour movement can help continue building our union and Women of Steel by reaching out to sisters in our unions and communities.

- Start a women's committee in your local.
- Raise women's issues in union meetings.

- Invite a speaker to talk about:
 - changes in the workplace and the economy
 - anti-harassment and violence prevention
 - pressing social issues
 - the importance of work-life balance
- Recruit more women organizers.
- Identify where women work in your workplace. Is there a glass ceiling? Look for hiring and training opportunities.
- Negotiate:
 - pay equity
 - anti-harassment training and policies
 - pensions and pension improvements
 - contributions to the Steelworkers Humanity Fund
- Lobby for:
 - proactive pay and employment equity
 - better pay and employment legislation
 - strong public services
 - shelters for victims of violence
 - the protection of public health care
- Organize rallies and join activities in support of progressive legislation.
- Recruit more women into courses. Sign up in pairs. Help identify and break down barriers to the participation of women.
- Identify and encourage women to be involved in the health and safety committee.
- Survey your membership about obstacles to participation, work-life conflict and bargaining priorities.
- Support women to seek nomination and election to leadership positions.
- Reach out to community and global partners.
- Celebrate our diversity.
- Get involved politically and join the NDP.
- Encourage women to run for elected positions municipally, provincially and federally.

To-do list

1. Start women's committee
2. Raise women's issues @ local meetings
3. Invite speakers to talk about issues that matter to women
4. Recruit more women organizers
5. Find hiring and training opportunities for women
6. Negotiate pay equity, anti-harassment policies
7. Contribute to Humanity fund
8. Get politically active - start lobbying, join/organize rallies

7. Resources

Labour

Canadian Labour Congress – Women’s Issues
www.canadianlabour.ca/human-rights-equality/women

International Labour Organization
www.ilo.org/global/topics/equality-and-discrimination

United Steelworkers – International Women of Steel
www.usw.org/action_center/women_of_steel

Government

Status of Women Canada
www.swc-cfc.gc.ca

International Equality

Feminist Majority Foundation
www.feminist.org

Politics

Equal Voice – Electing Women in Canada
www.equalvoice.ca

Poverty

Campaign 2000
www.campaign2000.ca

Research

Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women
www.criaw-icref.ca

Violence Prevention

Springtide Resources
Ending Violence Against Women
www.springtideresources.org

Wages

Equal Pay Coalition
www.equalpaycoalition.org

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Ken Neumann, National Director
United Steelworkers

234 Eglinton Ave. E., 8th floor
Toronto, ON
M4P 1K7

416-487-1571
www.usw.ca

