

OPSEU Provincial Women's Committee

Why Women's Committees?

To gain equality and achieve their goals, women must work with and through their unions. History demonstrates that by organizing into unions, working people have achieved better wages, working conditions, benefits, job security, human rights and equity protection.

The OPSEU Constitution guarantees the foundation - A Provincial Women's Committee (PWC). Each union local is also encouraged to set up an active women's committee (LWC). Its job is to highlight issues of particular concern to female OPSEU members.

No doubt about it, participating in union activities is the first step toward building women's rights in the workplace and our communities.

What is the Provincial Women's Committee?

Delegates in each region elect a representative to serve on this committee. The PWC advises the OPSEU Executive Board on women's issues and is an advocate for women within the union. It trains advisors, mediators and investigators to enforce the union's policy against harassment and discrimination. The PWC also initiates campaigns in the workplace and community for women's rights.

The PWC does not sit at the negotiation table but is available to work with the bargaining teams on contract language regarding equity issues. Equality for women and other equity-seeking groups is a central thrust of all OPSEU programmes, both in the workplace and our communities.

What a local women's committee can do:

- Encourage more women to participate in union activities.
- Inform members about OPSEU's policy against Harassment and Discrimination.
- Seek out sisters who will run as stewards and officers
- Identify and dissolve the barriers that block sisters from participating. This means everyone, including sisters of colour, First Nations sisters, lesbian sisters, disabled sisters and those with families.
- Work with the PWC rep in the region.
- Organize educationals at lunch or after work on issues like "bargaining for a family friendly workplace" or health and safety.
- Study the collective agreement to see if there are clauses that discriminate against women and/or other equity-seeking groups.
- Talk with your co-workers and develop contract clauses to present at demand-setting meetings.
- Ask your female co-workers what they would like to see added to the collective agreement.
- Propose measures to end discrimination in hiring and advancement at work.
- Examine your wage and classification system to see if it is fair.
- Carry out research, in cooperation with your local's health and safety committee, to uncover any hidden health hazards in your workplace.
- Examine the benefits in your collective agreement to ensure there is no discrimination against women.
- Discuss the adequacy of maternity, parental and adoptive leave provisions.
- Conduct a study of your members' childcare needs.
- Explore what protection and benefits exist for part-time workers.
- Identify and inform your members of community resources for victims of violence.
- Support women in other workplaces and other unions.
- Develop strategies to encourage your community to support public services.

URL: <http://www.opseu.org/committees/pwcabout.htm>

Direct OPSEU site: <http://www.opseu.org>