



AWHsome

Newsletter of Advancement of Women Halton

July 2023, Issue # 3

AWH is a collaborative of twenty women's groups and social agencies that advocate and amplify the voice of women. The monthly meetings give us an opportunity to hear about the activities and challenges of member organizations. This newsletter is another avenue for readers to learn about AWH member activities.



A Message from the Chair - Anne Douglas

The June AWH meeting was the culmination of advocacy work for 2022-23.

June is a celebratory month. Students graduate with a full year of in-person classes after three years of disruption. In addition, thousands of people came out to support the LGBT+ community and celebrated Pride Month.

June is also Indigenous History Month to celebrate the rich heritage of the Indigenous community. It is also a time to understand the implications of the Canadian colonial history as part of reconciliation with the Indigenous community.

June 22 is the anniversary of the Government of Canada's apology to Chinese Canadians for the Head Tax and Exclusion Act. The apology acknowledges a dark Canadian history of mistreatment of the early Chinese workers and a move towards reconciliation with the Chinese community.

The Federal parliament passed two pieces of legislation in June. AWH and partners advocated for the legislation for years.

Bill C-35 Canada Early Learning and Child Care Act for \$10 a day care passed. Will AWH advocate for a significant pay increases to retain staff and increase the number of spots available to families?

Bill C-22 Disability Benefit Act, received royal assent. The legislation is designed to offer federal income support for low-income, working-age people with disabilities, but won't come into force for about a year. The Act is designed to be in addition to the provincial funding. Negotiations are ongoing. Advocacy with the province will continue.

Thank you to AWH members who have been advocating to enhance the rights of women. Follow indigenous knowledge and get out on the land this summer and enjoy the healing properties of nature.

Come back September 21 to continue to advocate for women.

Thankyou to all AWH members for all your activities during a very busy Spring!



We helped Grandmothers Voice support families evacuated from Fort Albany



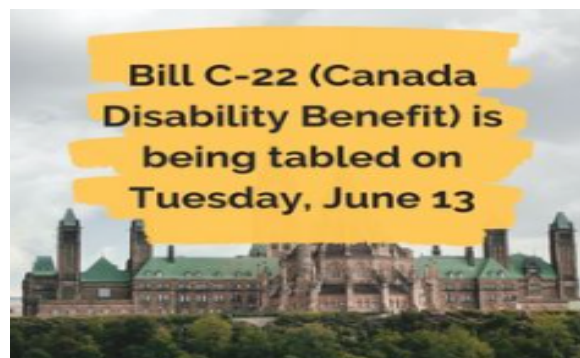
We supported GASP at the Hands off the Greenbelt rally. They made it to the pages of Chatelaine magazine <https://chatelaine.com/living/climate-activist-grandmothers/>



We supported the Ontario Health Coalition against privatization of healthcare.



We rallied with union members in Toronto and Hamilton on June 3rd to say Enough is Enough!



We wrote to Ministers and MPs and Senators urging them to prioritise Bill C-22 Canada Disability Benefit - and they rallied round and did just that.



We urged all parties to support Minister Gould's Bill C-35 Early Learning and Childcare, and they did. All that is needed now is Senate confirmation.
We are almost there, after 50 years!



We cheered when the Provincial Government agreed that the way to attract and retain child care workers was by paying them a living wage. We look forward to hearing more.



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau was joined by Minister Karina Gould, June 28th 2023 to announce that the \$625 million federal Early Learning and Child Care infrastructure fund promised in the 2022 federal budget will start to flow funds to provinces and provinces to help defray the capital costs of expanding not-for-profit and public child care across the country.

We attended Minister Gould's Seniors Symposium on June 28 at Burlington Central library and met with Federal Minister of Seniors, the Hon. Kamal Khera and Dr. Parminder Raina, from the McMaster Institute for Research on Aging.



Minister Khera

Claudia writes, "RWTO/OREO Burloak branch has been hunting and gathering gently used purses in very good condition to donate to women who are transitioning from homelessness, refugee status, spousal abuse or from prison. They are filled with essential personal care items (and a few non essentials!) It is one way for women to support other women in our community to demonstrate our motto of Caring, Sharing and Having Fun.

In 2023 RWTO Burloak supplied 38 filled handbags. Our branch was nominated for the Feather In your Hat award and won a prize for this initiative. "



The Purse Project Network

Earlier this year, RTOERO awarded a total of \$213,000 to six creative, results-based organizations working in the field of geriatrics research and/or seniors health & wellbeing. We are pleased to announce that one of these organizations is in Halton.

The Sheridan Centre for Elder Research, in collaboration with Artfull Enrichment Inc, was awarded \$50,000 for a very exciting project called *Using visual arts to address social isolation in older adults*.

On June 29 AWH supported the Council of Canadians at their on-line debriefing “Public Pharmacare Now! “ https://canadians.org/analysis/pharmacare-will-save-us-a-s-load/?utm_source=Council+of+Canadians&utm_campaign=a76859bfff-2023-06-28-E-News&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_f477a42a0b-a76859bfff-384247480



The HEDR conference on June 8th was held at the conference Centre at Sheridan College. The day included an Indigenous Keynote speaker and break-out sessions addressing many other topics, as well as honouring pride month with a drag performance during the lunch time



Ontario Nurses Association Representative
Kieran Maxwell With Ancilla Ho-Young



Elizabeth Espinosa presented on leadership in EDI

All our members were campaigning actively on many issues. I hope that everyone will relax and enjoy the summer and we will meet again in the fall to carry on the great work!

May your Canada Day be filled with fun, laughter and moments that reflect on how fortunate we are to call Canada home

A few words from Oakville-North Burlington MP Pam Damoff
Long-time ally and friend of AWH



In just 15 weeks, the House passed 15 historic bills that will help make life more affordable, safeguard our environment, protect the public safety of Canadians, and advance our commitment to reconciliation.

We've accomplished a lot as a collective working to enhance public safety, particularly with keeping our communities safe from gun violence (Bill C-21), and investments right here in Halton through the Building Safer Communities Fund.

As a government we were proudly able to introduce legislation that establishes the Canada Disability Benefit (Bill C-22) to reduce poverty and support the financial security of working persons with disabilities.

Another historic milestone made was our commitment to ensuring families across Canada have access to affordable, inclusive and high quality early learning and childcare (Bill C-35). While agreements have been reached with all provinces and territories, this legislation enshrines into law our commitment to early learning and childcare.

Key measures in the Budget Implementation Act include:

- **Delivered targeted relief** by helping Canadians manage the cost of living, including through doubling the GST tax credit to put additional funds in the pockets of vulnerable Canadians. We also delivered a top-up to the Canada Housing Benefit of \$500 to make life more affordable and introduced the new **Grocery Rebate** of up to \$467 for a family of four, which will be delivered on July 5! We have proudly continued to **make child care affordable** – fees have at least been cut in half on average across the country, and six provinces and territories have already reached \$10-a-day child care.
- **Improved health care for Canadians** by reaching agreements with provinces and territories on a path forward to improve access to family health care, reduce backlogs, increase the number of health professionals, and enhance mental health care services. Launching the Canada Dental Benefit for children under 12 that has already helped over 300,000 children go to the dentist, and made life more affordable for their parents.
- **Reaffirmed our commitment to reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples** by launching the Action Plan to achieve the objectives of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, laying out a roadmap to build a better future for Indigenous Peoples across Canada.

I am proud to represent you in Ottawa and I am looking forward to spending time in the community this summer and returning to a fruitful fall session!

Education on Democracy

The Committee, in its efforts to educate on democracy, asks: How do we best engage people in a deep conversation to understand the roots of our political, economic, social, and environmental malaise and circumstance? How do these circumstances influence the scale of our democratic deficit? How do we move from an understanding of these circumstances to collective action for change? How do we build the future through deep conversations, evidence-based dialogue leading to co-designed solutions with local community actors?

- *What is democracy and how is democracy being undermined?
- *What is the relationship between inequality and growing authoritarianism?
- *What is the relationship between growing inequality, human suffering ie food insecurity, protest, and increased police presence, and democratic decline?
- *What is the relationship of AI and democracy?
- *What is the impact on democracy of the province's consultative process or lack of it underlying their legislative agenda on democracy? (Rapid passing of Bill 124, Bill 60, and now Bill 97)
- *How does the theft of public goods affect democracy?

Enough is Enough Campaign

The Committee actively supported the OFL campaign joining the June 3rd protest in Toronto and Hamilton. The demonstrations mobilized thousands of people who were fed up with wages that aren't keeping up, sky-high housing costs, attacks on our health care system, Ford's dismal

environmental record, and the rise of hate. All issues of concern to AWH. The Committee was concerned about the lack of media coverage of the many voices raised against the policies of the Ford government. We will continue to participate in post campaign activities.

AWH Response to the Halton Strategic Business Plan 2023

The Committee prepared a document responding to the Plan. In this document, we raise a series of questions about the lack of citizen participation in the planning and programs for the 2023 -2026 period. We were also confounded by the lack of data and evidence driving decisions. We will be following up with the Region in search of answers to our concerns.

System of Social Protection

The Committee has supported AWH efforts to develop a modern system of social protection and thereby legislate into law the following:

- Bill C-35, An Act respecting early learning and child care in Canada, which as of this date is at 2nd reading in the Senate.
- Bill C-22, An Act to reduce poverty and to support the financial security of persons with disabilities by establishing the Canada Disability Benefit Act, which on June 22nd, 2023 received royal assent. It will come into force no later than one year after regulations have been developed.

Women Talking

The Streaming of the movie *Women Talking* has been rescheduled for the fall.

“...we also need to think about how democracy itself will evolve... Fortunately, a quiet revolution is underway. Many democratic societies have begun experimenting with new approaches that dramatically expand the range of opportunities available for people to play a meaningful role in shaping their societies. These countries are creating new roles for citizens to fill, which give them a real voice in shaping the policies that affect their lives.”

(Peter MacLeod and Marjan Ehsassi)

Health Care



Ann Douglas, Chondrena Viera-Martin, Jody Harbour, Judy Rivard, Teri Shaw, Claudia Stewart, Ancilla Ho-Young, Pat Froio, Daniela Jansson.

PRIVATE EQUITY'S PATH OF DESTRUCTION IN HEALTH CARE CONTINUES TO SPREAD

Eagan Kemp March 21, 2023

<https://www.citizen.org/wp-content/uploads/Public-Citizen-Private-Equitys-Path-of-Destruction.pdf>

Private equity firms have contributed to driving up the cost of medical services in the US and are actively acquiring medical services in Canada. Private equity firms are buying up medical care clinics. Private equity purchases are typically financed with debt that is immediately transferred onto the books of the businesses acquired, thus leaving the acquired entities with debt burdens to manage. The acquired business is required to either cut costs, cut corners or upsell to cover the debt burden. Private equity succeed by finding niches within the health care system that are insufficiently regulated or overseen and exploit them for maximum profit. The article goes through a number of medical specialties and the impact.

Private LTC homes pre covid had a 10% **higher mortality rate** compared to not for profit homes. U.S. Government Accountability Office identified the need to strengthen oversight of nursing homes which are often inadequately staffed.

Staffing agencies have been charging exorbitant fees to provide staff. Quebec has introduced legislation to cap agency fees.

Fertility clinics are lower risk for government oversight than some other medical specialties.

Dermatology rush to recommend surgery as relying on “pre- pre- pre- cancer” diagnoses.

Ontario Health Coalition: On May 26 & 27 The Ontario Health Coalition, supported by the Halton group, held a referendum re public health care vs for-profit health care. About 380,000 voted re privatization of hospitals/new surgeries: 98% of voted against the motion. Results were presented to the legislature the end of May, with very little media coverage. The organization considered next steps, and

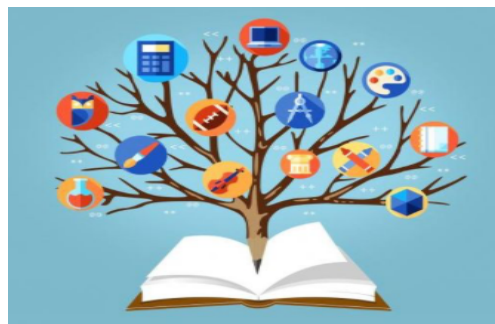
At noon September 25th they plan a mass protest at Queen's Park

Royal Victoria Hospital (Barrie): The Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre (RVH) announced a new pilot project booking system for some Emergency Department (ED) visits. Effective Thursday, June 1, the public can now book a same-day or next-day arrival time in the ED to be assessed and treated for minor injuries to a limb.

NURSING RATIOS: British Columbia has outlined a plan to become the first province to adopt minimum nurse-to-patient ratios and better retain and recruit nurses, all backed by \$750-million in funding over three years.

Bill-102, the Strengthening Safety and Modernizing Justice Act, 2023, was passed by the Ontario Legislature, resulting in the Keira's Law Motion becoming the law of Ontario. This means that Ontario's Provincial Court Judges and Justices of the Peace will now be required to undergo education and training on intimate partner violence and coercive control. A progress report will also be provided annually to the Attorney General.

Education and Child Care



Bonnie Brown, Peggy Russell, Jody Harbour, Judy Moore, Marianne Waraich, Claudia Stewart, Elizabeth Rennie

The Education Committee held its first meeting in June. Bill 98 had just passed at Queen's Park and the Peel Board of Education had announced the layoff of 500 teachers. Over the summer, our members are going to study the Bill, research why the teachers' unions did not mount a serious protest to it, secure a speaker for the October meeting and begin to look at the financial viability of the post-secondary sector. In September we will meet on Wednesday the 13th.

Income Security



*Tina Agrell, Joey Edwardh, Maureen Weinberger,
Gayle Kabbash, Peggy Russell, Teri Shaw, Angela Chaves*

Childcare legislation.

Federal: Bill C-35 the amended bill accepted by 325 Yeas to 0 Nays. Yesss! Adopted by the House June 19, 2023. Now we just need the Senate's approval and the act will finally be enshrined after 50 years.

Provincial: Improving pay for Ontario childcare staff. Teri forwarded details on the June 20th Day of Action for sharing with AWH membership.

Bill C 22 Disability Benefit received Royal Assent on June 22 . Minister Qualtrough says the next stage will be extensive consultation, to finalise the regulations. Thank you to the hard work of Minister Carla Qualtrough, and to MP Bonita Zarrillo, MP Mike Morrice, and Senator Brent Cotter for their tireless efforts.

Advocating for female seniors, the largest group living in poverty. UN open-ended working group on Convention for Rights of Older Persons now has a three-member commission whose task is to gather list of gaps in provision for the elderly from all member states. Groups in those states are to send information to their MPs on what these gaps are. Teri researched UN Sustainable Development Goals with specific reference to needs of Seniors and Income Security is a big gap worldwide. But locally there is no current data; who will fund the research?

Minister Karina Gould held a Seniors Symposium in Burlington on Wednesday June 28 (her birthday!) where we had a chance to raise this question. Perhaps the greatest achievement of the 20th/21st centuries is that people are living longer. But the Social Security system in Canada is also 65 years old and showing its age.

Minister of Seniors Kemal Kehra told us that many innovative broad policy strategies are in place or under discussion but it was clear that no one is collecting the data to identify just who is in poverty and where they are. Dr Parminder Raina of the MacMaster Institute for the Study of Aging floated the idea of intergenerational living (first and second year undergrads in residence with seniors) and finding ways to reduce technological inequity (seniors who cannot access services because they do not have skills with mobile phones and the Internet.)

OW and ODSP Rates. AWH will follow up on these as part of the response to the Region's Strategic Plan.

Affordable Housing. Halton Region agrees with Scandinavian countries that "Housing must come first." However, house prices in Halton continue to make a nonsense of this noble goal.

Basic Income. Municipal Councils including St Johns, Newfoundland, Victoria BC and Hamilton Ontario have declared support for BI. We hope municipalities in Halton will do the same .

In the Fall we hope to invite David Thornley from Social Commons to speak on the topic.

The Care Economy, its impact on individuals.

Teri noted that there may be a growing reliance on unpaid in-home caregivers, especially those caring for long Covid sufferers. Anecdotal evidence from sources like The Lancet suggests the numbers involved are enormous. For every long Covid sufferer off work due to illness, there is also an unpaid caregiver off work to care for them. What impact does this have on economy? Growing numbers need support but must not become a "normalised" part of the social safety net. Because AWH is a local group, we plan to limit our actions to allyship and support, and collaboration with other local groups, by starting Community Conversations

Halton Region Strategic Business Plan. AWH written response was sent in and apparently shared with Councillors. Although AWH called the Region out on lack of data and lack of transparency, there has so far been no response. At the July 12 Council meeting the plan will be received and rubber stamped by councillors. The Committee will send a written brief, reiterating our concerns.



Happy summer! See you again in the Fall.
Watch out for issue #4 of AWHsome in October 2023



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