



AWHsome

Newsletter of Advancement of Women Halton

April 2024, Issue #6



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 year started with a burst of energy. February was Black History Month. Media, Halton towns and many organizations held special events. The Halton Equity and Diversity Roundtable hosted a Lunch and Learn with keynote speaker, Lucky Stictz. He presented a musical, interactive message of resilience.

International Women's Day, March 8 was an opportunity to celebrate the diverse skills of women and the enormous strides to achieve gender equality. There were several events organized in Halton. The Dinner Party, organized by WHAM was an excellent event. The keynote speaker, Jully Black, asked the audience to "let our light shine" and imagine: a gender equal world, a world free of bias, stereotypes, and discrimination, a world that's diverse, equitable, and inclusive.

In addition, Sima Samar medical doctor, Afghan legislator, United Nations Special Rapporteur for human rights in Sudan, author, and advocate for formal education for Afghan girls was supporting her new book, *Outspoken*. Sima and co-author, Sally Armstrong, were present in support of Canadian Women 4 Women in Afghanistan, a financial beneficiary of the evening.

Sima's work in Afghanistan is a reminder that Canadian women cannot be gender equality complacent. The conservative Taliban took control and removed hard-won rights for girl's access to education beyond grade 6 and women's employment outside the home.

Erosion of women's rights also happens in Canada. Major improvements to Ontario labour legislation and increases to minimum wage passed in spring 2018 but were cancelled a few months later with a change of government. Another strategy to erode rights is to reduce financial support for government services. Look across Canadian borders to observe that women's maternal health is being compromised by lack of medical access.

April 16, 2024, is Equal Pay Day which symbolizes how far into the next year the average woman must work to have earned what the average man had earned in the previous year. According to the [OECD \(2022\)](#), for full-time employees, there is a 16.1% difference between annual median earnings of women relative to the annual median earnings of men. In its ranking of countries, Canada has the eighth worst gender pay gap. Traditional "women's work" tends to pay less than traditional "men's work." Jobs seen as "women's work" may be undervalued because they parallel domestic work women are expected to do for free ([Ontario Equal Pay Coalition](#)).

Women do not have gender equality until all women have gender equality.

Wishing you all the joys of Spring

AWH Advocacy Actions from January to April 2024

- a. Letter to Kamal Khera, Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Persons with Disabilities re Bill C22 Canada Disability Benefit.
Personalized reply was received from Adam van Koeverden's staff.
- b. Letter to Prime Minister re Bill 86 Citizen's Assembly on Electoral Reform.
A personalized reply was received from Adam van Koeverden's staff
- c. Letter to Halton MPs expressing disappointment that electoral reform Bill 86 did not pass.
- d. Letter to Burlington Mayor Meed-Ward recommending that the Housing Accelerator Fund resources be used to help homeless families.
- e. MP, Karina Gould, responded to AWH letter re Gaza. She voted for the motion "Canada's actions to promote peace in the Middle East".
<https://www.ourcommons.ca/members/en/votes/44/1/658>
- f. Letter sent to Minister of LTC, Stan Cho to encourage Ontario to implement the recommendations in the LTC Auditor General's Report of December 2023 which was released after the legislature was adjourned for holidays.

FALLING APART WITH A SMILE

A couple of days ago, as I pushed off from the end of the lovely community pool in my quest to stave off the ravages of age and heal my ruptured Achilles tendon all at the same time, I felt the slight tickle of the tag of my new black Speedo on my arm. I had put my bathing suit on inside out. I had walked across the changeroom, out the door and across the pool deck. Of course, no one said anything. Not interfering is kind of what we Canadians do in our politeness.

I'm 70 years old now. My younger self would have been mortified. But I quickly moved to amused and found myself chuckling down the lane in my quest for fitness in my old age. Thank God for a sense of humour in my DNA. Turns out I needed that sense of the absurd for the whole morning. I had decided to allow myself the luxury of a tea at a coffee shop while I completed some reading for a work gig. As I climbed onto the stool at the Starbucks, the lid popped open on the steaming green tea which promptly soaked table and the cover of the book. A handful of napkins later, my dignity shakily restored, I was actually able to regain the moment of calm.

As my younger sister said to me when I recounted the ridiculous morning I had had: 'No one cares,—we are invisible now and we can do whatever the hell we want because no one even sees us!' I was in elected office for 22 years. I became Premier and enjoyed/endured the notoriety. I loved the responsibility of that role and the privilege of thinking about the important issues confronting our society from the vantage point of someone who could actually make change. And now my bathing suit is inside out, and I am tipping hot tea on my book.

I have a choice that I suppose many of us confront at some point in our lives. I can withdraw because I deem myself not fit for public company, or I can persevere knowing that this is part of the human condition—that we do fall apart in small and significant ways.

I choose the latter. Withdrawal robs the town square of the continuum of age—it robs younger people of the glimpse into their future and of the opportunity to develop empathy. The world is a dark place at the moment. We need all-hands on deck. The young, the old, the able, the differently able. Withdrawal is not an option.

So, when you see the wacky old man or woman, inside out, right side down, dropping keys, spilling tea—just smile. *Kathleen Wynne*



In January

Health and Long-Term Care



On New Year's Day Andre Pierre Picard was made a member of the Order of Canada "For his dedication to advancing public health understanding and practices in Canada as a leading health journalist and bestselling author." This was well deserved recognition for his work exposing the failures of Long-Term Care and the struggles of Canada's health care systems.

Gender Based Violence

Paulette Senior, Canadian Women's Foundation, wrote:

This year we raised over \$500,000 for our violence prevention work!

We enable grassroots organizations in every province and territory that meet the needs of women, girls, and gender-diverse people who have been impacted by gender-based violence.

Programs like "The Way Out" Work Therapy Program for Survivors of Trauma and/or Abuse at The Castlegar and District Community Services Society (BC). This program helps participants build self-confidence and independence after experiences of trauma and abuse and develop strategies for adapting to new work placements.

Or Healthy Futures at Second Stage Safe Haven in Saint John. They cultivate healthy relationships and safe spaces for teens in both English and French. They provide training and resources for educators, guidance counsellors, and facilitators in middle and high schools, including those working with vulnerable youth and youth in the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

And like Specialized Sexual Violence Crisis at Counselling & Support in Northern Rural Alberta in Bonnyville. This program provides culturally safe counselling and support to those impacted by sexual violence. It serves more than 45 rural and remote communities in North, Central and Eastern Alberta

Local Democracy. Condensed from article by *Lawson Hunter in Oakville News*



On Thursday, January 11, the provincial Standing Committee Hearing on the Study of Regional Governance were in town to gather input on whether or not the eight regional governments in Ontario should continue as they are, be dissolved, or have changes made to the existing structures.

Halton Regional Chair Gary Carr recommended the status quo. Oakville's Mayor Burton argued for downloading many of the responsibilities back down to the local level. However, Burton's opinion on the status of the isn't shared by all councillors. Ward 1 councillor Sean O'Meara added, "If the Mayor wants to propose a single-tier level of government, then he should put a resolution before council." Burlington's Mayor Marianne Meed-Ward decided that it was foolish to jump into a choice between single or multi-level governance without knowing the costs, and which services would be better delivered alone or shared with others. City staff were directed to prepare a report within 90 days. With the province flip-flopping on the whole governance process, it seemed prudent to gather all the facts first, and even then, recognize that the provincial government might change its mind again.

Long Term Care January 15th Rob Ferguson wrote in the Toronto Star,

"Ontario has deployed a promised "investigations unit" to keep a closer eye on serious problems in nursing homes as critics call for better staffing and pay levels to improve long-term care for the frail elderly. The 10 investigators have more power than the government's cadre of nursing home inspectors and can lay provincial charges against nursing home operators and staff and refer cases to prosecutors as warranted. The investigators will probe allegations such as homes failing to protect residents from abuse or neglect, repeated incidents of non-compliance with ministry regulations, suppressing or falsifying mandatory reports from nursing homes to the government and negligence among corporate directors. Officials said provincial offences fines levied by the inspectors could range up to \$400,000."



Childcare

Condensed from a January 14 article by Janet Ecker, *former Ontario Finance Minister, Minister of Education, Minister of Community and Social Services and Government House Leader.*

January to March is pre-budget time for the Ontario government. Cross-province consultations are underway to identify the spring budget's priorities. One of them should be further steps for the childcare sector. Two issues have proved the most challenging – attracting and retaining professional staff due to compensation and government rules around what are considered appropriate operating costs. Ontario has already taken some steps on the wage front. The hourly wage for workers in participating childcare centres will be a minimum of \$23.86 an hour with opportunities for further increases.

The other issue undermining progress is costs. The YMCA has sounded the alarm, calling for a new, more realistic funding formula if Ontario expects to sustain and to continue to expand the number of centres. It is an excellent start, but the job is not over yet. The economy needs more workers, and more childcare can support that. Finance Minister Peter Bethlenfalvy faces the always challenging problem of balancing provincial spending with revenues. While a strong supporter of the program, he has a long line up of critical sectors at his door with their hands out. Hopefully, childcare will not get crowded out.

Housing

On January 16, Burlington MP Karina Gould (Leader of the House, currently on Maternity leave) announced: "We have reached a \$21million agreement with the City of Burlington to improve housing affordability and get more homes built faster in our community."



Karina, Pam and Marianne making things happen.

Basic Income

On January 22 the Tamarack Institute hosted a webinar on Advancements in Basic Income. (just click on the picture for more)



On-line hate



And on January 25, Canadian Womens Foundation created tip sheets on how to deal with on-line hate.

<https://canadianwomen.org/tip-sheets/>



In 1921, when the image was captured, the 54-foot-long, 1,200-pound refracting telescope at the University of Chicago's Lake Geneva Yerkes Observatory was the largest of its type in the world, capable of revealing unseen corners of the universe. Beneath this behemoth is a crowd of scientists. One, with a shock of wild gray hair, stands out. We can recognise Albert Einstein, who visited the Yerkes Observatory in 1921. But who are all the women?

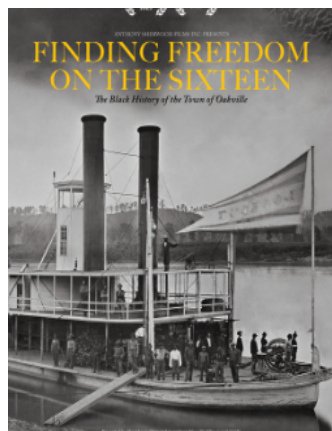
In the first half of the 20th century, when men dominated the world of scientific research, Yerkes Observatory employed more than 100 women, some as secretaries; some as "computers," solving mathematical equations; and many as astronomers. At Yerkes, women scientists could reach for the stars. As Director Edwin Frost wrote to Caroline Furness, an astronomer at Vassar College, "You probably know that we are running the Observatory this year by woman power, which should be a matter of congratulations to all suffragists—like myself."

Sadly, women were expected to resign upon marriage and although they continued their work, they found that looking after husbands and raising children left little time for writing and publishing their findings. (From an article by April White

In February



On February 1st CCAH hosted a Black History Month launch at Oakville Centre for the Performing Arts. Guests were welcomed in the lobby by the CCAH Steel Band. The wonderfully diverse program included singer Geri Defoe, performances by the Arthouse Children's Choir and the Girl Power dance group, a moving student poem, film producer and actor Anthony Sherwood with his latest documentary "Finding Freedom on the Sixteen", and jazz singer Jully Black. CCAH President Andrew Tyrell noted, "Not just black in February, we are black every day."



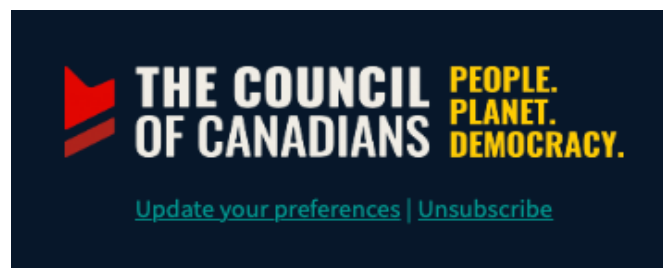
Red Dress Alert



Oakville North Burlington MP Pam Damoff wrote: “Since the spring, I have been working with MP Leah Gazan to advance a Red Dress Alert system in Canada. Over the last year through consultations on the creation of a public alert system for missing Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people, we have heard from survivors, families, advocates, front line workers and First Nations, Inuit and Metis partners on what this alert system should look like.

You can read more about this critical engagement here: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/national-red-dress-alert-consultations-begin-1.7037538>

Peace



February 2 The Council of Canadians issued a second [open letter](#) to Prime Minister Trudeau and Foreign Affairs Minister Joly urging them to publicly support the recent ruling by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) regarding the ongoing bloodshed in the Gaza Strip. This letter also urged them to take proactive measures to comply with its orders by:

- actively working for an immediate ceasefire, a negotiated release of all hostages, and an end to the longstanding blockade of Gaza by the Israeli government.
- ensuring increased and uninterrupted humanitarian aid to the Gaza strip, including by reversing the pause in funding for UNWRA, and
- immediately suspending all arms exports to Israel.

Democracy

On February 7 the House of Commons voted on M86, a motion calling for a Citizens Assembly on Electoral Reform. The Vote result was Yea 101, Nay 220. More MPs like the idea than before, but progress is SOOOO SLOW!

The Work of Non-Profit Agencies

On February 7, Oakville MP and President of the Treasury Board Anita Anand wrote regarding -Pre-Budget Consultations:

” Not-for-profits do vital work across our community. Today, I heard from over 30 Oakville based NFPs about the supports they need to function, including housing for women suffering from gender-based violence, mental health and gender equality”.



In relation to Non-Profit Appreciation Week, Oakville North Burlington MPP Effie Triantafilopoulos wrote, ” Recognizing the work non-profits do is important to me because I see the good work they do each and every day in our community. They provide services that range from mental health support to seniors’ services, homeless shelters, crisis lines, skills development, immigrant support, specialized

help for children, and family support services to programs that promote arts and culture, environmental sustainability, and recreation. Non-profits are part of the glue that keeps our province and our communities together, about one million committed, dedicated staff and volunteers in every part of Ontario. They help individuals, families, and seniors. They protect our environment and green spaces. They organize amateur sports for kids. We enjoy the fruits of their work when we visit museums, galleries, and historic sites. Non-profits make life better for millions of people across Ontario, and they provide the opportunity for volunteers to give back and to care for others in their communities.

We should remember this statement and remind Effie often!

Equal Opportunities



February 11th was declared by the UN as International Day of Women and Girls in Science. This is an annual observance adopted by the United Nations General assembly to promote the full and equal access and participation of women in Science, Technology, Mathematics and Engineering fields.



Feb 12 Childcare Now hosted a webinar “ **What is next for Childcare Advocacy?**” Lorna Ballantyne explained that the program has been a victim of its own success. Demand has mushroomed but because capital funding is lacking, expansion has not taken place. Each province has introduced the program differently and there are some good things about each one, but what is needed now is coherent program for expansion. We need to look internationally for best practices, emphasize all the positive progress made so far and form coalitions. Childcare Now has an open letter to the government, urging capital funding to expand the program. <https://youtu.be/DwQoKKUvXas>

Feb 13 Public Sector employees (especially teachers and nurses) rejoice.

The Ford government has lost an appeal over its controversial wage restraint legislation **Bill 124** in a ruling released by Ontario's top court on Monday.

The law — which capped public sector wages at one per cent per year for three years — was introduced by the Progressive Conservative government in 2019 in a bid to limit public sector spending.

The law impacted over 2,500 public sector collective bargaining units in Ontario and triggered a court challenge by a collection of unions and labour groups. In late 2022, the law was struck down as unconstitutional.

The Ontario Court of Appeal agreed with the lower court ruling and upheld the decision that ultimately scrapped the legislation. The Ford government has said it will not take that ruling to the Supreme Court of Canada and will repeal the law instead.

Diversity

On February 17 One Burlington presented to a capacity audience “And then what happened. **Untold Stories of the Underground Railroad**” with Songs and Stories by Tracy Cain .



For the storytelling aspect of her performance, Cain talked about four of her ancestors: Josephus Malott, Andrew Lucas, Allen Cooper, and the Right Reverend Samuel Richard Drake.

The first three men were enslaved in the United States, and each had a unique journey to freedom. Malott purchased his freedom; Lucas was a runaway, who fled to Canada to find freedom; and Cooper was willed to his freedom.

February 19 on Family Day A message from **Brad Park**, President and CEO of United Way Halton and Hamilton.

As I look forward to a day filled with family fun, I am reminded that many families in Halton and Hamilton face more pressing issues.

The past year has been a rollercoaster of economic uncertainty marked by soaring inflation, sky-high housing costs, and job losses. Members of our community with lower incomes, those on social assistance, single-parent families, seniors, and those with disabilities are struggling to provide the most basic necessities. Many people are struggling to put food on the table and keep a roof over their heads.

Families across our community have been deeply affected by the disruption of economic stability we used to take for granted. And the statistics coming from United Way-funded agencies speak volumes about the challenges we face. More than half of our agencies are reporting extensive waitlists, with 68% seeing a notable increase in the demand for their services. Some of the programs include food security, parenting, mental health, housing, and educational support. These numbers represent our neighbours, friends, or even family members who need a helping hand. And some in our community are facing the storm alone, without the safety net of family or close connections.

Brad speaks for all AWH organisations. This is what we are all about.



On February 22 Ancilla wrote: Today **Halton Equity Diversity Roundtable(HEDR)** hosted its Lunch and Learn on “Resonance of Resilience” a Black History event in partnership with CCAH at QEP Community & Cultural Centre. What a wonderful event ,which included Lunch and all FREE. Presenter Lucky Stickz really got the attendees involved as he told the story of the “steelpan” and how this instrument has influenced music all over the world, originating from my homeland Trinidad. Many friends and supporters from our community showed up to support this event.



Health.

MP Pam Damoff wrote: Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Minister of Health Mark Holland and Minister of Mental Health and Addictions Ya’ara Saks announced the signing of the fifth bilateral Working Together agreement alongside Ontario Premier Doug Ford and Ontario Health Minister Sylvia Jones.

Through this agreement, our government will provide more than \$3.1 billion over the next three years to Ontario to improve health services and access to care, as part of a broader 10-year plan. To ensure accountability and to demonstrate improvements to the province’s healthcare system, targets will be measured and reported publicly each year. **You can read more about this announcement and historic investment [here](#).**



Gender Based Violence National Action Plan

The government has now announced bilateral agreements with all 13 provinces and territories, with funding already flowing to each jurisdiction. The 10-year National Action Plan is the result of years extensive consultation and asks from stakeholders to have a national standard, and our government has delivered exactly that. The actions taken under the Gender Based Violence National Action Plan focus on five pillars, including:

- supports for victims, survivors, and their families.
- prevention.
- responsive justice system.
- implementing Indigenous-led approaches; and
- social infrastructure and enabling environment.

Provinces and Territories will focus investments on three federal priorities, including: increasing prevention efforts, with a minimum of 25% of federal funding required to be used on this priority to prevent violence from happening in the first place; reaching underserved and underrepresented communities; and stabilizing the sector. You can read more on the Canada-Ontario Bilateral Agreement [here](#).



What is happening with Childcare?

Professor Paul Kershaw, UBC wrote in the Globe and Mail, Feb.17, 2024: Two years into the rollout of federal funding for \$10-a-day childcare, the plan still isn't firing on all cylinders. BUT it isn't a sign that the plan is broken. It signals that provinces are playing politics with federal funding rather than urgently reducing financial hardships facing young families.

The solution requires provinces to invest fully and efficiently the federal child-care transfers they now receive, while adding their own provincial dollars to scale up the \$10-a-day system.

For the past two decades, provinces have retreated from prioritizing social investments such as childcare. Since Canadians use more medical care after age 65, there has been a shift away from investing in the generation raising young kids. The \$10-a-day childcare plan launched by Ottawa compensates partially for this provincial retreat. And families are celebrating when they can access affordable care for their kids. Clearly, \$10-a-day childcare is a life-changer for parents who can access it. So, we need governments to scale it up fast.

The government is leading, where the Constitution permits. By 2023, it had almost doubled federal child-care funding – to \$5.6 billion from \$2.9 billion in 2021. In 2024, federal spending is projected to grow to \$6.6-billion and will reach nearly \$8 billion thereafter.

By contrast, the provinces are moving slowly.

For example, Ontario, Alberta and B.C. are all taking federal funds without adding significant investments of their own. In Ontario and Alberta, the governments may have decided that the conservative political movement benefits if the federal Liberals can't take credit for the successful rollout of \$10-a-day childcare before the next federal election.

When provinces do little more than ride federal coattails, the wages of child-care professionals are collateral damage. **Incomes for early educators often rival those of parking lot attendants or people who clean cages at the zoo.** Low wages make it challenging to attract or retain enough professionals to scale up the \$10-a-day system. That's why some child-care providers warn of closings if the province doesn't step up soon.

Pharma Care



After months of negotiations the Liberals and the NDP have reached a deal on pharma care.

The two parties have agreed to provide universal coverage for birth control and diabetes medication through a single-payer system as a first step towards a national pharma care program. And there are reports that the upcoming bill will task the government with expanding the list of covered medicines, developing a bulk buying plan, and setting up an “implementation council.”

This represents one of the biggest advances in Canadian health care in decades. The pilot program would be life-changing for people who rely on birth control and diabetes medications. And solid framework legislation rooted in the principles of Canadian Medicare would be a huge blow to the pharmaceutical and insurance industries which have been working around the clock to gum up any progress on public pharma care.

But the victory will remain fragile as long as the program is still largely on paper, covering only a limited number of people’s medication needs. A lot depends on how quickly the program can be expanded between now and the next election.

Pink Shirt Day



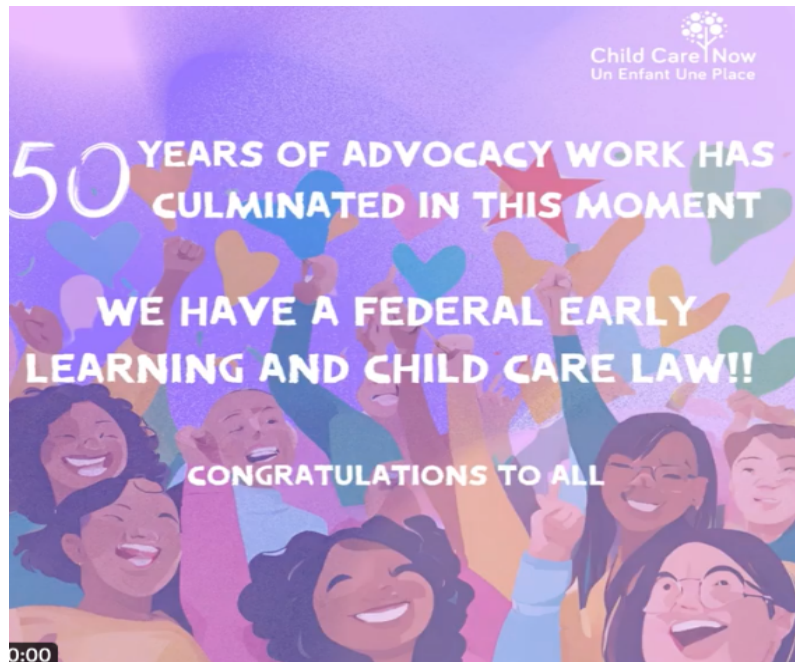
MP Pam Damoff wrote:

February 28th was Pink Shirt Day, which is a day on which people come together to stand against bullying and to support efforts for greater acceptance and awareness of gender diversity. Everyone in Canada deserves to fully participate in all spheres of society, regardless of gender identity, expression, or sexual orientation. On Wednesday, Women and Gender Equality Minister Marci len launched a call for proposals to better support 2SLGBTQI+ communities to mark this day.

Gender and sexually diverse community still face many challenges and continues to experience discrimination in our society. This new funding aims to support 2SLGBTQI+ organizations to deliver community-informed initiatives that address barriers to equality, including projects that facilitate systemic change as well as the development of knowledge, tools, and support for the community.

Interested organizations can find more information here, and have until **April 10, 2024**, at 12:00 p.m. (noon) Pacific Time to apply for funding.

February 29 A Leap Year Present ...YAY!



March was Women's History Month

March 4 500 Days in the Wild



To kick off International Women's History Month, the Oakville Festivals of Film & Art (OFFA) screened Dianne Whelan's new film *500 Days in the Wild*, raising money for The Women's Centre of Halton.

Hosted by local speaker and comedienne Carole Bertuzzi-Luciani, the evening featured live music from singer/songwriter Sydney Mae and a drum presentation by Grandmother's Voice and Butterfly Spirit Drum Circle of Women.

The new documentary featured award-winning director and cinematographer, photographer and author Dianne Whelan's six-year journey, walking, biking and paddling the entirety of Canada's Trans-Canada Trail from coast to coast, in a journey spanning thousands of kilometres.

Whelan is the only person to complete this epic journey of discovery. Best of all, the film featured a live Q&A with Whelan, speaking with the audience on Zoom from her home on Saltspring Island, B.C. and moderated by Oakville News arts writer Tyler Collins. Proceeds from all ticket sales went to The Women's Centre of Halton, an important community partner for women who are experiencing crisis or distress, or who are in transition. The Women's Centre of Halton is a safe place for all women to find personal empowerment.



Le 4 mars. A woman holds a placard that reads 'never again' as people watch a giant screen showing French lawmakers gathering for a special Congress in Versailles to vote on a bill to **include the right to abortion into the constitution** . France made two notable advances for reproductive rights. On February 23, parliament voted to extend the legal timeframe for abortion under any circumstances from the twelfth to the fourteenth week of pregnancy. On February 19, the government eased access to medication abortion as an alternative to more invasive surgical procedures.

March 5 Victory: Ontario's First Anti Renoviction Bylaw.

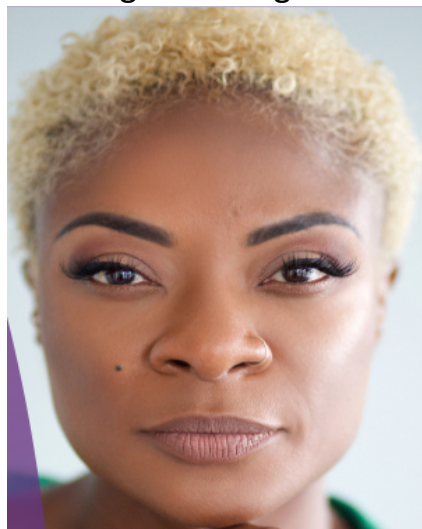
Hamilton became the first city in Ontario to pass an anti-renoviction bylaw. While this is a massive victory that has set a precedent for other cities to follow, we recognise that we cannot afford to miss this moment. Last week Ontario's ACORN released a new report on renovictions, and the trends are disturbing. There has been close to 300% increase in N13 renovictions. Over 22,000 N12/N13 eviction notices have been filed since 2017. Almost half of all landlords doing renovictions are hiding behind numbered companies. The fight continues!



MARCH 6



At Oakville Conference and Banquet Centre, the Women of Halton Action Movement (WHAM) brought back their annual celebration of International Womens Day in 2024 with a live, in-person dinner party and a powerhouse speaker – Canadian Platinum selling recording artist Jully Black.



The celebration helps to support SAVIS, (Sexual Assault and Violence Intervention Services) and CW4WA, (Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan). This event was extra special, as it marked not only the 20th anniversary of The Dinner Party celebrating IWD, but also, the 40th anniversary of WHAM's inception -- making it one of the longest serving feminist lobby groups in Ontario.

Guests enjoyed an excellent dinner, a wonderful performance by Jully Black, some beautiful songs from Dr Charlene Pauls and the Oakville girls' chamber choir and the opportunity to buy a copy of "Outspoken" from A Different Drummer bookstore and have it signed by co-authors Sally Armstrong (a long-time friend of WHAM) and Dr Sima Samar, former chair of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission. A photo booth with feather boas proved lots of fun as well as a Wall of Honour, where guests could recognise significant women in their lives. An on-line Silent Auction and a fifty-fifty draw kept guests on their toes. A grand total in excess of \$28,000 was raised for SAVIS and CW4WA.



March 8 GASP members visited the Royal Ontario Museum for a tour organized by the first ever curator of Climate Change. “The Epic of Life, Death, Hope” was a great success.



March 9 Oakville North Burlington MPP Effie Triantafilopoulos wrote, I was honoured to join other women MPPs in the Ontario legislature (for IWD). Together, we're breaking down barriers, driving progress and paving the way for future generations of young women in Ontario to seek elected office. Let's continue to champion equality and inspire positive change. Because when women succeed, Ontario succeeds!



Watch our International Women's Day video here:

<https://www.facebook.com/100006200042353/videos/903441351332938/>

At a remarkable Assembly-Women's Forum hosted by the Speaker of the Ontario Legislature, Hon. Ted Arnott, I was pleased to meet Bushra and Imaan, two outstanding young leaders from our community.

It was also inspirational to hear from Charmaine Williams, Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity, on her journey into political life.



March 18



First: THANK YOU. You have already counted yourself in — to our community of over 66,000+ people for gender equality and justice. We're so grateful you're with us.

Second: We need everyone who wants to build a gender-equal Canada to join this effort. It is our urgent collective action that will ensure no woman, girl, Two Spirit, trans, or nonbinary person feels out of options, out of sight, out of time, or out of mind.

That's why, starting March 18, 2024, we're asking you to help us invite others to count themselves in for gender equality.

Polls show that, more than ever, people in Canada understand the issues women, girls, and gender-diverse people face, and recognize the need for action on gender equality.

We believe thousands of people will say, **YES** —

- **count me in** to ending gendered biases and barriers: gaps in pay and policy, abuse and harassment, under-representation in leadership, and more.
- **count me in** to solutions: economic security, support for abuse survivors, inclusive leadership, and a sustainable and fair future.
- **count me in** to being a part of our Canadian Women's Foundation community and getting tools, inspiration, and opportunities to make an impact where I live and across the country.

We are excited to see this dynamic, active, and generous community grow! This is how the goal of a gender-equal Canada can finally become a reality.

Inter-Parliamentary Union

MP Pam Damoff wrote:

This week I represented Canada on the world stage at the United Nations in New York with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) delegation of Canadian MPs and Senators. It was an honour to represent Canada at the UN this week on such important international issues.

On Monday we began the day at the Canadian Mission for a briefing on the Commission on the Status of Women program. As head of the Canadian delegation for the IPU delegation of MPs and Senators, I spoke about women and girls' poverty being rooted in gender-based systemic discrimination. I talked about how our government's \$10 a day childcare and early learning program has led to the highest participation of women in the labour force in history - *at over 80%*.

Our Canadian IPU delegation had lunch with the delegation from the United Kingdom. It was a pleasure to meet the Rt. Rev. Rachel Treweek, the Bishop for Prisons in England and Wales. I shared how the politicization of prisons in Canada is disproportionately impacting women and Indigenous Peoples. It was interesting to learn about the Women's Centres in the UK, which take an approach that encompasses all aspects of a woman's life.

Thanks to Rosalee Keech, UN Observer for Protect All Children from Trafficking for taking the time to speak with me about their important work to combat human trafficking. They are looking to establish a pilot project to measure the efficacy of anti-trafficking programs by training hospital personnel to recognize human trafficking victims, take a baseline, implement programs to bankrupt the business of human trafficking.

We met with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) to talk about the continued work needed around the world to reach some of the most vulnerable populations. Every week, 4,000 adolescent girls and young women aged 15 to 24 years became infected with HIV globally – 3,100 of these infections occurred in sub-Saharan Africa. Thanks to Suki Beavers Director, Gender Equality, Human Rights and Community Engagement at UNAIDS for your leadership and such an inspiring conversation.

We also met with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). Our conversation focused on the abduction and forced adoption of Ukrainian children and its similarities to residential schools and the Sixties Scoop.



Council of Canadians, A Little History, by Pat Froio

COC has been in existence since March 1985 (39 years this year) which is quite impressive. It is good to reflect on the names of those who started it. Canadians like Mel Hurtig, Maude Barlow, Tommy Douglas, Margaret Atwood, and David Suzuki were founders and early supporters. Their vision, to advocate for a society built on democracy, justice for people, public service, and social programs, can be seen through the important advocacy work they did and continue to do.

Update Chapters are active throughout Canada. The Halton Chapter was very active with meetings, website, and Facebook, but has been in limbo since the start of the COVID pandemic. Hopefully it will resume in the near future with some new energetic members. COC has changed over the years, but I think it has improved its presence, especially in this digital age. We can all stay in touch by going to the website <https://canadians.org>

They have been very busy with campaigns, with *individual rallies*, digital actions and webinars.

Webinars are a great way of keeping the public informed on subjects like uranium mining, pharma care, climate etc. The section on the COC website under “Take Action” has many options. You can get information, sign petitions or call your MP.

They are presently calling for action on pharma care, Gaza ceasefire, taxing the rich, strengthening the Sustainable jobs act, Water, Climate, Fair Trade and more. They also publish some research and analysis in support of their campaigns, to keep supporters and members informed.

Take a few minutes to browse the “News and Analysis” section on their website. It is very well done, there is so much to read and learn.

Watch out for issue #7 of AWHsome in July 2024

OUR MEMBERS

