



AWHsome

Newsletter of Advancement of Women Halton

March 2025

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

The theme of International Women's Day 2025 is "Accelerate Action". I am proud of the work that Advancement of Women Halton does to amplify the voices of women and to advocate for gender equality. We are a group who works hard to accelerate action in all of our work. Although IWD is officially on March 8th, events occur all through the month and the work of gender equality is constant and on-going.

At AWH we try to imagine and work for a gender equal world. A world free of bias, stereotypes, and discrimination. A world that's diverse, equitable, and inclusive. A world where difference is valued and celebrated. Together we can forge gender equality. Collective action and shared ownership for driving gender parity is what makes International Women's Day impactful. Gloria Steinem, world-renowned feminist, journalist and activist reportedly once explained "The story of women's struggle for equality belongs to no single feminist nor to any one organization but to the collective efforts of all who care about human rights." Collectively, we will continue to fight for the world we envision for ourselves, our sisters, our children and grandchildren. We will Accelerate Action.

In solidarity,

Maureen

A woman is like a teabag; you never know how strong she is until she is in hot water. Eleanor Roosevelt

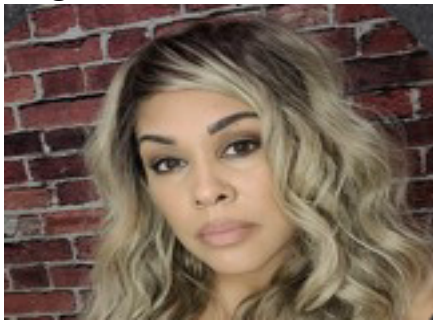
Feb 3 **Launch of Black History Month at Oakville Centre for Performing Arts**

CAAH Board President **Sheldon Williams** introduced the theme of Creating Harmony.



Keynote speaker, **Dr. Natasha Henry-Dixon**, spoke on her research about the histories of African Canadians. She recounted several different times during Canadian history when people from many different backgrounds came together to help fight racism and injustice, showing the power of harmony and working as a unit.

Singer Natasha Waterman wowed the audience with her incredible vocals



CAAH Steel Band and Parang Ensemble played.

Gospel choir **Kevin Adams & Voices of Praise** energized the crowd and had people smiling before the night came to an end.



And all through the month of February there were presentations in schools and galleries, plus exhibitions, flag raisings, movies and music

Wow Dionne! What a busy schedule!



Feb 3 CDH Follow up to Right to Housing Forum

Halton Housing Help and the Region shared about how unsheltered can reach out for assistance. Calling 311 is the best thing to do.

<https://www.halton.ca/For-Residents/Housing-Supports-and-Services/Housing/Halton-Housing-Help>

Cathy Greven shared that a group of faith organizations have begun to collaborate to advocate on housing issues.

To reach Halton Faith Group Advocates - cathy@greven.ca

Rishia provided a scan of political platforms for each of the four provincial parties and their stand on housing as well as an overview of organizations and papers that might be helpful for advocating during the provincial election.

Breakout groups came up with suggestions for action

- develop a list of common questions that can be used across the region. (AWH shared their own set of ten questions for candidates.)
- letter writing: making sure that the letters have information on local data, share them online and in print newspapers
- communicate what help is in place, amplify existing programs so unhoused can share it with their networks.
- challenge MPPS and MPs to live the life of someone who is experiencing homelessness or living on low-income.
- develop an online petition to address one of the key areas related to housing, to amplify a message during the campaign.
- Link to Rishia's slides:
https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1D_jkrToAGWKTEu0sp58N5IYjYV_NipLen/edit?usp=sharing&oid=112743632621066850251&rtpof=true&sd=true
- <https://www.amo.on.ca/sites/default/files/assets/DOCUMENTS/Reports/2025/2025-01-08-EndingChronicHomelessnessinOntario.pdf>

February 15 Flag Day 60th anniversary

In the face of bullying and threats, Canadians were united and showed fierce pride in their country and its flag.

February 21 **United Way of Halton** organised a fundraiser with people sleeping in their cars to spread awareness around poverty and raise funds for neighbours who do not have a safe place to sleep this winter.



Rishia Burke of CDH wrote: This was a humbling experience. I am truly grateful to you all for coming alongside of me to do this.

Together you helped me raise over \$1700! That was well beyond my goal. This was part of a larger effort across Halton and Hamilton, where dozens of people slept in their cars this past Friday night and raised over \$300,000! The money raised will be well used to support people in our communities, through amazing organizations . Thanks for all you do.

Food Security

MP Pam Damoff wrote: International Development Minister Hussen announced \$360.6 million for global efforts to eliminate malnutrition.

In 2017, I worked alongside Nutrition International and RESULTS Canada to host a parliamentary reception titled, “Unleashing the Power of Future Generations through Better Nutrition”, bringing attention to the importance of increasing investments in global nutrition for gender equality

This week’s announcement will support Nutrition International in providing life-changing nutrition resources to people in need, including vitamin A

supplementation, which reaches approximately 150 million children twice a year, and is one of the greatest nutrition successes in history.

FeedHalton grand opening draws hundreds who have helped the hungry



[Chris Arnold](#) *Burlington Today*

Halton's politicians, charity workers, volunteers, food organizers, and community members filled the aisles of Feed Halton's headquarters on Mainway on Friday, Feb. 21 as the organization officially held its grand opening event.

Representatives from all levels of government from Burlington and Oakville city council to Milton MP Adam Van Koeverden attended.

Feed Halton has previously been described by volunteers and employees as more of an Amazon distribution centre. Donated food is sent around Halton region to partnering food banks that need it, who then distribute it among their communities.

Burlington mayor Marianne Meed Ward noted that healthy eating can cost as much as \$300 per week. Residents on ODSP spend 41% to 141% of their income on food, and this is only possible through food bank assistance.

In the February on-line lecture series **Women, Peace and Security** we heard from

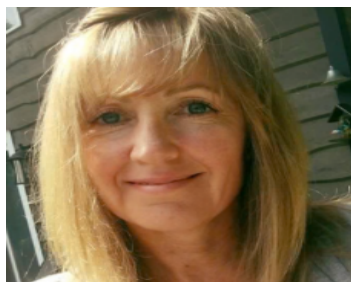


Trish Meekins MSW on how the First Nations women of Turtle Island have been directly attacked through legislation. Trish spoke from Vancouver, where she was attending a First Nations forum .



Francesca Dobbyns on Rural Women as leaders

She urged everyone to be a disruptive leader. Power is rarely given to women; you may have to take it! There is a gender image gap as well as a gender pay gap. Without career progression, pay and pension rights there is no peace or security. Be informed. Vote. Be seen. Use social networks. Be a pain in the ass.



Heather Sheldrick Women's Centre of Grey Bruce spoke on building community partnerships, raising awareness of violence against women, femicide and human trafficking.

It was interesting to see that the needs as well as the work being done in Grey-Bruce are identical to those in Halton Region. Wonder women are everywhere!

Grandmothers Voice Feb 25/26 held a 2-day event , both in person and virtually, entitled **"Truth with reconciliation: Respect, Restore, Relearn."** We will learn more about the workshop from Jody Harbour in next month's AWHsome. The event concluded with

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: An evening with Jody Wilson-Raybould.

This session was opened to virtual attendees and was a magical moment, with “Words before all Else,” to give thanks and The Strong Woman song to set the atmosphere. Greg Frazier described life on 6 Nations Reserve, with over 30 years of boil water advisory and taxes paid but no return in infrastructure. Alan Hill noted that indigenous people can change outcomes by rocking the boat. Recording artist Layla Staats and her daughter sang “Rise Up”, proclaiming that we shape next generation by actions we take now.

Our own Jody Harbour made a beautiful speech welcoming the speaker. Jody Wilson Raybould remembered her father Bill Wilson, who died a month ago. He was hereditary chief of Eagle Clan, on Vancouver Island. Jody said a noble family has responsibility to lead and inspire others. Her mother experienced the reality of relentlessness in fighting to preserve their culture in the face of Canada’s efforts to eradicate a way of life. On the family totem pole, symbols from the ground up represent its history. On top is the Thunderbird -strong and fierce in the present day. Judy noted the cultural tradition of the Importance of balance in the world and the need for harmony and justice in order to flourish. While her mother used invisibility and fought successfully from hiding, Jody’s role has been to be visible and be heard. She called all women leaders to be more visible, ever-present and bold. Symbolic, performative reconciliation is not impactful enough. We must break down the silos of different experience and make sure they are widely shared and understood. “When community is to be formed, common memory must be created.” *Dene leader Georges Erasmus.* “Inbetweeners “ travel and translate between those silos, and all of us play a part in advancing Truth and Reconciliation. It requires Many Walking Together



Our most recent e² annual report reflects on 10 years of 160 Girls progress. **The 160 Girls Project** has **trained 99% of police officers** responsible for child rape cases in Kenya, transforming defilement investigation practices. The program's effectiveness is evident:

- 81% of defilement victims now receive preliminary access to justice within three months of reporting.
- 100% of police trainees would recommend the 160 Girls course to a peer, and 99% rate it as highly effective.
- Over 67,000 youth leaders have been empowered as equality advocates through the Virtual Justice Club program.

26th February CDH hosted a webinar on



This was an invaluable discussion on peer support and co-production. Panelists were Chanay Dallas Child and Youth Worker, Betty Lou Kirsty Director of Support House and Lorraine Rollo of SAFE Halton. You can watch it here

https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/16_v9eH9HyFXBKaO7RHsluM94w16qanFcQUqikxuGfN4YMt7xFXNwzfpNBViQBGz.PttbwYVNHm8FTMqU

Passcode: .aMv8S74

Betty Lou Kirsty explained, **“We have to say things people don’t want to hear in a way that makes them glad they heard it!”**

February 27 was **Provincial Election Day**. AWH sent questions on issues of concern to all the candidates, and some shared their platforms with AWH. This was the one that most closely matched AWH's concerns

The voter turnout was 45%

The **PCs** achieved a third term with a substantial majority. Not good news for social service providers.

Liberal leader **Bonnie Crombie** lost her own seat, but her party made some gains and now has official party status.

NDP leader **Marit Stiles** noted, "Voters entrusted my team to represent them as Official Opposition and hold government to account. We will do it with fight and determination, but also with love, hope and optimism."

And Green Party Leader **Mike Schreiner** urged us, "Don't agonize; Organize!"





At the Council, we're standing firm and fighting for an economy rooted in justice, not exploitation. Together, we can build systems that serve people, not shareholders.

How do we fight back? With a bold roadmap for people-powered resistance.

Our [Unite for the Canada We Want](#) statement lays out how to resist corporate-driven agendas while building solidarity across communities. We're demanding that all levels of government act now to protect people — not profits — and chart a course toward justice for all.

[National campaign launch: Getting from the Canada We've Got to the Canada We Want](#): On Tuesday, March 4, we are very excited to share with you our plans for the federal election and beyond. We'll discuss how we can gather our forces, rally our allies, and build a movement to win the Canada we want.

[Register now](#)

In January, **Alberta** introduced two significant funding changes for childcare. First, the province launched a new capital funding grant program, *Building Blocks*, designed to expand not-for-profit and public childcare. Additionally, starting April 1, the government will implement a provincially set daily parent fee of \$15. The province of **Manitoba** and federal government announced the creation of over 700 new child care spaces for children up to age six across Manitoba.

So, Come On Ontario!

USAID funding freeze devastates reproductive healthcare worldwide.

Grace Wade in New Scientist

The Trump administration's pause on US foreign assistance could lead to an estimated 4.2 million unintended pregnancies and more than 8300 pregnancy-related deaths

Women lining up at a mobile tent for reproductive health services in Zimbabwe

The day Donald Trump took office as president of the United States, he issued an order temporarily pausing foreign aid, including the funding that flows through the US Agency for International Development (USAID). The funding freeze will have permanent consequences. It has already crippled global health programmes, including critical reproductive health services, placing millions of lives at risk – particularly those serviced by providers in lower-income countries.

Trump's shock doctrine is deliberate cognitive overload

Jennifer Walter on How to Combat this

Set boundaries. Pick 2-3 key issues to focus on
Feeling overwhelmed is the point. Recognise this and regain some power. Take breaks. Allow time to process. This is a marathon
Practise going slow. Wait 48 hrs before reacting. Don't let urgency cloud what is important. Don't miss the context.
Build community, share the load. Different people can track different issues.
Network intelligence beats individual overload. **Our focus is resistance.**

February 28 The Honorable **Paddy Torsney** presented her **Annual International Womens Day Breakfast,**

with guest speaker **Julie Cole**, an Aldershot high school grad (and valedictorian!) and Burlington resident: Julie is a recovered lawyer, mom of six and Co-founder of Mabel's Labels Inc. She is an award-winning entrepreneur, best-selling author, and sought after speaker and emcee.

When she's not juggling her busy family and professional life, Julie is an engaged community member serving on boards and volunteering. She is passionate about women's issues, mentoring young entrepreneurs, and social justice.



Ancilla wrote: It was a fabulous event. The room was full. There was no shortage of politicians past and present in attendance, as well as student representatives

from many schools in Burlington. I had a great time catching up with folks I have not seen in years as well as having a few photo opportunities.



A promotional poster for "The Dinner Party 2025". The background is dark with purple flowers. At the top, the title "The Dinner Party 2025" is written in a white cursive font. Below the title, a pink banner contains the text "KEYNOTE SPEAKER NICOLE RAKOWSKI" in white. The date "Wednesday, March 5 2025" and the location "Oakville Conference Centre 2515 Wycroft Road" are listed. The ticket price "\$95" is prominently displayed in large white font, with a QR code and the text "QR CODE HERE" below it. The website "thedinnerpartyiwd.ca" is also listed. A circular portrait of Nicole Rakowski, a woman with long brown hair and blue eyes, is on the right. At the bottom, the text "SUPPORTING:" is followed by "SAVIS OF HALTON (Sexual Assault & Violence Intervention Services)" and "RIGHT TO LEARN AFGHANISTAN (Formerly Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan)".

March 8th

OFL IWD 2025 LAPEL PIN, SHIRT AND POSTER



Champion the power of women's voices in democracy and celebrate the power of voting by supporting the OFL's The Power of Many: **Women Vote** campaign this International Women's Day. Wear our lapel pin and t-shirt and display our poster in solidarity and sisterhood. This campaign is about more than just merchandise - it's a movement! Women's

votes shape our communities, our workplaces, and our future. Pin, shirt, and poster are available in English and French. Place your order by January 31 to guarantee delivery in advance of International Women's Day. Visit the eStore now to get yours!

ENGLISH: <https://myunionstore.ca/pages/international-womens-day-2025>

Watch out for AWHsome in March 2025



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