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Dear members,

Since late 2013, the NSGEU has been defending our members from a barrage of anti-worker legislation introduced by the McNeil Liberal government. In 2018, I believe this government finally began to see that they'd made a mess of collective bargaining in the process, and they began looking for a way to clean up some of that mess.

2018 was about finally putting to rest some of the most challenging rounds of bargaining this union has ever faced: after three years of hard work, we were finally able to conclude agreements for our Health Care, Support Services, Administrative Professional and Nursing members working in the acute health care sector (see page 4-5 for a synopsis of bargaining). I am very proud of what our bargaining council members were able to achieve at the table, despite all odds, and am very hopeful that having new province-wide base agreements in place will mean we will be in an even stronger position for the next round of bargaining.

The past year was also about coming out of a very dark time for the union and beginning to celebrate our accomplishments: our union turned 60 years old in 2018! We celebrated this milestone anniversary with events for our members and their family members throughout the province, which were all very well attended.

We still have plenty of work ahead of us at the bargaining table for our group home and home care workers, however, and we are getting ready to host more than 368 delegates at our Triennial Convention in May (see page 8-10 for more information on Convention).

I see 2019 as a time for us to refocus on improving working conditions for our members, and apply strategic pressure on government to ensure they are making decisions that are in the best interests of all Nova Scotians.

We also want to continue to raise public awareness of the NSGEU: we want Nova Scotians to see who our members are and understand that not only do they help deliver important public services, but they are also their neighbours, friends and fellow community members. And our members shouldn't feel apologetic because they have a pension, benefits and a decent wage: we should be proud of those things, and try to ensure more workers have an opportunity to be a part of a union. We spend so much of our time in the workplace, it only makes sense that if you are active in a union and actually have a say in what goes on at your workplace, it will improve conditions for everyone.

Overall, I am looking forward to continuing to doing good work on behalf of our members in 2019. We have some challenges ahead of us, to be sure: home care workers deserve more respect from government; Zack Churchill has thrown our public education system into disarray with the abolition of school boards; our Child Protection Workers are drowning; Deputy Sheriffs are still fighting for safer workplaces, as are our members at the East Coast Forensic Hospital and the Central Nova Scotia Correctional Facility.

But we're ready to do the work. Our Board of Directors will be rolling out our strategic plan after our next Board meeting, and those plans will be married with whatever direction comes out of Convention.

My wish for all of our members for 2019 is that they have a safe, healthy workplace, and that you know that the work you do is important and appreciated.

In solidarity,

Jason MacLean  
President, NSGEU

## THE STAND

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General Employees.  
[unionsyeah.ca](http://unionsyeah.ca)

#ALL  
Together  
NOW

together  
FAIRNESS  
WORKS

The Union Stand is proudly  
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Local 2797.



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## CONNECT WITH US!

We want to hear from our members. If you have thoughts on this issue of The Stand, or ongoing union issues, send us your feedback! You can email us at [inquiry@nsgeu.ca](mailto:inquiry@nsgeu.ca) or connect with us:

 [facebook.com/NSGEU](https://www.facebook.com/NSGEU)

 [@NSGEU](https://twitter.com/NSGEU) [@JMACL3AN](https://twitter.com/JMACL3AN)

## NSGEU TWEETS

### Suzanne MacNeil (@esooze)

As @Tony\_Tracy & I drive from #CapeBreton back to #Halifax, we continue our many hours of podcasts by listening to our dear friend Jason MacLean (@Jmacl3an), President of @NSGEU, as he talks about #NSGEU's highlights of 2018. #NSpoli #canlab #CBpoli #1u

### Tyler Simmonds (@tylersimmonds)

I'll be speaking to @AdmiralUK and @NSGEU this January about mental health for #BellLetsTalk @Bell\_LetsTalk - I hope to see some of you

### CdnCancerSocietyNS (@cancersocietyNS)

Thanks to the @NSGEU for providing all the printing for our #onenightstandns mail campaign! Your donation made it possible to send out extra letters and the response has been wonderful!

### Dave Squires (@DaveWSquires)

About 30 or so protesters at each entrance. @NS\_Labour and @NSGEU members here. @globalhalifax

### Pink Larkin (@PinkLarkin)

PL's @jillhoulihan appeared on @NSGEU's latest Union Matters Podcast to talk about #cannabis and #worklaw in #NovaScotia #Canada #Canlab #nspoli

### Donna MacGregor (@macgregordm)

NSGEU donates \$10,000 to Transition House Assoc. of NS. Thank you NSGEU for this donation and helping women of NS build lives free of violence.



Admin. Professionals Bargaining Council



Support Services Bargaining Council

## A HISTORIC ROUND OF HEALTH

At long last, this round of bargaining for our four acute health care units – Health Care, Administrative Professionals, Nursing and Support Services – has wrapped up!

It truly was one for the history books, as Stephen McNeil's Liberal government restricted wage increases and froze, then ended, retirement allowances. They also decided to throw the health care system into chaos by "streamlining" nine district health authorities into just two: a province-wide health authority (the NSHA) and the IWK. The move was intended to force union members out of their existing unions (NSGEU, CUPE, NSNU and Unifor) and into a union of the government's choice (read: not the already powerful NSGEU).

A legal battle ensued and after a lengthy and trying arbitration process, the four unions involved came out on top, ensuring no existing members would be forced into a union of government's choosing, and forming the Council of Unions (which, incidentally, is what the unions had proposed before government passed legislation).

But the arbitration was really just the beginning of the battle.

Next came the challenge of trying to merge dozens of existing contracts into just two (one for the NSHA and one for the IWK) in each of the four bargaining units, a process

which required all four unions to bargain together at one table – something that had never been done before.

As the cherry on Premier McNeil's union-busting sundae, government also introduced legislation requiring that all union members working at the NSHA and the IWK negotiate very complex province-wide essential services plans that ensured large numbers of members remain at work in the event of a strike.

In the spring of 2018, the Council of Health Care Unions undertook a strategy to ratchet up the pressure on the provincial government and the employers in an attempt to level the playing field in bargaining. This strategy required the unwavering support of health care workers in three unions across the province. In April, the Council announced it was conducting the first ever province-wide strike vote in health care. The membership responded with overwhelming support: On May 1st, members voted 93 per cent in favour of strike action. That vote was the key turning point.

Shortly after that, the Council referred disputes under the IWK Essential Services agreement to the Labour Board for resolution. Outstanding work by IWK members led to a settlement that meant that only 35 per cent of IWK members would remain at work in the event of a strike.

The very real possibility of an effective strike at the IWK



Nursing Bargaining Council



Health Care Bargaining Council

## CARE BARGAINING CONCLUDES!

and the impending possibility of a strike at the NSHA caused the province to propose mediation/arbitration with William Kaplan as a means to settling all four health care collective agreements at the NSHA and the IWK. The mediation/arbitration agreement also established the wages for the new collective agreement, froze the retirement allowance pending a court challenge by the Unions, provided an option for payout of existing retirement allowance accruals and ensured the protection of existing sick and retiree benefit agreements for all members.

The mediation/arbitration proposal was ratified by 92 per cent of members in all four bargaining units across all four unions (NSGEU, NSNU, CUPE and Unifor).

The parties re-entered negotiations following the ratification and the Council began to make real and important progress on your behalf.

On July 27th, Mr. Kaplan began the mediation/arbitration for the Council of Health Care Unions. During this time, Mr. Kaplan decided upon the remaining outstanding issues. His award established the final collective agreements for all Health Care bargaining unit workers at the NSHA and the IWK.

The Health Care collective agreement and Mr. Kaplan's award was essentially used as a base agreement for the

other three bargaining units for the purposes of the negotiations.

It turns out, Premier McNeil may have underestimated the labour movement's ability to come together in the interests of our members.

Now, after countless hours of painstaking bargaining preparation and time at the table, our four Councils have hammered out strong agreements that feature some of the best language from each of our components' existing agreements. NSGEU members came through this challenge and retained all of the very important key collective agreement provisions they fought so hard for throughout the past 40 years.

NSGEU is very proud of the hard work done during these rounds of bargaining. We appreciate the efforts of staff and bargaining council members who helped us achieve these agreements, and the support and patience of the members who were forced endure this tumultuous round of bargaining.

And now that the heavy lifting of getting the first collective agreement under our belts is behind us, we can head into our next round of bargaining in an even stronger position: prepared to fight for more improvements to these contracts next time around.

We are stronger together! 

## WHAT'S HAPPENING IN HOME CARE?

### We're Part of a Working Group!

The NSGEU is pleased to have been included in a provincial government working group on home care. The purpose of the group – which consists of union stakeholders, Health Association Nova Scotia (HANS), and government representatives – was for government to obtain the unions' perspective on the state of our home care system in Nova Scotia.

We will be tabling a number of proposals that are focused on getting government to recognize home care as health care.

We have agreed to finalize the first draft of our recommendations by mid-January, with the goal of having a final report to the Minister of Health & Wellness by early February. We anticipate a response from the Minister within six weeks of submission.



### Home Care Bargaining Update

NSGEU staff and bargaining committee members have been hard at work for the past few months, developing our bargaining proposals and meeting with home care employer representatives to exchange proposals.

Negotiations with the larger home care employers, Northwood and VON (Locals 34, 31, 35, 40 & 85), have been progressing steadily, with January and February expected to be crucial months at the table.

Negotiations for Local 33 (Richmond County) and Local 37 (Guysborough County) are also well underway, with progress being made at both tables. Yarmouth/Argyle home support (Local 32) have bargaining dates set for January 15th and 16th, when proposals will be exchanged with the employer. Bargaining proposals for Digby & Clare home care are still being developed and dates will be set up in late February or early March, once they are finalized.

Requests have been made to set dates for bargaining for the remaining home care tables (Locals 36, 39, 76, 83 & 84) with the respective employers. [△](#)

Enter to  
Win an  
iPad!

**Would you like a chance to win an iPad?**

**Simply complete the Communications Survey that is being emailed to all members and be entered into a draw to win an iPad!**

## Standing with our posties!

The Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) has been at the bargaining table with their employer, Canada Post, for more than one year, trying to negotiate important issues like gender pay equity and improvements to workplace safety concerns.

At the end of November, Canada Post called on the Federal Liberal government to pass back-to-work legislation that would put an end to the rotating strikes being held throughout the country by CUPW, rather than simply bargain in good faith with the union.

Many NSGEU members have been affected by similar heavy-handed legislative tactics by our own Provincial

Liberal government, under the leadership of Stephen McNeil. The right to free and fair collective bargaining and the right to strike is every workers' issue.

As such, the NSGEU has been showing our support to CUPW by promoting and attending rallies in solidarity with these fellow workers, and sharing information about CUPW's struggle. NSGEU President Jason MacLean also sent a letter to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and members of the Federal Liberal cabinet, outlining what our own experience with back-to-work legislation has been like over the past five years.

Here is a copy of that letter:

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau  
Office of the Prime Minister  
80 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister,

I am writing you today on behalf of the over 31,000 members of Nova Scotia Government & General Employees Union regarding your government's introduction of Bill C-89, "An Act to provide for the resumption and continuation of postal services".

Your government's back-to-work legislation is completely one-sided and incredibly harmful, as it does nothing to encourage Canada Post to negotiate in good faith, emboldens other governments across Canada to trample on Labour rights and diminishes and weakens Canada's labour movement. I know this all too well, as the members of NSGEU have been under almost constant attack in Nova Scotia since the election of the Stephen McNeil Liberal government in 2013. In our own province over the past five years, we have faced similar undemocratic legislative interference, and I can say that it has severely damaged labour relations with the thousands of public sector workers delivering important services throughout our province. We all

had hoped for better from you.

Labour unions play an important role in protecting the rights of workers and growing the middle class. Under Stephen Harper's government, many of the fundamental labour rights that unions have worked so hard to secure were rolled back, making it more difficult for workers to organize freely, bargain collectively in good faith, and work in safe environments. Do these words sound familiar Prime Minister? They should: they are taken directly from your own "Real Change" 2015 platform. You also committed that:

- Changes to labour laws should be based on evidence, not ideology, and made after legitimate consultation with unions; and
- We are strongly committed to supporting and protecting workers' rights, and as government, we will bargain in good faith with Canada's public sector unions.

By siding whole-heartedly with Canada Post and introducing Bill C-89, your commitments to Labour now ring hollow and your actions prove no different than those of Stephen Harper. You and Members of Parliament across Canada will defend the introduction of C-89 by saying it is

"simply procedural", and that you still "believe a deal is possible." While they may be good talking points, nothing could be further from the truth. Passing this legislation interferes with the collective bargaining process and will unfairly tip the scales in favour of the employer – Canada Post – as it sends a very clear message that if unionized workers do not accept the current subpar offer that is on the table, they will be forced back to work.

We honestly want to hear from all of you on how this is fair? If it was wrong when Prime Minister Harper did it, why is it right today?

I ask that your government scrap Bill C-89 and instead, encourage both sides to get back to the bargaining table and negotiate in good faith to address workers' concerns regarding unsafe working conditions, equality for rural carriers, and access to secure full-time middle-class jobs.

I look forward to your reply,  
Jason MacLean [△](#)





**STAND UP**  
Delegates at NSGEU's 2016 Convention voted on and spoke to resolutions to help set the direction for the coming term.

# Triennial Convention

NSGEU's Triennial Convention will be held May 8th to 11th at the Halifax Convention Centre

## What is Convention?

Convention is a very exciting time for the union. On May 8th, hundreds of your fellow NSGEU members – delegates elected by each Local – will come from every corner of the province to meet in Halifax and, over the course of the next four days, they will make decisions and pass resolutions that will govern the union for the next three years. They will also elect the next NSGEU Executive Committee, which will help ensure the union meet these goals and challenges.

Convention is an empowering experience for everyone involved. It is a time for reflecting on the accomplishments we have made together over the past three years, and strategizing about how we will overcome the next set of challenges. It is a time that people share stories and strategize about the future. It is a time for solidarity, and support.

## Your Local at Convention

The Local is the building block of the union – its foundation. The number of delegates your Local can send to Convention is set out in the NSGEU Constitution and is calculated based on the total number of members on the membership list 120 calendar days preceding Convention (which is Tuesday,

January 8th). Your Local's delegate entitlement is sent to your Local President from the Union office within two weeks of this date (by January 22nd). The next step is for your Local Executive to hold elections to fill the delegate positions at a special or regular meeting at least 70 days prior to Convention (before Wednesday, February 27th).

## Interested in Becoming a Convention Delegate?

To be eligible for nomination as a delegate or alternate to convention, a member shall have attended at least forty per cent (40%) of the members Local meetings in the twelve (12) month period preceding the date of nominations. Please note that members shall be deemed to have attended the local meetings if they are unable to attend due to attending to union business or scheduled to work at the time of the Local meeting and have notified the Secretary of the Local in writing.

If a Local has not elected its full complement of delegates or alternates to Convention, then a member in good standing shall be considered eligible for nomination for the remaining delegate seats or as an alternate.

## Submitting Resolutions to Convention

Your Local can also submit resolutions to Convention.



Resolutions are very important! They are ideas that set the union's direction in between conventions. Find out more about resolutions and how to write them: <http://nsg.eu.ca/resolutions/writing-resolutions-and-constitutional-amendments/>

## Executive Committee Elections

NSGEU's Triennial Convention is where the direction and priorities of the union for the upcoming term are established, and where leaders are elected to ensure those goals are reached.

Any NSGEU member is welcome to seek election on the Executive Committee, and giving each candidate an opportunity to participate in the campaign is critical to the union's strength and ongoing success. To make sure these opportunities are open to each and every NSGEU member, there are some basic rules that govern the Executive Committee Elections: In order to run for the Executive Committee, you must:

- First be elected as one of your Local's convention delegates;
- Have attended at least 40% of your local meetings over the past 12 months before nominations;
- Or, over the past six years, have spent at least 12 months as a Local officer, steward, bargaining committee member, member of the Board of Directors, member of a provincial committee or

## Important Dates for the Local

- Tues. January 8th, 2019 – Date on which your delegate entitlement is calculated. The number of delegates each Local may elect will be communicated to each Local President within two weeks from this date (Jan. 22nd)
- Wed. February 27th, 2019 – Date by which all delegates must have been elected. Locals who do not hold their elections before this date will not be eligible to send delegates to convention, as per NSGEU Constitution & Bylaws, which does not permit exceptions to this article.
- Fri. March 8th, 2019 – Date by which NSGEU's Executive Director must have received the following information from each Local's Secretary: 1. the names of the Local's elected delegates and alternates for convention; 2. Resolutions or constitutional amendments which were approved at a Local meeting, and certified by the Local President and Secretary.
- Fri. March 29th, 2019 – Date by which each delegate and alternate must submit their completed application form to the NSGEU's Executive Director (Adjustments to time off can be provided to the Convention Coordinator as needed following submission of their application forms).
- Mon. April 8th, 2019 – Date by which all resolutions and reports which were submitted to Convention are forwarded to all delegates by NSGEU staff.
- Mon. May 6th, 2019 – Date by which credential forms for each delegate have been received by the Executive Director. The credential forms are completed and submitted by the Local Secretary or Secretary-Treasurer.

## Important Dates for Committees:

- Wed., March 13th, 2019 – Deadline for all committee reports to Convention to be received by the Executive Director.
- March 22nd & 23rd, meeting of the Board of Directors – At this meeting, the Board will consider and vote on Board Resolutions to Convention.
- Mon. April 8th, 2019 – This is the deadline for the Resolutions Committee to submit their report to Convention.

## Important Dates if you wish to run for the Provincial Executive:

- Wed. February 27th, 2019 – Deadline to be elected as a delegate to Convention (see above for more information).
- Fri. March 8, 2019– Deadline for photo and personal statement of no more than 600 words which will be included in the Pre-Convention issue of the Stand.
- Mon. March 18, 2019 – Date that the list of delegates to Convention will be available to candidates for campaigning purposes only.
- Fri. May 10th, 2019 – Deadline to submit an "Intent to Seek Nomination" form to the Nominations Receiving Committee.



regional or occupational councilor.

Once elected as a convention delegate, eligible candidates must then fill out the "Intent to Seek Nomination" form, which is available from either your Local President, the Nominations Receiving Committee, the NSGEU office, or from your Convention binder (which you will receive 10 days before Convention). Most candidates fill out this form well in advance of Convention so they have a chance to create and distribute campaign materials, but there is nothing stopping an eligible candidate from coming forward during Convention itself. The "Intent to Seek Nomination" forms must be submitted to the Nominations Receiving Committee no later than the concluding session of the second-last scheduled day of convention (which is May 10th).

NSGEU Campaign Policy NSGEU policy allows for all declared candidates to be provided with a list of names and contact information for each Convention delegate. The candidates must sign a declaration promising to use this list only for campaign purposes.

Candidates have an opportunity to have a photo and personal statement in the Pre-Convention issue of The Union Stand which will be emailed out to all members. Union staff will copy, mail, and email a one-page leaflet to all delegates on behalf of each declared candidate. These leaflets will be mailed out within 10 days of the candidate submitting the material for their leaflet to the Nominations Receiving Committee, c/o NSGEU head

office. Candidates will also be provided with copies of this leaflet to distribute to delegates during Convention (Please note: distribution of campaign material is permitted only outside of Convention hall. Election material cannot be posted inside the hall.)

Other NSGEU members are allowed to offer assistance in-kind to candidates and their campaigns, or by helping to contact delegates and distribute campaign materials at Convention. Campaigns will be kept internal, and candidates will not seek out media as a means of communicating with members. Other than the article in The Union Stand and the one-page leaflet, the union (or anybody from the union, like a Local or committee) will not offer donations, materials or assistance in-kind from outside sources also will not be allowed. Except for copying and mailing campaign material, there shall be no staff involvement in the political process. If there are any allegations of staff interference, the complaint should be made in writing to the Executive Director, who will refer them to the President for due process. Elected members or candidates seeking election will not initiate involvement of staff in the political process. Should staff have complaints, they should make them in writing to the Executive Director, who will refer them to the President for due process. In accordance with Article 13 – Discipline of the NSGEU Constitution, no candidate shall produce literature or make statements that will bring disrepute on the union, other candidates or its members. Δ

## FALL 2018 SCHOLARSHIP & BURSARY RECIPIENTS



Mary Olivella



Adria Quigley



Benjamin Wright



Shauna Crosby



Micayla Matthews

### NSGEU Member Bursary Awards

The following members have been selected by the NSGEU Education Committee and ratified by the NSGEU Board of Directors to receive awards of \$1,000:

- Local 102 Katherine Rennie – Bill Hebert Memorial Award
- Local 119/1246 Kristina Murphy – Carmen Williams Memorial Award
- Local 7 Kristianne Raposas – Kathleen Morrison Memorial Award
- Local 119 Kendra Slawter
- Local 100 Adria Quigley
- Local 119 Jessica Mannette
- Local 100 Atul Sabharwal
- Local 119 Nicole Melanson
- Local 3 Nicholas Baker
- Local 71 Shauna Crosby
- Local 267F Kathleen Williams
- Local 66 Alissa Quinn
- Local 100 Micayla Matthews
- Local 8 Cassandra Knight
- Local 77 Kate Hide

### NSGEU Member Dependent Scholarship Awards

The following members' dependents

have been selected by the NSGEU Education Committee and ratified by the NSGEU Board of Directors to receive scholarships:

- Local 80 Michael Phlean: Emily Phelan \$2,500 – Adrian Timmons Memorial Award
- Local 470 Bonnie Davidson: Myles Davidson \$1,500 – Alex Buchanan Memorial Award
- Local 100 Peilong Zhang : Zi Jing Zhang \$1,500 – Aubrey Stevens Memorial Award
- Local 53 Linda Wright: Benjamin Wright \$1,500 – Greg Blanchard Award
- Local 122 Susan Jerrott: Emma Jerrott \$1,500 – David Peters Award

### NSGEU Member Dependent Bursary Awards

The following members' dependents have been selected by the NSGEU Education Committee and ratified by the NSGEU Board of Directors to receive bursary awards of \$1,000:

- Local 2 Mark Farrell: Makaylah Farrell – Westray Memorial Award
- Local 101 Tiffany Cameron: Sarah MacNeil – Brian Langille Memorial Award

- Local 101 Tracy Field Shalyn: Field – Irving Deale Memorial Award
- Local 77 Lauri MacDougall: Megan MacDougall – Phillip Cogswell Memorial Award
- Local 73 Heidi Jollimore: Taylor Jollimore – Gordon Burnham Memorial Award
- Local 100 Jeffrey DeGuzman: Ephraim De Guzman – John Rossiter Memorial Award
- Local 423 Lisa Doucet: Gabrielle Doucet
- Local 72 Richere Fortin: Sarah Fortin
- Local 101 Linda Fitzner: Joseph Fitzner
- Local 101 Linda Fitzner: Ronald Fitzner
- Local 1246 Marie Crowley: Lauren Dexter
- Local 101 Zarghone Hashemi: Zohre Hashemi
- Local 53 Carol Ann Daley: Kristena Daley
- Local 101 Arlene Roy: Sophia Roy
- Local 8 Heather O'Keefe: Mary Olivella Δ

**TOTAL AWARDED: \$38,500**

# Tuning in to the union

In the Fall, the NSGEU Communications team launched a new podcast, "Union Matters." The goal of the podcast is to share information and create dialogue around issues that are important to our union, the labour movement, and our members.

The idea for the podcast came from President Jason MacLean, who enjoys listening to podcasts in his free time (he is partial to podcasts about health and wellness, fantasy football and pop culture.)

"I thought an NSGEU podcast would be a great way to connect with members who might be more interested in hearing about union issues, rather than reading about them," MacLean said.

So far, topics have included cannabis use in the context of the workplace; NSGEU's educational

opportunities; how the union gives back to the community; Nova Scotia's health care crisis; and the importance of paid leave and support for victims of domestic violence (just to name a few!)



To help promote the podcast among the members, the Communications department ran a weekly contest, requiring members to listen to the weekly podcast and answer a question about that week's episode to be entered into a draw for two spots in a skybox to see the Halifax Mooseheads play the Moncton Wildcats in mid January. We received an average of 380 entries each week!

Thank you to everyone who has listened to our podcast, and who participated in the contest! Δ

## UNIONS MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN OUR LIVES!

Unions fought for many of the benefits workers enjoy today: Sick leave, maternity & paternity leave, vacation, minimum wage, paid breaks, overtime, workplace safety standards and regulations, collective bargaining rights, and much, much more.

Do you know of a group of non-unionized workers who might be interested in joining the NSGEU? Please contact:

Lori Smith, Education & Organizing Officer  
902-456-6531 or 1-877-556-7438 or [lsmith@nsgeu.ca](mailto:lsmith@nsgeu.ca)



**WOMEN OF WIC**  
Members of NSGEU's Womens' Issues Committee (WIC) at the conference in November. (L to R) Sandra Mullen, Marilyn Perry, Natalie Hillier, Tracy Groves, Debbie Bowie, Michelle Jardine, Loretta Simmons, Susan Macumber, Karen Grandy and Christine Rushton.

# Empowering Women to Empower All!

Did you know that almost three quarters of NSGEU's membership identify as female?

With that many women in our ranks, it only makes sense that we put a significant focus on womens' issues. We do this through our Womens' Issues Committee (WIC), which takes the lead on many initiatives, events and campaigns throughout the year, but also plans a Womens' Issues Conference in off years from our Convention.

On November 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>, the committee hosted their conference at the NSGEU office in Burnside. Sandra Mullen, NSGEU's 1<sup>st</sup> Vice-President, is also the Executive Liason to the Womens' Issues Committee.

"The theme of this year's conference was 'Empowering Women to Empower All,' because you empower the women of the union, which are 73% of the union, they're going to take this information back to their locals, to their community, and we hope that that's how we build a stronger membership and have the women be courageous to get involved," Sandra explains.

Past themes of the conference include women in politics, which included communications workshops, a tour of the Nova Scotia Legislature, in an effort to educate and encourage female NSGEU members to get involved in our political system.

This year's conference saw a number of first-time participants, and proved to be a great opportunity to empower the women of our union.

The conference also featured a panel discussion intended to showcase how women make a difference in the lives of their loved ones: in their family, their community and their union. Panelists included Tammy Martin, the NDP MLA from Cape Breton; Sandra Margettie, a well-known former school board member; and Jacqueline Swaine, President of NS SEIU, member of the Nova Scotia Federation of Labour and Chair of the Women's Committee for the Federation of Labour.



To hear more about this year's conference, tune into our podcast: <https://tinyurl.com/y9bg6rj9> Δ





## Hot Topic: Weed & The Workplace

Since the legalization of cannabis on October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2018, many employees (and employers) have been left with questions about how the use of the substance – recreationally and medicinally – may affect their employment.

**Union Matters (UM)** sat down with **Jill Houlihan (JH)**, partner at the law firm Pink Larkin, which specializes in labour and employment law, professional regulation, and pension and benefits law, to see if we could answer some of the most commonly asked questions:

**UM** Since cannabis was legalized just a few weeks ago, workplace policies on its use are still kind of unclear for many people. Some employers, like the military, police, and airlines, have established rules for restricting cannabis consumption, even in an employee's off time. So generally, are employers allowed to control whether employees use cannabis in their off time?

**JH** Generally speaking, no. They can't control your use in your personal time per se. The question is always whether there is a connection to the workplace – whether or not there is a connection to your employer's interests. So in the context of cannabis, what we're

looking at is whether or not you are impaired at the point when you are coming in to work.

**UM** Okay. So, kind of the same idea as if you use alcohol in your off time, you have to make sure that you're not impaired by the time you come to work in the morning?

**JH** That's right. Principally there's no difference in that sense. Just as you say, you wouldn't come to work impaired by alcohol, you shouldn't come to work impaired by cannabis or any other substance, for that matter.

The tricky issues with cannabis are that, we're not quite sure how long impairment lasts. The general rule accepted by Health Canada is that if someone uses cannabis, they can expect to experience the effects of that for up to 24 hours. So that's a pretty good benchmark. But there are also some studies to suggest that, especially for people who are regular users of cannabis, the effects can linger for quite a long time after the 24-hour period.

So, that's sort of where it gets into the fuzzy area.

Because cannabis builds up in the system, if you are subject to testing, for example, if there's an issue of alleged driving while under the influence and you're tested, you may, if you're a regular user of cannabis, have quite high levels of THC in your system, even though you may not have consumed cannabis within 24 hours.

**UM** Oh, that's really interesting. So that's probably on the police side of things, where it will be difficult to prove impairment for use.

**JH** That's right, so impairment on the criminal side, police have tools at their disposal that they can use to prove impairment as such. Whether or not there's a clear line between the levels of THC in someone's system and impairment is a bit of an open question.

**UM** What can employer do if they suspect an employee is high at work or impaired at work?

**JH** This will always depend on the particular workplace and you can look at your collective agreement and what workplace policies you may have. Generally speaking, if the employer suspects that someone is intoxicated or under the influence of cannabis at work, you can expect that they are going to remove that person from the workplace initially, and that there will be an investigation. Whether or not they are entitled to send that employee for testing would depend on the rules in that workplace.

...As a general rule, employers are not allowed to impose random testing, except in some particular exceptions. And so what you're looking at in that type of situation is, where there's reasonable cause to believe that someone is impaired, there is law to suggest that in those cases the employer may be able to request that the employee may be tested. And whether or not that's the case in your workplace, that's the type of situation where you want to speak to your local rep or the union about that.

**UM** For our civil service members, their employer has developed a fitness to work guideline, and a policy around impairing substances, which they plan to roll out soon, and there'll be some educational pieces around that. What does that mean for the average civil service member? Wouldn't they already have a policy in place about alcohol?

**JH** That's right. Fitness to work is way of putting the onus back on the employee. So rather than adopting the type of policies you've seen in some police forces or the military where they're setting a particular time limit, for example, that you can't consume cannabis within a certain number of days. By establishing a fitness to work policy, then it's up to the employee to make sure that ... you are coming to work in state where you are able to do your job and you're not impaired. And so, yes, in terms of alcohol, I think we all understand what it means not to come to work under the influence of alcohol. In terms of cannabis, it is a little bit less clear, so for any particular person, whether they're coming into work impaired by cannabis or not, how long ago they might have consumed cannabis, how much, what strain, and what method of consuming it, that can vary depending on the person in terms of the impact on that person, so for fitness to work, it's a matter for each individual employee you have to make sure that whatever you've been doing, that at the point where you come to work you're not impaired.

**UM** With alcohol, there are blood alcohol levels and you can generally know how many drinks you can consume before you are considered to be impaired. So in the years to come, as they develop clear science on this issue, people will probably be able to better gauge that?

**JH** I think that's right. The criminal code was amended as part of the legalization of cannabis this past June. There are new particular limits in terms of THC that you can have in your system for driving under the influence, so those offences start at 2 nanograms of THC per 1000 ml of blood. There are clear limits in that sense, but what's not clear is at what point can you expect to have that level of THC in your system.

**UM** Can different government departments implement their own policies for safety sensitive positions. Could we see different areas implement different rules?

**JH** It always depends on the collective agreement, it depends on the nature of the workplace, but you can expect that employers are going to be entitled to demand different standards depending on the nature of the work that you're doing. We always talk about when the





employer is implementing a policy pursuant to its general management rights that any policies it implements have to be reasonable. Oftentimes you have a requirement in the collective agreement if there are going to be those types of policies that you have consultation with the union about those, that you have an opportunity to provide feedback on those and review those policies, but yes, as a general principle, if you are in a safety sensitive workplace, and that can range from situations where you are operating heavy equipment or something where there's a very clear physical risk, but also you can look at health care, where people are working with patients and have to make sure that they're able to provide care in a safe way, so yes, you can expect that there are going to be different standards in those types of workplaces.

**UM** From a legal perspective, this must be an interesting time, for you. Have you heard any really interesting pieces of case law that are coming out of this, or that you think will develop out of this?

**JH** It is interesting. It's a challenging time because there are so few clear standards, even in the law. So what we are seeing coming up to legalization and now you see a lot of different approaches. Even in labour law, you can pull arbitration decisions where one arbitrator has said you can expect that this person should be able to consume cannabis within a certain period of time of going to work and that's okay, and then you look at another arbitration decision and the arbitrator's come to the completely opposite conclusion. It's challenging in that sense, it's difficult to provide clear guidance to our clients in some ways because you're saying we can't say for certain how an arbitrator's going to deal with some of these issues. A lot of that is going to play out over the coming years and we'll see how things unfold.

**UM** There's still some grey areas on the issue of cannabis use, for example, is there, or what is the difference between medicinal cannabis use versus recreational cannabis use as it pertains to the workplace and policies?

**JH** Medical cannabis use, the primary difference between that and the use of recreational cannabis, is

that if you are using cannabis because of disabilities and you have a medical authorization for use then you have protection under the Human Rights Act. So if you are using marijuana in that context your employer has a duty to accommodate that use up to the point of undue hardship. So if you're looking at situations, for example, where someone is regularly using medical cannabis, for example, perhaps are using in the evening in coming to work the next morning, that the employer has to take a much more careful look at that issue for that employee, so it wouldn't be enough just to say "We're instituting a blanket policy, you can't consume cannabis 24 hours within coming to work." they can't do that with someone who's using it for a disability. You have to look at that person's individual circumstances and you have to assess whether or not you can accommodate that usage up to the point of undue hardship. There's no such protections if it's recreational cannabis.

**UM** If people have questions, if their workplace hasn't instituted clear policies on recreational cannabis use and they still have questions about recreational cannabis and how it relates to their work, what's the best thing for them to do?

**JH** I think it's always a good idea to talk to your local rep or the union to see if there's some advice that they can provide. Often times you can look at a policy and some aspects might not be clear to you but those might be issues that the union has actually addressed with the employer and might be able to fill you in on some of the background to those issues. Of course you can always raise those issues with a supervisor or manager. I can understand that some people may not want to flag themselves as someone who is possibly using cannabis even though it's legal now there's still a lot of kind of cultural barriers dealing with cannabis use that are still probably going to persist for some time. Absolutely that's an issue that you can go to the Union and seek some advice out.

 \*Note: this Q&A is based on an episode of "Union Matters" that was broadcast on Monday, November 19<sup>th</sup>. That podcast has been streamed more than 550 times! To listen, visit <https://soundcloud.com/user-807277680/union-matters-weed-the-workplace> 

## 2018 Sock It To Poverty Campaign Recap



**WARMING HEARTS (& HEADS)** Tara MacDonald is pictured here crocheting her 30<sup>th</sup> hat for NSGEU's 2018 Sock It To Poverty campaign.



Although we have not received a final tally of all the donations received for the 2018 Sock It To Poverty Campaign, Melissa Marsman, Chair of the Human Rights Committee reports that they have bought close to \$6,000 worth of socks from Stanfield's in December to distribute to regions in which the money was collected.

"On behalf of the Human Rights Committee we would like to thank the membership for making our 2018 campaign one of the most successful we have ever held," says Marsman. "Your donations of money and cold weather items will help many deserving Nova Scotians in your regions."

There were so many people who gave their time and their energy to gather items for donations. In Stellarton, a member organized a collection at her workplace and is organizing the donations be taken to a new shelter that opened up that is named after Viola Desmond and is called Viola's Place in New Glasgow.

Ken Wilkie, President of Local 480C sent us a short write-up on his co-worker, Tara McDonald, who

crocheted 41 hats for this year's campaign.

Tara is a Correctional Officer and a graduate of Success College in Lower Sackville where she intended on a career in policing. Once she was started working at the Cape Breton Correctional Facility, however, she decided to stay in corrections. After working at the Antigonish and North Nova Correctional Facilities where she was active in her Local Executive, she is now back at the Cape Breton Facility.

Tara learn to crochet 14 years ago while working at the airport where there was a lot of downtime between departures and arrivals. This is her second year crocheting hats for the campaign.

Besides crochet and working full-time, she is also kept busy with her young family leaving little time for her other passions; photography, and her dogs.

Thank you Tara for the donation of all your time and materials for 41 hats for people in need in your Cape Breton region. Thank you to Ken too, for sending this story in. 



**Giving Back** (left) Denise Zinck (Income Assistance Supervisor) – DCS Hants District Office; Darlene Meehan (Secretary Local 4); and the Christmas Angels Coordinator, Melanie Skelhorn – Community Services in Windsor.



**(Right)** Gabriella Rosales, Administrative Support for Department of Community Services; Peter Austin-Smith (Local 4 President); and Margaret MacMillan adoption Social Worker - Community Services in Kentville.

they provide to as many families as possible with their other programs, but these gift cards will enable and empower more families to purchase what they need for food themselves. This is a program that our agency ran when it was Family and Children's Services until we became DCS in 2010. It has been in existence since the 70's and the county residents fully support it each year for families in need (see <http://christmasangels.ca/projects/> for more information).

The office in Granville agreed to give one card to each family to share the Christmas joy. The ten families have been agreed upon and workers will begin giving them out right away. These families in need include 24 children and 16 parents.

- Article submitted by Peter Austin-Smith Jr., **(Right)** Dave Brewster (Local 4 Chief Steward) and Edwina Beals Caseworker Supervisor – Community Services in Granville.



## Giving back, at the Local level

At one of our recent Local meetings, members of Local 4 discussed our Social Account and how best to spend some of the money. It was felt that monies have been sitting unused in this account for some time as there has not been social events put on for Local 4 members for various reasons, but not for lack of trying.

As our Social account continued to grow, there were discussions around things like requests for a donation for Valley Regional Council go towards their fall event. Though we didn't offer funds to the Regional Council, it was felt that this would be a good resolution to put forward at Convention – to get \$1,700 up front for events and after the end of term, return what monies if any is left to head office. That still did not help us with our current issue of spending or Social Account. So, after a bit more discussion, Brother Clark Cooper made a motion to donate \$500 (each) to three different Community Services offices for the festive season for children in need. This motion was seconded by Brother David Brewster.

At our next meeting (November 13<sup>th</sup>) Brother Dave Brewster discussed the logistics of gift cards being given to DCS agencies to assist needy families during the holidays from our Social Fund. Gift cards (ten \$50 gift cards) would be given to representatives at DCS in Hants, Kings and Annapolis agencies. Those folks being given the gift cards were also asked to submit some information with their photo of how the cards will be used.

All the gift cards that were purchased have now been given to Community Services staff for disbursement.

In West Hants, the cards will be given to needy families by the Christmas Angels Coordinator in the area for the holiday season to assist with food for their families. All cards had "food only" written on them so they can only be used for that at Sobeys. The Christmas Angels program does food hampers and gifts for families in the most need with their Wishbook Program (usually 15 to 20 families), however they can only do so many of those, so

## NSGEU Gives Back

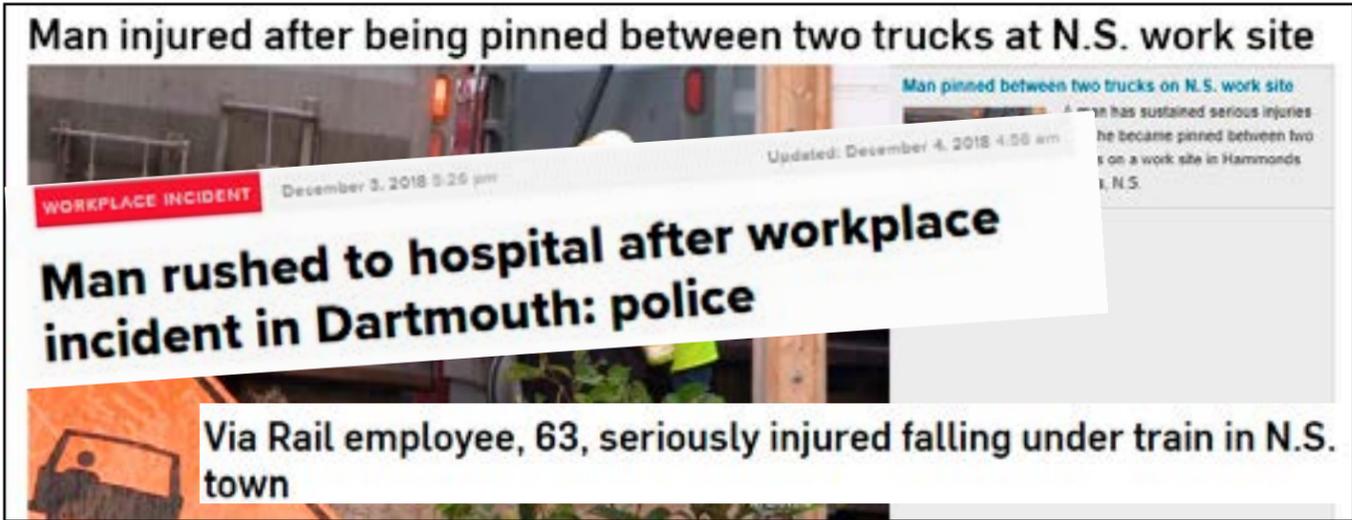
To date in 2018 the NSGEU has given back to the community in excess of **\$57,000** in the form of donations to Nova Scotia charities, directed by Convention and your Board of Directors.

FEED NS **\$14,000** | AIDS COALITION OF NS **\$5,000** |  
 NSGEU CANCER SUPPORT FUND **\$8,750** |  
 NSGEU INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL JUSTICE SOLIDARITY SCHOLARSHIP **\$5,000** |  
 TRANSITION HOUSES ASSOCIATION OF NS **\$10,000** |  
 MAYWORKS **\$4,000** | KIDS HELP PHONE **\$6,000** |  
 SOCK IT TO POVERTY **\$5,900** |



Transition House Association of Nova Scotia





## OH&S Report: A look back at 2018

There were 12 acute (as a result of a specific incident, like a fall) and 17 chronic (long-term illnesses like mesothelioma from inhaling asbestos) fatalities for a total of 29 deaths at work or because of work in the past between January and September, 2018.

We haven't even received the numbers from the last quarter of 2018 and we have already surpassed the number of fatalities in 2017. Each one of these statistics are real people who were trying to make a living and as a result of unsafe conditions at work, they are gone. It is important that we all are aware of health and safety and make it a priority in our lives and especially at work.

Did you know that every Nova Scotia employee has three basic OH&S rights?

Under the Nova Scotia Occupational Health and Safety Act, all provincially regulated employees in Nova Scotia have:

1. **The Right to Know:** Employees have the right to know information that could affect their health or safety in the workplace;
2. **The Right to Refuse Unsafe Work:** Employees have the right to refuse any unsafe or unhealthy work if they believe it will endanger them or someone else. They must be paid for their time while the situation is reviewed;
3. **The Right to Participate:** Employees have

the right to take an active role in safety in their workplace:

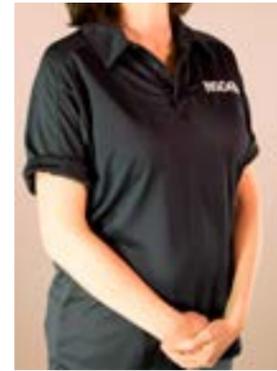
- In a workplace with between five and 19 employees, this means having an employee Safety Representative. This person would be chosen by all employees to meet regularly with the employer to address OH&S concerns;
- In a workplace with 20 or more employees, this means having a Joint Occupational Health & Safety Committee (JOHSC) which must meet regularly and which also must be comprised of at least 50 per cent employees.

You also have the right to report unsafe conditions and voice your concerns or opinions on any issue that affects your health and safety, or the health and safety of anyone at the workplace.

If you are interested in learning more about your OH&S rights, or if your workplace does not have a health & safety representative or JOHSC, you can contact the NSGEU OH&S Officer at [inquiry@nsgeu.ca](mailto:inquiry@nsgeu.ca) to arrange for customized OHS training or call the NSGEU toll free at 1-877-556-7438. △

# Union Threads

There's a whole range of colourful NSGEU clothing available at the union office at 255 John Savage Avenue. For more info, call Jackie Creemer at 424-4063 (toll free at 1-877-556-7438) or email [jcreemer@nsgeu.ca](mailto:jcreemer@nsgeu.ca).



NSGEU unisex golf shirt \$15.00 (xs-2xl)



Unisex zip up jackets \$30.00 (s-3xl)



NSGEU sweatshirt \$30.00 (xs-2xl)



Vest - Unisex-no hood \$45.00 (s- v4xl)



NSGEU 1/4 zip Pullover \$20.00 (xs-4xl)



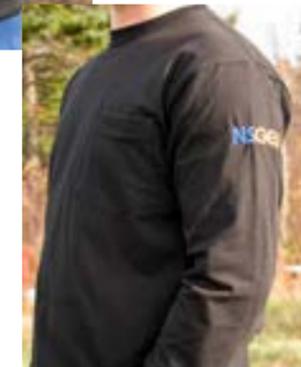
Ladies Vest with Hood \$45.00 (xs-2xl)



Unisex zip up jackets \$30.00 (s-3xl)



Micro-fleece jacket \$15.00 (xs-2xl)



Unisex long sleeve t-shirts grey, navy, black, \$15 s-l

# Women's Committee Conference 2018



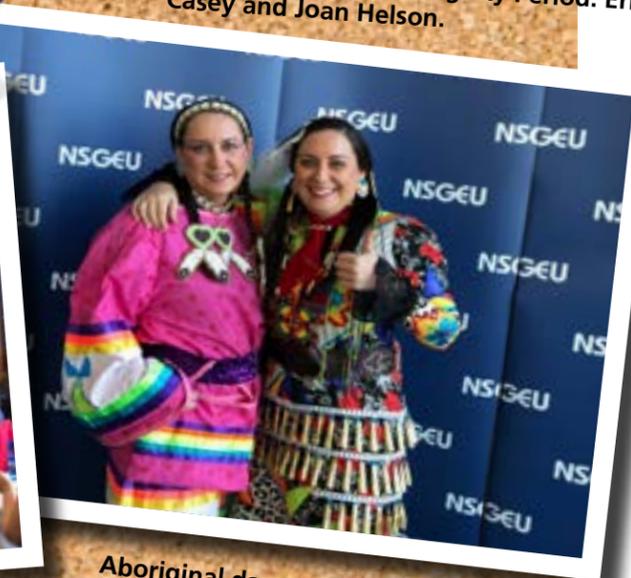
Above: NSGEU Women's Committee members Tracy Groves and Sandra Mullen present a donation to Transition Houses of Nova Scotia.



Guest speakers from Dignity Period: Erin Casey and Joan Helson.



NS Federation of Labour President Danny Cavanagh speaks at the Women's Conference.



Aboriginal dancers Brittany Pennell and Courtney Pennello opened the conference with a performance.

# Around the Union in Photos



NSGEU Board of Directors at their monthly meeting in December.



NSGEU Education Committee



Above and left: Juliana Mullen fills boxes with other NSGEU IAMAW members for Shoeboxes for Shelters.



# AFRICAN HERITAGE MONTH 2019



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