

Sisters – I am the only thing standing between you and some of the most amazing powerful and amazing talent I have ever seen. SO I am not going to take up too much of your time.

I want to thank the members of the women's committee for their leadership in pulling this conference together, I thought it was a good conference with great speakers and I know that people worked really hard to make this happen so please join me in thanking all of the sisters who made this weekend possible.

I also want to welcome the newly elected sisters on to the committee, to thank them for stepping up and taking a leadership role both yesterday in the small groups and again this morning during presentations.

And I also want to acknowledge the sisters who offered for election and were not successful. Standing in an election is one of the most critical acts of democracy that we can undertake. And I want to say thank you for putting yourself out there and allowing your name to stand, I know that it is not easy.

Sisters, one thing is clear from all of the speakers we have heard from this weekend is that women are under attack. By our employers, by governments, corporations, sometimes by Men.

And we have no choice but to respond with our collective strength. Together, we must rise up to say – we are not going to take this anymore. Not at the bargaining table, not through government policy or legislation, not in our union, not anywhere.

I think your great minds have come up with some concrete ideas about how the union can focus and take on some of these issues.

The central union alone cannot take on these issues. We need your help. We need your continued leadership within your local unions, in your workplace, in your community.

Like always, there is so much work to do. We talked about our campaigns, about what we need to do at the bargaining table ... about the provincial elections. WE have an opportunity this year with the elections to really make parties of all

stripes go on the record about where they stand on the policies that are so crucial to women's lives. Like child care, pay equity, housing, privatization.

A speaker told us this week we have to get each party's platform and we have to read between the lines. We have to view their policies through a gender and equity lens,

And I know that sisters are busy. Your involvement can be as simple as sending an email to your MPP or talking to your friends and family about an issue.

We should never underestimate the collective power we have when we coordinate and focus on our MPPs and we should never underestimate the influence we have over others in our lives. Be it at your kitchen table, at the hockey rink, coffee shops, socializing with friends.

Just simply having a discussion with your friend or neighbor or colleague about your perspective on these issues can go a long way.

Many of you have asked how we are going to pay for all of the work that we want to do. And there is no question that there are several competing demands for our money.

But one thing I know because I heard loud and clear this weekend – that this work has to become a priority.

We have access to 3 different pots of money from the National Union. So this is money in addition to the money that we collect from local per capita.

We have access to the National Defense Fund for Regional Strategic Initiatives. This is generally the area where we fund the majority of our equality work and this year we have access to \$800,000.00.

We also have access to the Anti-privatization fund and we know that privatization and women's issues go hand in hand and there will be opportunities for us to access the anti-privatization money to assist in carrying out some of work.

And like NDF, there is another 800,000.00 available to Ontario.

And because we know that October will be a provincial election we also have access to election money to the tune of about 300,000.00. So in total, for our campaign work for 2011 we have access to just under 2 million dollars.

And I can't think of more important issues to spend this money on than raising women's wages, achieving and maintaining pay equity and securing pensions for all and I commit to you, as I did on the opening day to ensure that our issues are on the front burner and adequately resourced.

Darcie Beggs, our very own Pensions expert, reminded us that in fact, every working woman in this country does in fact have a pension plan. It's the Canadian Pension Plan, CPP. And that highlighted for me the need to re-energize the fight for improvements to the CPP. This has to be in addition to our fight to achieve Defined Benefit Pensions in our workplaces.

We can all start to take action this weekend when over 40 buses will arrive to Hamilton for a mass show of solidarity for the steelworkers. Please don't miss out on this historic event. Contact our office to get your seat on the bus.

You came up with some great campaign ideas this weekend but I have to encourage you to not limit your involvement to these areas. We have other campaigns on the go that truly impact women's lives.

Like our fight to secure 3.5 hours of nursing and personal care for seniors in our LTC homes. The fight for quality affordable accessible child care, the fight to raise the rates for the most poor in this province, the fight to end competitive bidding.

Please contact Maureen in our office to learn more about our campaigns and to get involved in one of them.

So sisters, I said that I would be brief.

But I want you to know that I've been inspired this weekend. By you, your energy, your level of engagements, the ideas you have brought forward.

Like I need and want all of your support, I know that you will also need my support. I invite you to call me if there is anything that I can support you with – it doesn't just have to be money and per capita issues.

And use the committee you elected here this weekend for support.

Our support and solidarity to each other is crucial. Call on the friends and alliances you have made here this weekend. Find a young woman that you can help to bring along and mentor. Reach out to CUPE Ontario and the women's committee for support.

If we've learned anything this weekend it should be that we are strongest when we come together, unite to take action to defend the rights and protect the lives of women in this province. We know that when women unite we are an unstoppable force.

I want to end by reminding us of something Marie Clarke Walker said this weekend. She said, don't forget to stop to take time to celebrate our successes. While there is no doubt there has been a lot of set backs for women – women have made gains and we should not sell ourselves short by not taking the time to recognize and highlight our victories.

I want to thank you for taking the time to be here this weekend, for your commitment to these issues and for your level of engagement this weekend.

I hope you all had a great time and have a safe trip back to wherever you have to go today.

Please join me in welcoming the Raging Asian Women (RAW) drummers ...