

Women and Gender Rights Committee Report CUPE 3906 AGM

Dear members,

It has been a privilege to serve as Chair of the Women and Gender Rights Committee over the past year. This marks my third year leading this work, with a continued focus on building meaningful, member-centered, and action-oriented spaces within our union. Over the past year, the committee's work has focused on three key areas: community outreach and care, programming and events, and building structures for long-term support and action.

1. Community Outreach and Care-Based Work

A significant portion of the committee's work focused on direct outreach and relationship-building with members.

- Conducted one-on-one conversations and small group meetings with members
- Created safe and confidential spaces for sharing experiences
- Focused particularly on members facing difficult and sensitive circumstances

Through this work, key concerns emerged, including isolation, safety, surveillance, and disconnection from families. These challenges were found to disproportionately affect women and gender-diverse members.

This outreach was not only about gathering information, but about building trust, care, and solidarity within the union.

2. Programming, Training, and Events

The committee moved beyond symbolic programming toward skill-based, discussion-driven, and action-oriented initiatives.

Self-Defence and Empowerment Initiative

- Developed and proposed a self-defence training for members
- Secured facilitator support and presented a motion for funding
- Focused on practical skills, safety, and empowerment

International Women's Day Programming (March Event)

- Organized a three-hour interactive event
- Included group discussions, collaborative work, and structured dialogue
- Created space for members to share lived experiences in a respectful environment
- Provided lunch and care packages to support participation

This event has been organized consistently over the past three years, with increasing focus on depth, engagement, and outcomes.

3. Issue Identification and Action-Oriented Work

A key shift this year was toward collective problem identification and action planning.

- Participants identified two major issues affecting women and gender-diverse members
- Through discussion and consensus, one priority issue was selected
- The committee committed to developing concrete steps and union-based solutions

Key issues raised included lack of safe spaces, childcare needs, and experiences of violence and harassment, as reflected in the discussion outputs from the event.

The intention is to ensure continuity—so that next year, the committee can report back on tangible progress and outcomes.

4. Creating Safe, Inclusive, and Ethical Spaces

Throughout all activities, the committee prioritized:

- Trauma-informed and confidential engagement
- Respect for participant safety, privacy, and consent
- Careful handling of documentation and public sharing

This was especially important given that some participants were survivors of violence and required additional protections and sensitivity in engagement.

Reflections and Moving Forward

This year marked a transition from awareness-based work to structured, intentional, and action-oriented organizing. Moving forward, the committee will focus on:

- Advancing the identified priority issue with concrete implementation steps
- Expanding accessible programming across units
- Strengthening ongoing support systems for women and gender-diverse members
- Continuing to integrate equity, labour, and care into union work

I would like to thank all committee members and participants for their time, trust, and contributions. This work is grounded in collective effort, and it continues to grow because of the community we are building together.

In solidarity,

Kusum Bhatta

Chair, Women and Gender Rights Committee
CUPE Local 3906