

CSW69 DELEGATE REPORT



WHAT IS THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN?



The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is “the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women.” Established in 1946, it is a functional commission of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), of which Bob Rae is the President.



Each CSW has a unique theme and usually a review theme, which provide a framework for the whole program. To mark the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Conference, the theme of CSW69 was:

A review and appraisal of the implementation of the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the 23rd special session of the General Assembly.

This included “an assessment of current challenges that affect the implementation of the Platform for Action and the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and its contribution towards the full realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.”

...But what is the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action?



WHAT IS BEIJING+30 ?

2025 marks the

30th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995.

The conference's purpose was to set out a global framework for securing gender equality. Its outcome was the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted by all 189 participating governments. The Declaration recognized that:

MORE THAN 17,000 PEOPLE ATTENDED THE CONFERENCE, WHILE A PARALLEL NGO FORUM HAD 30,000 PARTICIPANTS.

“Women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development, and peace.”

WHAT IS THE BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION?



The Beijing Platform for Action is an agenda for women's empowerment, adopted alongside the Declaration.

It identifies 12 critical areas of concern, with strategic objectives and actions to be taken for each.

THE 12 CRITICAL AREAS OF CONCERN:

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
|  Women and poverty |  Women and armed conflict |  Human rights of women |
|  Education and training of women |  Women and the economy |  Women and the media |
|  Women and health |  Women in power and decision-making |  Women and the environment |
|  Violence against women |  Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women |  The girl child |

CFUW WRITTEN STATEMENT

NGOs like CFUW who are in special consultative status with ECOSOC are invited to submit written statements on subjects in which these organizations have a special competence and which relate to the CSW theme. Those statements are circulated by the UN Secretary-General.

Since CFUW's special competence is in education, our written statement focused on "**Education as the pivotal implementation tool of the Beijing Platform for Action.**"

It outlined how education is a cross-cutting strategy that accelerates progress in each **Area of Concern**, by demonstrating how education...

[Read
CFUW's
Written
Statement
Here!](#)



Women & Health: Reduces child and maternal mortality and improves child health and wellbeing. Sexual and reproductive health curriculum improves girls' health by giving them knowledge and agency over their bodies.



Violence Against Women: Creates economic opportunities that foster independence for women who may otherwise be financially reliant on a partner or family members, making leaving abusive situations difficult or impossible.



Women & Armed Conflict: Gives women and girls the tools to advocate for peace and opens up their access to decision-making and peacebuilding tables. Education on tolerance and mutual respect can also cultivate a culture of peace.



Women & the Environment: Empowers women and girls to engage in climate leadership, create and implement climate action initiatives, and develop their skills for green jobs.



Women, Poverty, & the Economy: Fosters workforce participation and entrepreneurship, contributing to women's economic development and that of their countries.



Women in Power & Decision-Making: Provides women with knowledge and skills to engage in political life and move into decision-making roles.



Women & the Media: Trains women and girls to work in and influence the fields of media, communications, and information technology.



The Girl Child: Allows the girl child to become informed and independent, escape poverty, prevent child marriage, and ensure her human rights are respected.

POLITICAL DECLARATION

Every 5th year, states negotiate a Political Declaration ahead of CSW, instead of the usual Agreed Conclusions. This declaration was hard-won, with progressive ideas challenged by the far right. Consequently there was no wording included on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and there was regression on commitments to climate change. However, the push by some countries to remove the word “gender” from the text did not work.

CFUW was involved in the negotiation process through Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE)’s Rapid Response group, providing feedback on the Declaration to the Canadian negotiating team.

[Read the CSW69 Political Declaration Here!](#)

The NGO Women Deliver outlined the following list of gains achieved in the Political Declaration:

- Adolescent girls are included in a CSW political declaration for the first time, recognizing their distinct needs, contributions, and vulnerabilities. Adolescence is a pivotal time — full of potential, yet often the moment when opportunities are stripped away, especially in times of crisis.
- Gender-based violence and sexual violence are explicitly named, reinforcing the urgent need for action.
- New language on peace and security acknowledges the critical role of women in peacebuilding.
- “Full, equal, and meaningful participation” is strengthened, reaffirming women’s and girls’ rights to be heard and to lead.
- Care work is recognized, with explicit references to care systems and the need for remuneration of care workers.
- Universal health coverage is upheld, maintaining a key framework for advancing health rights.

CONSULTATION DAY



In the Pre-Covid period, Consultation Day was an exciting in-person event of lively presentations, music, and meeting other delegates.

It has since become a virtual presentation and without the means to have our delegation together to view it on a TV screen, we met in the breakfast area and viewed on several laptops for most of the three-

hour presentation. One of the recommendations from our delegation is that Consultation Day revert to an in-person presentation, and that it be much shorter.

On Sunday at 6pm, the CFUW delegation met together in-person for the first time! Introductions were made and Kenzie distributed the CFUW lanyards, business cards, postcards, and notebooks. It was a happy time followed by groups going out to dinner in New York City!



THE OPENING OF CSW69

By Monday, March 10th, the CSW delegation had been in New York City for a few days, some since Friday as they came in early to pick up their passes without having a long wait. To attend sessions at the UN General Assembly Building, we went through security similar to airport security, and flashed our passes to enter the courtyard. The UN building can be like a maze for newcomers, although CFUW delegates had seen diagrams and a video to introduce them to the location of the sessions.

A group of “first-timers” arrived bright and early for a tour of the UN headquarters led by seasoned CSW experts Joy Hurst and Sandy Millen.



Delegates gathered around the Sphere Within Sphere, a gift to the UN from Italy in 1996. In it, a globe sits inside a broken sphere, symbolic of the fragility and complexity of the world.



They also stopped for pictures in front of the Knotted Gun, a Swedish sculpture that symbolizes non-violence.



At the entrance to the lobby, we stopped to admire the beautiful nickel and bronze doors donated by Canada and installed in 1952. The panels represent peace, justice, truth, and fraternity, qualities that were embodied in the life of Nelson Mandela, whose statue is just inside the lobby. During the presentations at CSW69, we would hear how those qualities are sorely missing from the lives of many women seeking gender equality and from the governments of many of their countries.



CFUW joined thousands of other delegates in watching the CSW69 Opening Session (recording [here](#)), featuring speeches from the Chair of CSW69, Abdulaziz M. Alwasil, UN Secretary-General António Guterres, and ECOSOC President Bob Rae, as well as several inspiring young women from around the world.



“

The poison of patriarchy is back—and back with a vengeance. There is an antidote, and that antidote is action.

”

*UN Secretary-General
António Guterres*

Delegates watching the CSW Opening Ceremony



CFUW PARALLEL EVENT

The planning of an in-person parallel event at CSW69 was done by a sub-committee of the CFUW International Relations Committee and chaired by Dr. Linda Coles, with CFUW members Grace Hollett, Barb DuMoulin, Heather Oxman, Sandra Thomson, and Linda Sestock. Since we had applied to co-sponsor with Women Graduates-USA, their representatives Dr. Elise Russo and Dr. Fay Weber joined CFUW on the sub-committee.

Panelists were invited and agreed to self-fund their visit to New York City to present in person. Following personal consultations and an introductory Zoom meeting where panelists met each other, the focus of each presentation was decided. Later, a full practice was held to better ensure a successful presentation.

NGO CSW/NY PARALLEL EVENT

EDUCATING WOMEN & GIRLS: ADVANCING THEIR EMPOWERMENT & EQUALITY

**MARCH 13, 2025
12:30-2:00PM ET
CCUN 2ND FLOOR
NEW YORK**





THE HON. JOAN MARIE AYLWARD
Lieutenant Governor,
Newfoundland & Labrador

Opening doors to leadership through education



WANDA BEDARD
President & Founder,
60 Million Girls

Supporting girls' agency through a quality education



GEETA DESAI
Co-Director, Global Affairs, Women Graduates - USA

Fostering women's and girls' innate critical thinking skills



SOON-YOUNG YOON
Founder, Cities for CEDAW; Beijing Conference NGO Forum Organizer

Accelerating progress on the Beijing Platform for Action: An inter-generational dialogue

Watch
the
Parallel
Event
Here!



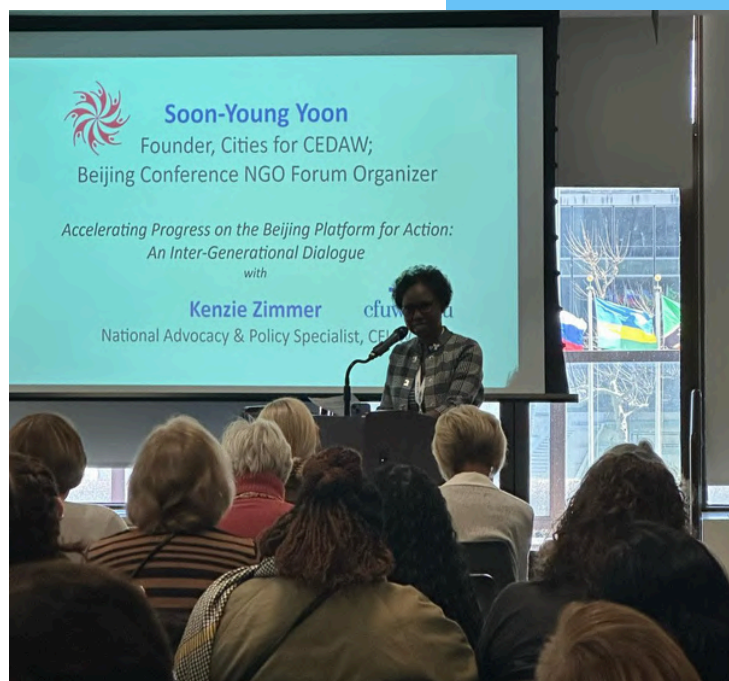
The Speakers with CFUW's Linda Coles, Grace Hollett, and Linda Sestock

Attended by more than 100 enthusiastic people, the session was moderated by Grace Hollett, VP International Relations, while the Q&A was monitored by CFUW President Linda Sestock.



Elise Russo introducing Geeta Desai

Attending CSW parallel and side events provides opportunities for meeting and networking with many interesting people from all around the world. This is illustrated by the many organizations represented by one or more attendees at our parallel event. We have emails to facilitate any follow-up including promoting CFUW's parallel session for CSW70.



Joy Hurst, introducing Soon-Young Yoon and Kenzie Zimmer



Sandra Thomson introducing Wanda Bedard



The Speakers:

Top left: Joan Marie Aylward, Lt. Governor of Newfoundland and Labrador

Top right: Soon-Young Yoon, Founder of Cities for CEDAW, and Kenzie Zimmer, CFUW National Advocacy and Policy Specialist

Bottom left: Geeta Desai, WG-USA Co-Director of Global Affairs

Bottom right: President & Founder of 60 Million Girls

CAMEUS VIRTUAL PARALLEL EVENT

CAMEUS, the North American regional affiliation of GWI members from CFUW, Women Graduates-USA, and FEMU of Mexico, focuses primarily on issues that migrant women and children face in our three countries due to social, political, and climate changes. Barbara DuMoulin became the Chair in fall 2024.

The main concentration of CAMEUS leading up to March is preparation for CSW and our own virtual parallel presentation. This involves research, discussion about, and refinement of the topic, followed by a search for speakers from our respective countries.

CAMEUS presented a CSW69 virtual parallel session focusing on issues faced by educated migrant women in having their professional credentials accepted by host countries. This topic encompasses two perspectives—the necessity for host countries to ensure immigrants are

competently trained, and the experiences and frustrations of individual migrant women. Similar to the preparation for the CFUW/WG-USA in-person event, we held meet and greet and information sessions with the panelists. The poster shows the panelists and who they are. The three NFAs alternate which one will be the lead on CSW planning, and this year it was ably led by FEMU.

RECOGNIZING QUALIFICATIONS FOR EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN MIGRATING TO NORTH AMERICA

Exploring challenges women migrants face in having their previously-acquired skills, education and experience recognized. Panelists will focus on this challenge as it relates to issues of gender, education, and emotional health.

 **Tuesday, March 18, 2025**

 **12:30 PM - 2:30 PM ET**

 **Zoom**

PRESENTED BY CAMEUS,
AN ALLIANCE OF CFUW-
FCFdu (CANADA), FEMU
(MEXICO), & WG-USA



AN NGO CSW VIRTUAL PARALLEL EVENT



Deana Hatcher
Former Registrar of Teachers, teacher advocate and forever a learner. Administrative Officer at the NL Teachers' Association.



Sodaba Saeedi
Doctor from Afghanistan currently studying to be a nurse, as an intermediate step to becoming certified in Canada.



Teyebah Nazarian
Architect and lecturer in architecture and urban design who immigrated to the USA from Afghanistan.



Ana Marcela Pérez Sánchez
Feminist activist from Colombia currently in Mexico doing her PhD research in social science.



Aída Chávez Zapata
Global Partnerships Manager at Talent Beyond Boundaries.

Watch the Virtual Parallel Event Here!

CANADIAN EVENTS



CFUW delegates normally attend an orientation session for Canadian NGOs at each CSW, organized by Canadian Senator Marilou McPhedran. Following CSW68, CFUW and Senator McPhedran discussed CFUW getting involved in planning the event, and we were pleased to co-sponsor it this year. Since so many Canadian NGOs attended, this was a rare chance to meet and network with other NGOs, providing opportunities for future contact.

Also on the Monday, CFUW received invitations for two delegates to attend a reception at the Canadian Mission to the United Nations, hosted by Ambassador Bob Rae. President Linda Sestock and National Advocacy and Policy Specialist Kenzie Zimmer attended, and made connections with representatives from many other Canadian NGOs.



Some CFUW delegates also attended an event at the Canadian Mission entitled "Parliamentarians Assess Beijing +30 Impacts," which had several Canadian Senators as speakers.

MEETINGS WITH OUR INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS

CSW is also a time to network with...

GWI at their two breakfasts and evening dinner,



WG-USA at their networking lunch,



and other **CAMEUS** members over lunch at the UN cafeteria.



The NGO CSW/New York Forum Reception was held at a Salvation Army catering facility and lived up to its promotional description as a perfect opportunity to “celebrate progress, share experiences, and build connections!”



CFUW delegates moved around the room introducing ourselves to other delegates and making valuable connections. We used our CFUW business cards and a postcard with a QR code, both produced by CFUW staff who were very supportive of delegates.

All such social events were self-funded and attendance was optional.



SIDE & PARALLEL EVENTS

Throughout the week, CFUW delegates attended dozens of official Side Events, hosted by United Nations agencies and member states, as well as Parallel Events, hosted by non-governmental organizations.



CIVIL SOCIETY TOWN HALL

At the Civil Society Town Hall with António Guterres in the General Assembly Hall, both Linda Sestock and Grace Hollett had the opportunity to ask a question. Linda asked about how civil society could be integrated into CSW negotiations, while Grace asked about achieving gender equality. Guterres urged feminist movements to mobilize, stating “power is never given, it must be taken.” A question from another delegate about when we will finally have the first woman Secretary-General received thunderous applause.



[Read the UN News article on the Town Hall here.](#)

THE CFUW DELEGATION



CFUW, as an Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) accredited organization, is entitled to bring up to 20 delegates to CSW. Because we had over 20 members apply to attend, our Mexican affiliate FEMU kindly allowed

four CFUW members to register to attend as FEMU delegates. Two members also attended as GWI delegates.



In total,
CFUW had
26
delegates!

Our delegation included members from each of CFUW's regions:

British Columbia



The Prairies



Atlantic



Quebec



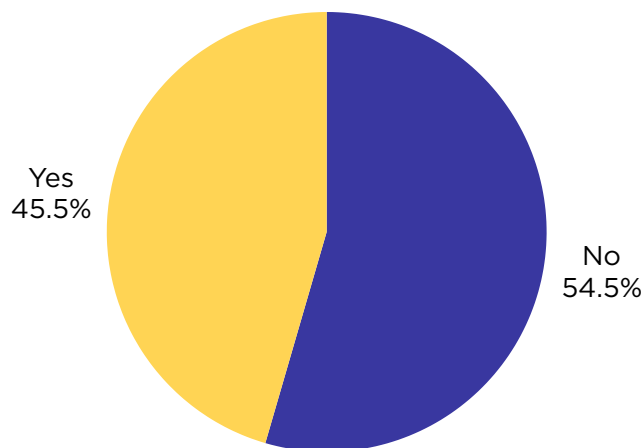
Ontario



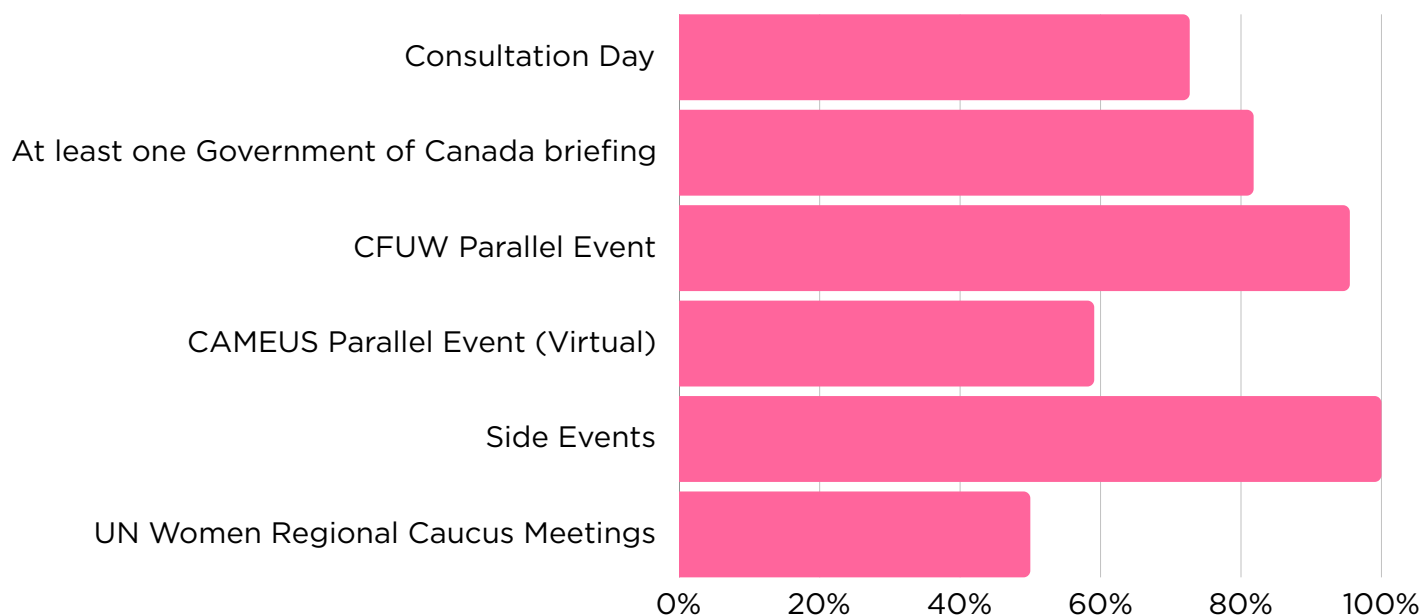
DELEGATES' REPORTS

Responses and data from our post-CSW survey:

Was this your first time attending UNCSW?



What events did our delegates attend?

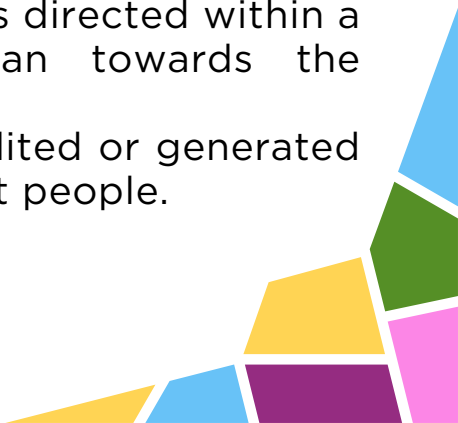


What important data did you learn? (selection of responses)

- Gender based violence in Canada has become an epidemic where deaths from intimate partner violence occur every 4-5 days, but there is a labour crisis in shelter work due to a lack of funding and value for these first responders.
- 1 in 4 young women in Sweden has been raped, strangulation being the most common cause of death,
- The number of women and girls living in conflict-affected countries increased by 50% since 2017
- Women and girls perform over 75% of unpaid care work globally, which remains undervalued and under-resourced.
- Only 26% of parliamentary seats worldwide are held by women, underscoring the ongoing need for gender parity in leadership.
- 80% of those displaced by climate change are female.
- The homicide rate for Indigenous Canadian women is 6x higher than other women.
- On average, 29% of women are online vs. 49% of men.
- Every year, 12 million girls become child brides.
- Less than 50% of aid goes to investing in girls.
- Less than 5% of trades workers are women
- The "RACHEL" mobile learning labs (MLLs), provide curricula plus other info on sexual + reproductive health, menstrual health.
- Several countries including Australia have instituted legal proceedings against the Taliban government
- Two thirds (or more) of the world lives in authoritarian countries.
- More than 14 million women are suffering from the Taliban takeover.
- Gender disparity costs \$10 trillion US globally per year.
- Women continue to face systemic barriers in accessing capital, leadership roles, and financial literacy.
- 1 in 4 countries reported backlash in gender equality.
- Between 1995 and 2004, 1,531 legal reforms around the world sought to advance gender equality, yet women have only 64% of the legal rights of men.



What new concepts did you learn? (selection of responses)

- Safe City app - Red Dot Foundation
 - Digital violence, "online rapes" and the increased commodification and exploitation of women through social media and online trafficking
 - Data storytelling
 - Gender-segregated data
 - Intersectional feminism
 - Gender budgeting
 - Intergenerational dialogue in policymaking
 - Climate justice
 - Care economy
 - Zipper list - a method of listing candidates on a ballot
 - Indigenous Women's Declaration at Beijing 95
 - Red Dress Alert - similar to Amber Alert but for Indigenous women
 - AI as a tool for grant & proposal writing, marketing, researching, improving literacy, exposing money laundering, and tracking the arms trade but, still recognizing the need for human, especially women's, involvement in monitoring AI use
 - Period poverty
 - GBA+ (Gender-Based Analysis+)
 - Anti-rights movement
 - Parental Alienation
 - The Feminist Peace Playbook
 - Victimology and social ecology
 - Radicalized inclusion - going beyond surface-level inclusion to actively dismantle systems and structures that create exclusion
 - Push back
 - Gender apartheid
 - Hyperlocal actions - something focused on a very small, specific geographic area, like a neighborhood or even a few streets, targets a localized audience; used in reference to advocacy for women's rights
 - Lateral Violence - aggressive or harmful behaviors directed within a marginalized or oppressed group, rather than towards the oppressors
 - DeepFake - images, videos, or audio which are edited or generated using AI and which may depict real or non-existent people.
 - Digital revolution
- 
- A decorative graphic in the bottom right corner consisting of several overlapping, colorful geometric shapes, including triangles and polygons in shades of blue, green, yellow, and purple.

DELEGATES' INDIVIDUAL RESPONSES

WENDY TAYLOR, ORILLIA

Memorable Quotes: "The world would be different if women were leaders" Emil Broberg, Member of the Board of the Swedish Assoc. of Local Authorities and Regions.

Outstanding Sessions: Power 4 Girls
Stepping Up, Standing By, Speaking Out for Women's Rights Movements
Town Hall Secretary General
Nordic Ministers for Gender Equality
Women In Trades
CFUW Parallel Event

Key Takeaways: Gender Equality has taken a backwards step globally. We need to continue to support Indigenous women and work to change the colonial laws that entrap them and erode their safety. Educate men and women that equality is good for everyone. Collaborate more with other countries, especially Nordic countries. Shifting attitudes, mentoring young people and train our new leaders.



LINDA COLES, ST. JOHN'S

Memorable Quotes: "Critical Thinking constitutes skills essential in the education of women and girls."

Outstanding Sessions: Power 4 Girls. There is a commitment to girl-centred programming at the heart of the Power 4 Girls initiative.

A Beijing +30 Report Card (Senator McPhedran's panel)

Nordic Ministers' Panel - Pushing for Progress

Not to be biased but our own panel session with Lieutenant Governor Joan Marie Aylward, Wanda Bedard, Geeta Desai, and Soon-Young Yoon and Kenzie Zimmer was certainly one of the best sessions that I experienced at UNCSW69.

Key Takeaways: The importance of intergenerational strategies and projects; the need for critical thinking; involvement of women and girls with developments in AI.



MARY SCOTT, WINNIPEG

Memorable Quotes: I did not record quotes but speakers that inspired me: Mellanne Vervier; Susan O'Malley; Maryam Ranjayvi; Katrina Leclerc; Antonio Guterres; Jackie Neapole; Michelle Bachelet.

Outstanding Sessions: Women and Armed conflict - the woman speaking from the Ukraine

Key Takeaways: I have several speaking engagements locally. I will continue my work with MMIWG2S.

Mary Scott attended the 1995 Beijing Conference as a CFUW delegate!

KATHRYN SAWATZKY, SASKATOON

Memorable Quotes: "Women leaders should not only open doors, they should hold them open for other women to come through." Michelle Bachelet - former President of Chile

Outstanding Sessions: 1. Driving Actionable Change and Strengthening Global Solidarity Among Indigenous Women
2. For ALL Women and Girls: The Beijing +30 Action Agenda

Key Takeaways: One of the biggest things that has resonated with me is how much we are 'holding the line' in many aspects of women's rights and we cannot back down. It also struck me how most countries there, especially developing countries, are fighting for basic human rights. My personal action plan is to educate my hometown on what I have learned at CSW69. I write a blog that gets quite a few readers from home, and I want to share what I have learned. I plan to support career development for the students (a majority of whom happen to be women) that study abroad through my office at work, and to seek out more STEM classes abroad. I commit to seeking out ways to support and uplift Indigenous women, women of colour, women with disabilities, and low-income women in every aspect of my life.





SANDRA THOMSON, KINCARDINE/OAKVILLE

Memorable Quotes: "What gets measured can get changed."

Outstanding Sessions: Wyde Women's Leadership=Transforming Norms

Advancing Leadership. Nordic Ministers panel

Pushing for Progress Equanomics: Leveraging Public Finance for the Beijing Platform

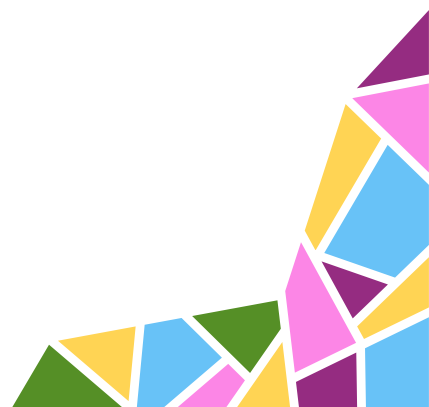
Key Takeaways: From a provincial point of view, to investigate the current opportunities and plans to help women suffering from economic abuse. Pushing for progress on a local level will be explored as well. Secondly to continue with the work of ECOSOC, UN Women, NGO CSW NY and other NGOs on CSW Revitalization.

EMAN EL HALIES, LONDON

Memorable Quotes: "Women's rights are not a side issue—they are the foundation of just and sustainable societies."

Outstanding Sessions: 1.UNICEF's Power of the Girl
2. Her Leadership, Our Future: Cultivating Change for Food and Nutrition Security
3. Shaping Tomorrow: Young Women Pioneering Change for Equality

Key Takeaways: My key takeaway is that while global conversations around gender equality have advanced, we are facing an alarming backlash against feminism and women's rights. There is a critical need to protect the progress made and amplify the voices of women and girls, especially those in marginalized communities and conflict zones. Personally, I plan to advocate more actively for inclusive and culturally responsive gender equity work within my community, integrate what I've learned into my roles at CFUW and the Muslim Parent Council, and support young girls in leadership through mentorship and community programming.





MARIAM ISHAK, MONTREAL

Memorable Quotes: "Human being not commodity" Slogan used by Icelandic women in their 1975 strike

Outstanding Sessions: From vision to Reality -Saudi Arabia
Modern slavery and
Human trafficking From Afghanistan to New York

Key Takeaways: As a financial professional, I will expand mentorship programs for women in finance and advocate for more financial literacy programs for women, particularly survivors of domestic violence. Hosting educational sessions on economic independence, investing, and wealth-building for women, particularly in underserved communities. I will deepen my involvement with women's advocacy organizations, including the West Island Women's Shelter and MLUWC, to provide financial guidance and support fundraising efforts.

SERENA HABIB, HAMILTON

Memorable Quotes: Marissa Moar: "Ask yourself: who is not in the room"

Outstanding Sessions: Sexual and Gender-based
Cyberviolence: Challenges and solutions to counter backlash and build a world free from violence (France, Mexico, Sweden, Canada, in partnership with Osez le féminisme)
Educating Women and Girls: Advancing their Empowerment and Equality (CFUW and Women Graduates-USA)

Key Takeaways: Ensuring that all those being impacted are at the table in any decision-making for interventions I am part of; sharing my learnings with others and engaging in dialogue about these issues; approaching gender equality from a global perspective instead of a local one





HALLY SIDDONS, OTTAWA

Memorable Quotes: "We must not stop. we must engage, not only with those who agree with us, but also with those who don't".

Outstanding Sessions: 1. Launch of Power4Girls: This powerful session brought together UNICEF, Purposeful, UN Women, and the Governments of Sierra Leone and Canada to promote the rights, well-being and leadership of adolescent girls around the world.

2. Turning Pushback Into Progress: Nordic Ministers have signed a common declaration to meet the push-back, and to keep pushing for progress. They shared urgent challenges, bold strategies, and advancements already made.

3. From Afghanistan to New York: Afghan Women Calling for Action - An Interactive Dialogue with Afghan Women from Inside Afghanistan and in Exile: First-hand stories from Afghan women called for stronger international solidarity without delay. They are subjected to a system of repression that meets the definition of gender apartheid, a crime that must be addressed with the full force of international law.

4. Upholding the Rights of Afghan Women and Girls: Women Peace and Security: This was another thought-provoking session including H.E. Ambassador Melanne Vereer, Dr. Sarabi, Lamar Zala Gran, the remarkable student and Founder of Empowering Afghan Women, and Richard Bennett, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan.

Key Takeaways: I have a much better understanding of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the work over 30 years. It is marvellous to see the progress made, yet discouraging to see the push-back, and to realize that, in addition to catching up again, new issues including climate and AI must be added to the list for action. Many of us in Canada are so very fortunate, but we must not forget those who are not, and also the number of fascinating women we met from around the globe and for whom the UN is their only hope. We know too, we need to encourage and support the inclusion of younger women in this very important work.

WANDA BEDARD, 60 MILLION GIRLS

Memorable Quotes: "The main argument against women's rights is women need to know their place: it's here, there and everywhere" - Bob Rae

Outstanding Sessions: The Town Hall with Secretary General Guterres; The Town Hall with Bob Rae and the Head of UN Women; UNICEF session about girls' education

Key Takeaways: Re-energized despite the brutal and anti-feminist political landscape we are now facing. Good connections for our work in girl education in the Global South. Better understanding of the various UN agencies.



GRACE HOLLETT, ST. JOHN'S

Memorable Quotes: "What Canadian Feminists Want: Gender Justice Now"

Outstanding Sessions: 1. Power4Girls, which reported 122 million girls out of school and needing access to education and skills to seek economic empowerment, healthcare, leadership roles, technology knowledge, safe spaces, personal hygiene products, maternal care, safely from GBV and FGM and freedom from family responsibilities that keep them from school.

2. Educating Women and Girls: Advancing their Empowerment and Equality. This was a collaboratively planned session by CFUW and WG-USA

3. Town Hall with the Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, who presented a very heartfelt summary of the little progress made since 1995, and the many ways in which gender equality is regressing. President Linda Sestock and I were called on to ask a question.

Key Takeaways: 1. Gender Equality is decreasing. (Action: Bring this issue to local Club and the International Relations Committee)

2. The importance of the UN in bringing significant world events to our attention. (Action: Plan: promote the online UN News to the IR Committee and to the membership.)

3. Many young enthusiastic people attended CSW69. (Action: planning locally with membership chair and with VPMembership to attract more young women to CFUW.

4. Valuable CSW sessions need to be shared with the membership. (Action: regularly publish links to recorded CSW sessions)

5. Our CAMEUS virtual session exposed difficulties experienced by migrant women in getting credentialed on coming to N.A. (Action: CAMEUS has undertaken to outline information presented and decide on manageable and productive follow up.)

6. Collaboration is the way forward. (Suggest how CFUW might use the list of CSW69 contacts. Renew contact with local women's groups)





BARBARA GUSTAFSON, PRINCE ALBERT

Memorable Quotes: "This session takes place in a world on fire."
António Guterres, UN Secretary General

Outstanding Sessions: The ERA Action on Beijing -- push to fully implement the Equal Right Amendment in the US as law. 85% of UN countries have a constitutional guarantee of general equality, but not the US.

Townhall session -- hearing the Secretary General speak out so strongly as a feminist.

Canadian session on Indigenous women -- brought tears with discussion of MMIWG and need for inclusion

Key Takeaways: This year's session was a contrast to last year in terms of American political changes and concerns; however, it also reinforced the long-standing issues especially in African countries. It further developed my awareness of the needs still to be met, and my gratitude for what we are privileged to enjoy in Canada.

LINDA SESTOCK, MONTREAL

Memorable Quotes: "Human rights are under siege"

Outstanding Sessions: Our own parallel-panel with Women Graduates. and our Virtual CAMEUS panel. Most exciting was the Town Hall with the Secretary General where CFUW had the opportunity to ask 2 questions.

Key Takeaways: There are amazing women and organizations around the world working hard to improve the lives of young women and men. That we are so lucky to be Canadians and have the security of knowing that we have access to education, food, health care and freedom to vote and advocate on behalf of others. Good people exist.





ANNE CORDON, PETERBOROUGH

Memorable Quotes: “If Government is not listening—shout louder to be heard, organize, use technology. Make sure that government pays a price for not listening and acting.”

Outstanding Sessions: Nordic Council of Ministers--Push for Progress; Townhall moderated by the UN Secretary General; Parliamentarians Assess Beijing +30 Impacts at the Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations; CFUW & WG-USA Parallel Event: “Educating Women & Girls: Advancing their Empowerment & Equality”.

Key Takeaways: At the Canada Mission session I sat beside and had a chance to talk with Senator Donna Desko, Independent Senators Group living in Toronto. Little did I know until later, Senator Desko is a respected national pollster, media commentator, and private sector business leader with considerable public policy experience. I had no idea who she was or how much she has contributed to supporting gender equality and women in politics until I got home and looked her up. Senator Desko would be an inspiring, amazing speaker!

SANDRA SHAW, PERTH & DISTRICT

Memorable Quotes: “Marriage does not have the same value that it used [to have]. Having a good education and job is better than having a husband.” (Dr Hoda Badran, a co-founder of the Alliance for Arab Women (AAW))

Outstanding Sessions: Coercive Control and Litigation: Criminalization of women and Gender Diverse People Canada’s Mission

Interparliamentary Union (IPU)

Technology facilitated Gender Based Violence (TfGBV)

Key Takeaways: Use some topics for Ontario Council Speakers Series. Present key issues to my own Club. Write topic specific articles for newsletters. Consider an Op-Ed Engage with Women’s Shelters Canada.





LISA FANCOTT, MONTREAL

Memorable Quotes: This is precisely the problem with AI, we are focused on using it to get what we want, and we are willing to push all safety concerns aside, and in the interest of our personal objectives, we do not stand up and speak for proper governance mechanisms. Likewise, we put the state in a position of conflict and policing rather than agreeing collectively to work for a healthy safe ecosystem where everyone has a shared responsibility.

Outstanding Sessions: 1) Gender Equality and Artificial Intelligence led by Bob Rae, UNWomen, Lithuania's Ambassador to the UN and others. It was outstanding because it reflected like all other sessions on the intersect between GE and the digital age, that the demand for dialogue and change in this area is far outstripping the supply.

2) The Town Hall because it was an opportunity to interact directly with the Secretary General and the Head of UN Women, and it brought together the sea of humanity working for gender equality.

3) Canada's Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA) - as presented by Canadian NGOs. It was insightful to hear from organizations and activists who work on the ground in various sectors in Canada while also interacting with politicians and their communities.

4) The Interparliamentary Union panel hosted at Canada's permanent mission, for the inspiration provided by the women parliamentarians who presented on legislative developments and political insights on the progress and challenges to the implementation of the BPFA.

Key Takeaways: My personal takeaway is that I may after 30 years in this field have developed an orientation towards local engagement rather than the high level engagement I have worked on to date. It is rewarding indeed and a privilege, but the polarity in global politics, and the sea of policy ideas and discussions can pull us away from connecting more deeply with an issue or a movement. Attending CSW reinforced that message for me. My personal action plan is to continue exploring what that local engagement might look like. and start building a plan of action around environmental education, and a major career shift away from the international sphere, while also keeping open to what is happening at that level.



JOY HURST, EDMONTON

Memorable Quotes: “You can’t expect to plant peanuts and get diamonds!” (low value inputs will not result in high value outcomes); plans mean nothing without action

Outstanding Sessions: Of course the CFUW/WG-USA and CAMEUS sessions, CRIAW session, Women in Afghanistan

Key Takeaways: I plan to use and integrate frameworks that I learned about at CSW that are new to me, for example UN ERGP (Economic Recovery and Growth Plan)—with its 5P’s, People, Planet, Prosperity, Partnership & Peace, I will explore what I have been introduced to from other countries.



BARBARA DUMOULIN, SALT SPRING ISLAND

Memorable Quotes: “When you see it, you cannot unsee it.”

Outstanding Sessions: POWER4GIRLS; Nordic Ministers’ panel ; Join us in Pushing for Progress; Threats and Opportunities of Digital Technologies; Women in the Public Eye; Bob Rae’s session; Secretary General’s Townhall

Key Takeaways: In reflecting on CSW69, there was celebration of how far we have come but also consternation on the pushback. I was saddened by this backsliding in women’s rights. I was also impressed by the voices stating that we must not let this continue that we must keep advocating and pushing for women and girls’ rights. I felt that there was a greater sense of urgency this year. On a personal note, I felt a degree of unease being in the US.

KENZIE ZIMMER, CFUW NATIONAL OFFICE

Memorable Quotes: “Women don’t die; they stay alive in our memories, in our bones” -Nandar, activist from Myanmar

Outstanding Sessions: Disarmament Education: WPS Policy Solution for Climate and Gender Nexus; Beijing Platform for Action 30+ Years and Beyond: A Critical Review and Future Directions for Myanmar; It All Comes Down to Money! Care, the Value of Work & the Multifaceted Pay Gap

Key Takeaways: After years of studying United Nations processes, it was so different to experience it in person - in some ways, much less glamorous, but in others, more energizing than I imagined. The power and emotion in the rooms were often overwhelming. Thank you so much to CFUW for the opportunity to attend, and to those who helped us first-timers orientate ourselves!





LORRAINE O'DONNELL, MONTREAL

Memorable Quotes: "Violence is not culture. It is a crisis." "What gets measured gets done." (Two quotes from rep. from Samoa, UN Official meeting. General discussion, 2025-03-14)

Outstanding Sessions: UN side event at Canada House, "PARLIAMENTARIANS ASSESS BEIJING +30 IMPACTS": a lot of great info from several countries
UN side event at the Uganda Mission building, "Leveraging Technology in Gender-responsive Development": this was held at Uganda's mission building. It was fascinating to attend this small-scale discussion-oriented event where the details of women's economic development in Uganda were discussed

Key Takeaways: I am inspired by the tremendous quality and quantity of work being done by government and NGO people around the world to monitor and improve the status of women - I hope to work with a local NGO called Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN) to create a group addressing needs and priorities of Quebec's official language minority community (= Quebec anglophones). I am being recruited for a leadership role in my UCWM club and if offered a position, I intend to take it

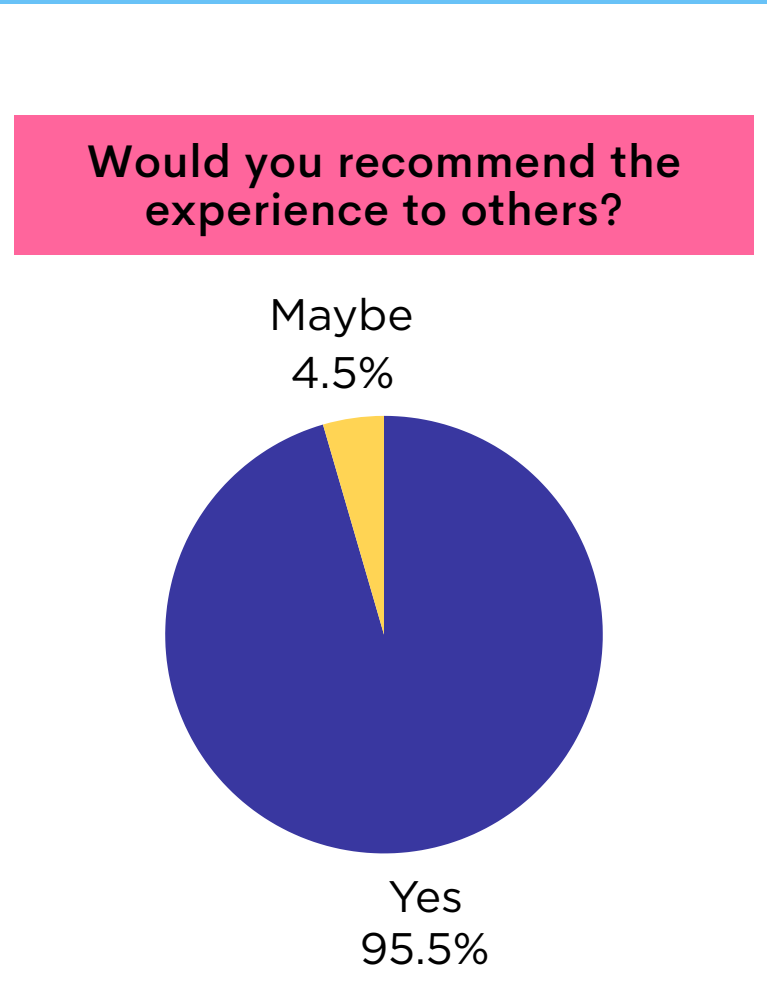
AILEEN LINGWOOD, VICTORIA

Memorable Quotes: "Since 53% of senior management positions at the UN are filled by women, it is likely that there will be a female Secretary General in the near future."

Outstanding Sessions: 1. Civil Society
2. Opening Doors to Leadership through Education
3. Arts Equity: Gender, Cultural, Ability Diversity

Key Takeaways: I am motivated to share the importance of the UN in striving toward goals and ideals; even though we seem to have entered a period of world stalling, I hope it will be a short-lived period in history. So, I will be speaking in schools & to CFUW interest & neighbourhood groups, Advocacy, & at our AGM.





LOOKING AHEAD TO CSW70

MARCH 9-20, 2026

The CAMEUS group and the CSW Planning Committee are beginning their planning for next year's CSW70.

The themes for CSW70 are:

- **Priority theme:** Ensuring and strengthening access to justice for all women and girls, including by promoting inclusive and equitable legal systems, eliminating discriminatory laws, policies, and practices, and addressing structural barriers.
- **Review theme:** Women's full and effective participation and decision making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls

See you there!

