



lobby group raises women's issues

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Report on B.C. Federation of Labour Lobby in Victoria March 7 and 8, 2016

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The BC Federation of Labour's annual government lobby day was scheduled for International Women's Day this year. So it was decided that it should be carried out by the Women's Rights Committee.

Participants focused on three important issues: child care, women's economic security (\$15 minimum wage) and the lack of "rape kits" allowing full forensic exams in all B.C. hospitals following a sexual assault - an issue brought forward by HSA following discussions at last year's convention.

Building on the comprehensive government relations training provided to many participants through HSA's Constituency Liaison program, we held focused and productive meetings with opposition members Andrew Weaver, Shane Simpson, Judy Darcy, Maurine Karagianis, and Doug Donaldson, who were very interested and supportive. We also met with cabinet ministers Shirley Bond and Stephanie Cadieux. Minister Bond was interested in the rape kit issue and was sympathetic to the child care issue as her son and daughter-in-law have difficulty finding affordable daycare.

On the evening of March 7, we attended a Union Sisters dinner, co-sponsored by the BC Fed and the Victoria Labour Council. We had a panel presentation of the three lobby issues during which I presented on rape kits.

On March 8, International Women's Day, our group held a press conference on the steps of the legislature which was attended by CTV, Global and representatives of various print media. Following the press conference, we attended question period where we were introduced by NDP MLA's and two questions, plus two supplemental questions, related to the rape kit issue were asked by Maurine Karagianis and Jennifer Rice. Terry Lake responded that sexual assault exams are performed at all B.C. hospitals.

At a meeting on March 9, the Women's Rights Committee passed a motion asking the B.C. Fed to write a letter to Minister Lake correcting the misinformation, requesting that accurate information be brought to the attention of the house and that proper services be implemented around the province.

Lobby days have proven to be a very useful exercise and it has been suggested that there be an annual BC Fed women's lobby in Victoria. It was felt that the combination of two longstanding issues (child care and minimum wage) with a new issue (rape kits) was helpful in attracting attention to all three issues. I'm pleased that HSA was part of this important initiative and hope we will continue to participate in the future.

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