

Counterpoint



PROFILE – FELICIA FORBES – HEALTH AND SAFETY ACTIVIST

**QUEBEC TAX
DEAL CAUSES
UPROAR!**

**Focus: 2016 is the
Year of Health
and Safety**

Toronto city
workers reach
agreement

**Privatization push
back in Nova Scotia**

KEEPSAKE POSTER –
HEALTH AND SAFETY

“A resident killed another resident... workers were affected mentally, and that often goes unrecognized.”

Felicia Forbes, a young worker activist for health and safety



Big push to expand the CPP

Over the coming months CUPE will be ramping up its efforts across the country to expand the Canada Pension Plan.

After years of stalling by the former Conservative federal government, CPP expansion is closer than ever. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau campaigned promising an expanded CPP. So now is the time for CUPE and the entire labour movement to make the last big push to make it a reality.

“Over 11 million Canadians without a workplace pension are in desperate need of an expanded CPP, so they may retire with dignity and out of poverty,” said Mark Hancock, national president of CUPE. “CUPE is going to do everything it can to make sure the federal Liberal government lives up to its promises, and shows they have courage to finally expand the CPP.”

New resources are being developed for CUPE locals to help rally support with members. They will include fact sheets, a new Expand the CPP campaign website, and videos to share explaining why expanding the CPP is so important to Canadian workers and the economy.

Campaign efforts will first focus on the upcoming meeting of finance ministers in June, where CPP expansion will be a key agenda item, and a planned national day of action on CPP expansion this fall.

■ Greg Taylor

Quebec’s new partnership agreement causes significant disagreement with workers

In September 2015, the Couillard Liberal government signed a “Partnership Agreement” with Quebec’s mayors that will last from 2016 to 2019. The agreement commonly known as the “tax deal,” would empower the province’s municipalities to dictate the working conditions of their employees.

Giving municipalities the power to determine the outcome of bargaining is a direct infringement of the right to collective bargaining and the right to strike. According to the Supreme Court, these are fundamental rights that are protected by the Charter of Rights. Taking away workers’ right to strike is illegal in Canada.

In conjunction with the Quebec Federation of Labour (QFL), CUPE has launched a campaign to alert Quebec workers of the dangers of the proposed legislation, which will be tabled this spring. The public campaign kicked off in February with radio ads.

After three weeks of the radio campaign a poster campaign was initiated in

workplaces and a website was launched. This site **egalegal.ca** informs the public about what is at stake and provides the opportunity to send an email to Members of the National Assembly.

The objective is to increase public awareness and encourage action against this ill-advised plan on

the part of the Couillard government. The labour movement is troubled by the agreement, which would have the consequence of wiping out the right to collective bargaining and the right to strike. It would amount to a very serious attack on labour relations in Quebec and Canada.

■ Lisa Djevahirdjian



CUPE'S QUARTERLY PUBLICATION SPRING 2016

Counterpoint

ISSN print 1920-2857
ISSN online 1920-2865

Counterpoint is published by the Canadian Union of Public Employees. Address all letters to the editor to: CUPE Communications, 1375 St. Laurent Blvd. Ottawa, ON, K1G 0Z7
T: 613-237-1590 F: 613-237-5508
Publications Mail Agreement Number 40005741

Union-printed on 50% recycled, 30% post-consumer waste, elemental chlorine-free paper, certified by the Forest Stewardship Council.

Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to: CUPE Communications, 1375 St. Laurent Blvd. Ottawa, ON, K1G 0Z7

Visit CUPE's website at cupe.ca or contact us at cupemail@cupe.ca

Managing Editor Catherine Louli
Communications Director Robert Lamoureux

Graphic Designer Jocelyn Renaud
Editorial Assistants Hélène Bélanger • Manon Lajoie • Michel Saucier

Contributors Greg Taylor • Lisa Djevahirdjian • Wes Payne • Julie Jobin • Archana Rampure • Troy Winters • John McCracken • Kevin Wilson • David Jacks • Tria Donaldson • Pierre Ducasse • Philippe Gagnon

CANADIAN UNION OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES NATIONAL EXECUTIVE BOARD

National President Mark Hancock
National Secretary-Treasurer Charles Fleury

General Vice-Presidents Daniel Légère • Lucie Levasseur • Fred Hahn • Kelly Moist • Marle Roberts

Regional Vice-Presidents Wayne Lucas / Newfoundland & Labrador • Vacant / Nova Scotia • Odette Robichaud / New Brunswick • Lori MacKay / Prince Edward Island • Denis Bolduc, Benoît Bouchard / Quebec • Michael Hurley, Candace Rennick / Ontario • Henri Giroux / Northern Ontario • Mike Davidson / Manitoba • Judy Henley / Saskatchewan • David Graham / Alberta • Paul Faoro, Victor Elkins / British Columbia

Diversity Vice-Presidents Gloria Lepine • Yolanda McClean



A young worker takes the lead on health and safety

“I have grown so much as a person, I’m a stronger worker and activist,” says Felicia Forbes as she reflects on her time in the union. “I want to take what I’ve learned and the support I’ve received from the people who saw something in me and provide that to another person down the line.”

A member of CUPE 3791, Forbes coordinates life enrichment activities for

residents at the Wexford Residence, a long-term care facility in Scarborough, Ontario. She’s also a young worker and a health and safety activist. She’s been involved with her local for four years and has also recently become involved in her provincial division and the national young workers’ committee.

Forbes’ activism began as a member of her workplace health and safety committee. A startling incident highlighted the importance of health and safety. “A resident killed another resident and that’s when the light

bulb went off,” explained Forbes. “Workers were affected mentally, and that often goes unrecognized.” Since the incident, Forbes has been involved in workplace hazard assessments, and other preventative work. She wants to break down the stigma associated with mental health and make education a priority in dealing with health and safety hazards.

Her activism in health and safety also led her to become a workplace steward. “My local president saw that I was vocal about things in general, health

and safety rights, human rights, workers’ rights. She took me under her wing.” Forbes says she’s noticed a lot more members coming to her for advice. “I feel that I’m more of a resource and an ear for them. I try to understand what they’re going through”.

“I’m trying to connect with other people and trying to empower young workers like myself to get out there and get involved. You don’t have to wait 15 or 20 years to get involved in such a wonderful thing,” she says about CUPE.

■ Julie Jobin and Wes Payne



Because it’s 2016

We now have a Prime Minister who calls himself a proud feminist. So surely it’s time for this federal government to move beyond symbolic actions such as a gender-balanced cabinet.

Because it’s 2016, it’s

time this Prime Minister and his Cabinet took note of the fact that Canadian women make 73 cents to every \$1 Canadian men make. It’s time for legislation mandating pay equity.

The Trudeau government



has made good on their campaign promise to repeal Bill C-377, which tried to force unions to disclose their spending, and Bill C-525, which made it harder for unions to be certified in the federal sector while simultaneously making it easier to decertify them. Bill C-4 repeals both these toxic Tory bills and is currently making its way through the House. Watch closely to see what the Conservatives do with it once it hits the Senate, where they still hold a majority. Will they honour their past cries of “respect the democratic

will of the elected House of Commons!” or try to stop C-4?

It is important to remember that the repeal of C-377 and C-525 return us to where we were before the Conservatives tried to take a machete to the collective rights of workers.

Proactive legislation has been introduced and tabled by the NDP that seeks to have strike breakers (“scabs”) prohibited in the federal sector. The NDP also used their Opposition Day to bring forward a motion that calls on all parties to acknowledge that mounting job losses, combined with a lack of access to Employment Insurance, contribute to growing

income inequality. Unfortunately, the Liberals and the Conservatives joined forces to vote this down because they weren’t comfortable with the idea of a universal qualifying threshold of 360 hours for EI claimants.

There are many other good ideas that the NDP has brought forward including regulating the use of precarious workers, bringing in legislation that protects interns and funding more innovative parental leave policies.

Will the Trudeau Liberals support these good ideas? Because it’s 2016 – let’s hope they embrace progress for working people.

■ Archana Rampure

NATIONAL PRESIDENT MARK HANCOCK

Renewing our commitment to safer workplaces

This year, CUPE is renewing our commitment to achieving safer workplaces – not just for our members, but also for all workers in Canada and around the world.

While we’ve made great strides in making workplaces safer, far too many workers are not making it home to their families. In my first few months as your national president, I have already had to offer condolences to the families of CUPE members who’ve lost their lives on the job.

We must remain vigilant and ensure each and every one of our employers, and every government in Canada, hears the message that it is never acceptable for workers’ lives to be put at risk. It’s not OK to expose workers to conditions that will cause injury or death in order to do their jobs.

Whether it’s lax safeguards that expose workers to potential industrial diseases, cutting corners on safety regulations to get the job done faster, or failing to invest in workplace safety training and prevention programs – negligence of workers’ health and safety is never acceptable.

We must also work to expand our understanding of what workplace health and safety entails. Specifically, we must recognize and acknowledge the harm harassment and bullying in the workplace have on workers and their families.

CUPE has much to be proud of in our work on health and safety. But until all workers can be ensured of a safe and healthy workplace, where they are free from harassment and don’t have to work with threats of violence – we must remain vigilant.

We will do this at the bargaining table by negotiating stronger health and safety language. We must also keep up the pressure on all level of governments to enact new and better legislation to protect workers, and to hold employers accountable when they are negligent.

This is the principal we need our political leaders and all Canadians to embrace and enforce. Being put in danger should never, and can never, be considered “just part of the job.” This is the principal we need our political leaders and all Canadians to embrace and enforce. If you kill a worker, you go to jail.

MARK HANCOCK ONLINE twitter.com/CUPENatPres



Focus:

HEALTH AND SAFETY

The Day of Mourning: How tragedy inspired action in CUPE

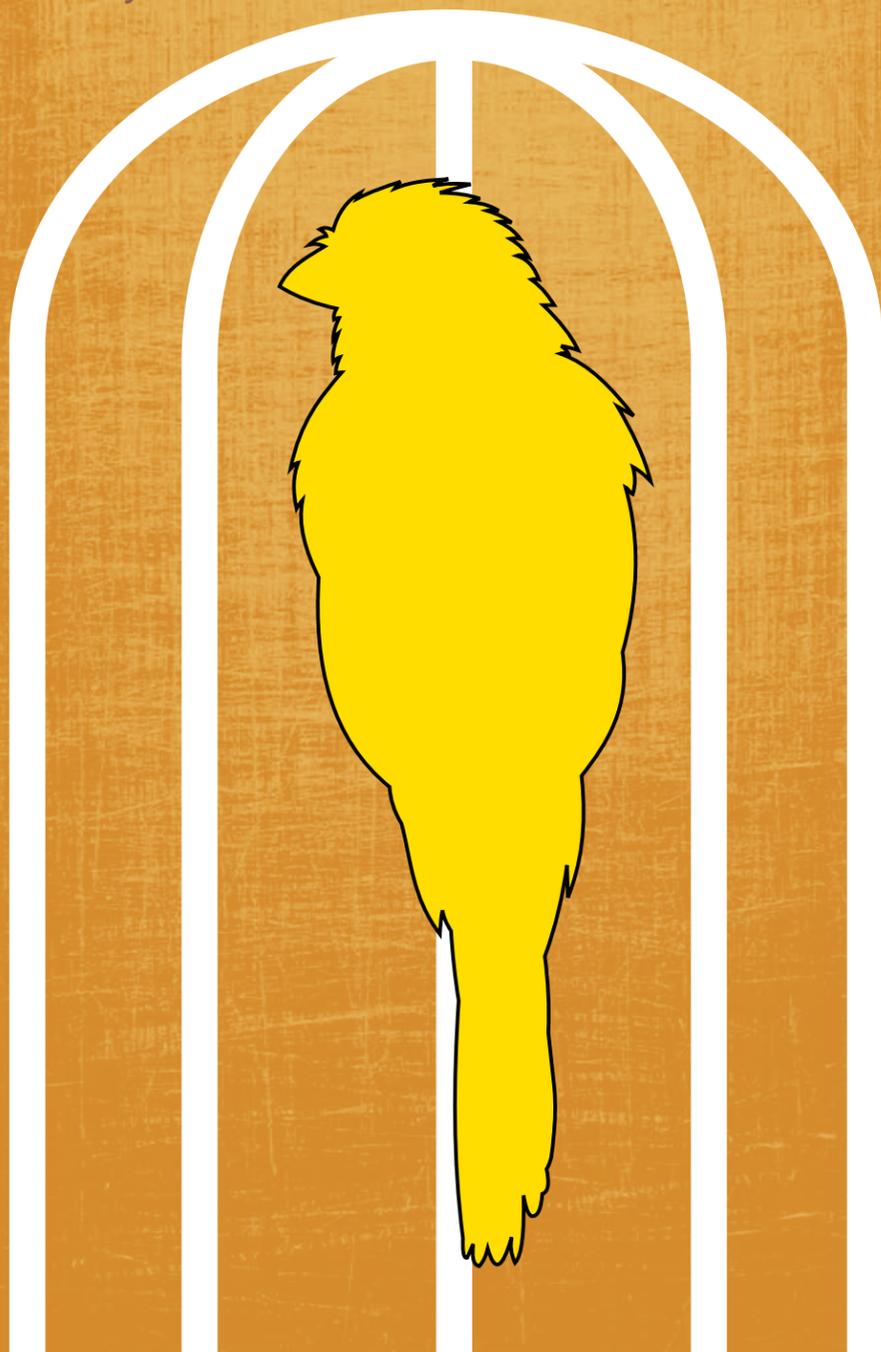
Frustrated that workplace deaths too often went unrecognized, in 1984 CUPE's National Health and Safety Committee had enough. The committee proposed a national day of mourning to remember workers killed or injured on the job.

The day would be held every year on April 28 to honour those who'd given their lives on the job. It would also serve as a reminder about the importance of workplace health and safety. Then-National President Jeff Rose announced CUPE's plan to hold the day of mourning at CUPE's 1985 Health and Safety Conference. That same year, the Canadian Labour Congress passed a resolution recognizing April 28.

The date was chosen to mark Ontario's 1914 proclamation of the first comprehensive workers' compensation act in Canada. The Day of Mourning is now recognized in more than 100 countries. In 1991, Canada's House of Commons officially recognized the day. In 1996, the International Trade Union Confederation recognized it. In 2002, on recommendation from the International Labour Organization, the United Nations declared April 28 as the World Day for Safety and Health at Work.

Many communities across Canada hold day of mourning events. Check with your CUPE local or district labour council for events in your area.

■ Wes Payne



Têtes-à-têtes!



2016 proclaimed CUPE's Year of Health and Safety

Following the adoption of the Strategic Directions at the 2015 National Convention, CUPE declared 2016 as the Year of Health and Safety. CUPE members can expect to see lots of health and safety action across the country.

For starters, many divisions are hosting a special health and safety conference for their region. CUPE National will support these events, providing educational materials and staff assistance. Check your division website for details.

CUPE is also launching the new Health and Safety Learning Series. Modelled after the successful Steward Learning Series, the health and safety version will include a nine-hour introductory workshop, followed by several three-hour modules.

To earn a special certificate, participants must take all four skills modules, at least three perspectives modules, and at least three specific hazard modules.

There are currently 10 modules offered, and more are being developed. To access the courses offered, speak with your CUPE servicing

representative or your regional union development education representative or check out cupe.ca/union-education.

You may have also noticed a series of member profiles on cupe.ca describing the work of some of CUPE's health and safety activists. One profile will be released each month, along with resources to help tackle the hazards our activists are facing. So far we've profiled Dolores Douglas from CUPE 2669 in Saskatoon, Sylvain Beaulieu from CUPE 2929 in Quebec City, Aman Cheema from CUPE 402 in Surrey, BC, and Felicia Forbes of CUPE 3791 in Ontario, featured on the cover of this issue.

We also have a great new certificate for health and safety activists. Locals that want to recognize the work of their health and safety activists can submit their names to healthandsafety@cupe.ca. A special certificate will be printed for locals to present to their honouree.

For more information on the Year of Health and Safety, check out cupe.ca/health-and-safety.

■ Troy Winters

“Your three essential health and safety rights: The right to participate, the right to know and the right to refuse.”

Troy Winters, CUPE senior officer Health and Safety, national office.

Introducing CUPE’s Health and Safety Learning Series

The Health and Safety Learning Series will give participants a wide range of knowledge and skills related to workplace health and safety. After the nine-hour introductory workshop, participants can take any of the three-hour workshop modules in the three sections outlined below. To receive a certificate, participants need to complete the introduction workshop, all four skills workshops, at least three perspectives workshops, and at least three specific hazard workshops.

Health and safety: An introduction (9 hours)

Every CUPE member should take this workshop. After completing it, members can complete other workshop modules from the Health and Safety Learning Series.

SKILLS WORKSHOPS

These workshops will teach members basic skills to be successful while working on a health and safety committee, or as a health and safety representative.

The workshops are:

- Identifying and documenting hazards
- Making committees work
- Basics of incident investigations
- Laws and orders

PERSPECTIVES WORKSHOPS

These workshops will challenge participants to think about the different ways that health and safety intersects with human rights issues in our union and our community. Members will learn how they can contribute to social justice causes while improving health and safety in the workplace.

The workshops are:

- Women and work hazards
- Equality in health and safety
- Preventing mental injuries
- Mobilizing around health and safety solidarity beyond borders

SPECIFIC HAZARD WORKSHOPS

These workshops will teach members about specific workplace hazards and methods for removing them from the workplace.

The workshops are:

- Ergonomics
- Workload and overwork
- Violence prevention
- Harassment prevention



Your three essential health and safety rights

Across Canada, health and safety laws are based on the concept of the internal responsibility system, which says workers and employers should be able to meet and solve their health and safety issues as partners. To that end, health and safety laws in this country enshrine the following three rights to most workers. These rights form the basis for your health and safety at work.

1. THE RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE

All workers have a right to participate in keeping the workplace healthy and safe by taking part in activities like the selection of health and safety representatives or joint health and safety committee members, or by being a committee member themselves. With this right comes a worker’s responsibility to report all hazards to their employer, without fear of reprimand, reprisal,

or punishment. Through participation in health and safety-related activities, workers help decide what hazards can be tolerated in the workplace and what hazards must be mitigated.

2. THE RIGHT TO KNOW

Workers have a right to know about all hazards present in their workplace, and how those hazards may hurt them. Employers are required to provide the information, training, and supervision a worker

needs to avoid being hurt by hazards in the workplace. Training and information about hazards should be provided before a worker is exposed so they know how to protect themselves. Despite what many employers claim, there is no law that supersedes a worker’s right to know about hazards in the workplace.

3. THE RIGHT TO REFUSE

Health and safety laws give workers the right to refuse work they believe is unsafe to themselves or their co-workers. Ultimately, the right to refuse is provided so that a worker never needs to choose between their health and safety and having a job. In every

province, a worker cannot be punished for refusing to do work that they believe will hurt themselves or others – it’s the law. It is not up to the worker to prove whether their belief is justified. An investigation following the refusal will determine if the refusal should continue. Each jurisdiction has slight differences in the investigation process.

For more information on the right to refuse that’s specific to your province, visit cupe.ca/health-and-safety.

For any questions on your health and safety rights, contact your CUPE servicing representative, or your CUPE health and safety specialist.

■ **Troy Winters**

Toronto locals push back concessions, protect public services, and secure contracts

By standing strong and working together, the City of Toronto's inside and outside workers were able to push back some of the worst concessions ever proposed in the city, and secure collective agreements without a disruption in service.

Since December 31, CUPE 79 (City of Toronto Inside) and CUPE 416 (City of Toronto Outside) had been without a collective agreement. With a new

conservative Mayor replacing the old conservative Mayor, it seemed the city was spoiling for a fight that could lead to a work stoppage while whipping up public anger against city workers.

CUPE 79 and 416 had other ideas. With support from CUPE National, they worked closely and coordinated strategies, ensuring that the city couldn't divide the locals. Library workers, represented by CUPE 4948 and community centre

workers represented by CUPE 2998, joined them in their efforts and are also in the process of bargaining new collective agreements.

Early on, things looked grim. Negotiators for the city tabled page after page of concessionary demands. Workers rose to the occasion. As bargaining intensified and the city applied pressure to accept concessions, CUPE 79 members began 'Blue Mondays' by wearing blue clothing. CUPE 416 followed suit

with Black Fridays.

On February 20, hours after the deadline passed, CUPE 416 and the City of Toronto reached a tentative agreement. Not long after, following a weekend of fruitless bargaining, CUPE 79 commenced work-to-rule action, the first time such action has ever been taken by a municipal local in the city.

Under work-to-rule, CUPE 79 members performed only the tasks required of them, refusing to take on

additional work, and took their full breaks and lunches. The tactic clearly caught the city by surprise, and was supported by an extensive advertising and communications effort.

The threat of escalating job action hung over management's head, and their negotiators withdrew virtually all concessionary demands.

On March 3, CUPE 79 announced they had reached a tentative agreement.

■ Kevin Wilson

IT TAKES GOOD STABLE JOBS TO DELIVER GREAT CITY SERVICES.

CUPE Canadian Union of Public Employees

betterlivesTO.ca

in brief

CUPE Women's Day event a big hit in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside

Celebrations for this year's International Women's Day, sponsored by CUPE Metro District Council, honoured women in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. Guest speaker Melanie Mark, B.C.'s first-ever First Nations woman elected to the Legislature, shared stories of the bullying she has witnessed throughout her life, and called for an end to bullying. "We need to overcome the past because we want to make a difference," she said.

Participants enjoyed drumming performances and making cedar bracelets. Those in need went home with protein-pack lunches and purses filled with personal care products donated by young workers. The contribution by 22 volunteers from CUPE locals made the luncheon possible for the 140 women who attended the event, organized by women for women.

CUPE member steps up for Saskatchewan elections

Vicki Mowat, 30, is a proud member of CUPE 3287- the University of Saskatchewan Sessional Lecturers. She ran in the recent Saskatchewan provincial election and narrowly lost to the Saskatchewan Party incumbent.

Mowat grew up in a working family that always encouraged her to help other people out as much as possible. I ran for the New Democrats because they are the only party that will stand up for working people," said Mowat.



Manitoba: Taking action for stronger social services!

From domestic violence contract language to equity for midwives, members in Manitoba have been taking the fight to the streets. Members of CUPE 2348 have had a busy year, mobilizing the community to speak out in support of Winnipeg School Division community liaisons and successfully staving off proposed job cuts.

CUPE 2348 mobilized women's shelter workers in Steinbach Manitoba to take to the streets, calling on their employer to support contract language that would protect workers who are victims of domestic violence. During this campaign, the provincial government announced ground-breaking legislation

requiring that all employers must provide paid days off for victims of domestic violence.

The local also teamed up with the Midwives Association of Manitoba launching an intense campaign to improve compensation and equity for Manitoba's midwives. This community-driven campaign included early morning info pickets and garnered over 1,500 petition signatures. All this in addition to participating in countless community events such as PRIDE!, the Day of Pink, International Women's Day, and more!

CUPE 2348's experiences make it clear that working with the community and taking direct action gets results for the membership, and beyond!



NS home support workers push back sector-wide privatization

CUPE home support workers from across Nova Scotia are cautiously optimistic that a threat of sector-wide privatization has been pushed back, now that Stephen McNeil's Liberal government has backed off plans to put agency contracts out to private tender.

CUPE Home Support Coordinator Marianne Welsh said, "We are pleased that Health Minister Leo Glavine has backed away, at least for now, on plans to put home care contracts out to private tender. We're also happy that there's been no further discussion about the introduction of a lower-paid Home Care Aide classification."

Home support workers from several unions came together with the Nova Scotia Citizens Health Network and other community allies to fight for local jobs and local service providers in our communities. Recent remarks from Minister Glavine that the new deals signed with home support providers in the coming months will include what he called 'performance expectations' is something CUPE is watching closely.

CUPE represents Home Support Workers at Region of Queens Home Support, Lunenburg County Home Support Services Society, Victorian Order of Nurses - Cumberland County, New Waterford Home-maker Service Society, and Victoria County Home Support Workers.

■ **John McCracken**

Doing More for the Environment in Our Workplaces

Promotion of a healthy environment is integrally linked to other aspects of occupational health and safety. The phenomenon of climate change makes it clear that unions need to be at the forefront of environmental engagement starting with our own workplaces. To support this effort, CUPE has produced a fact sheet to assist members and locals seeking to explore related issues. "How to Form a Workplace Environment Committee" provides ideas and useful suggestions. Some environment committees are made up solely of workers, while others are joint committees with the employer. Multiple models are possible.

"Although the environment and workplace health are closely related, experience has shown that environment committees should ideally be distinct and independent from, for example, health and safety committees," said Matthew Firth, CUPE senior officer Health and Safety, national office. "This leaves the environment committee free to focus specifically on its own mandate and work."

"A variety of actions can be taken to improve environmental performance in the workplace in relation to recycling, energy and water conservation, modes of transportation, meetings, etc. It is not always easy to know where to begin. The

CUPE website offers an eco-audit tool used to assess current workplace practices and provide ideas concerning possible actions," said CUPE National-Secretary Treasurer Charles Fleury.

"We can and we must do more," added Carmel Forde co-chair of CUPE's National Environment Committee. "It's important to show that unions are part of the solution. We take pride that CUPE cares about the environment," said Joanne Azevedo the committee's other co-chair.

For more information, visit cupe.ca/environment.

■ **Pierre Ducasse**



Members of CUPE 6079, of the Hospital Employees' Union, won the 2015 CUPE Earth Day contest. They helped set up the first "Green Team" in their workplace, an environment committee, that tackled issues such as waste and recycling.

NATIONAL SECRETARY-TREASURER CHARLES FLEURY

We have a strong national union because every member does their part

Our members are facing many challenges these days: attacks at the bargaining tables, government cuts, and funding freezes. But CUPE members are always ready to take on a fight, and they can count on their national union to back them up.

In CUPE, we know how to mobilize our members to resist attacks. We also build our union power across our regions and across the country. CUPE National: that's 636,000 members, tens of thousands of dedicated activists, and more than 850 staff members.

Together, we are CUPE National. When all of us work together, we have everything that we need to fight against attacks and to win.

We also have a powerful union because each month, our 2,400 locals send their per capita payments to CUPE National. This money pays for staffing, offices, training, campaigns, organizing, election work, our Fight back Fund, our Strike Fund, and so much more.

This year, we have a big focus on supporting strikes and lockouts. In CUPE, we do many things to prevent a strike. But sometimes, it's the only way to hold onto what we have and to make gains. When that happens, we are committed to supporting our locals. Our priority is always to make sure that the picket lines stay strong and that we win the strike.

We now have over 85 million dollars in our National Strike Fund. The employers know this, and this is a big part of our power as a National Union. We all have a responsibility to make sure that our Strike Fund stays healthy and available for every member who needs it.

Alone we can only do so much. But when we work together and support each other, we have the people power and the resources to win many fights.

CHARLES FLEURY ONLINE  twitter.com/CUPENatSec





Day of Mourning

for workers
killed or injured
on the job

April 28

Remember the canary

The tiny canary was once the only safeguard mine workers had against danger in the workplace. If the canary died, it was a signal to evacuate the mines... fast. Today, CUPE members across Canada act as frontline protection for their fellow citizens. They have become the canaries.

Each year approximately 1,000 Canadian workers are killed on the job. Hundreds of thousands are injured. Countless thousands become permanently disabled or die from work-related diseases.

April 28 is a day to pause, reflect and gather our resolve. It has become a day to rededicate ourselves to the fight for improved health and safety.

Let's remember these CUPE members killed on the job in 2015

Dellis Partridge, CUPE 4946, Alberta
John Macleod, CUPE 1867, Nova Scotia
Alain Bissonnette, CUPE 503, Ontario
Harl Hawley, CUPE 30, Alberta
Nilo Sanchez, CUPE 59, Saskatchewan
Venancio Perez, CUPE 1483, Ontario
Stephen Penny, CUPE 30, Alberta
William Miller, CUPE 4705, Ontario
Mark Urbanowicz, CUPE 1000, Ontario (2014)

CUPE