

October 2014

TO ALL CUPE CHARTERED ORGANIZATIONS

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

DECEMBER 1 – WORLD AIDS DAY

World AIDS Day was established to create an opportunity for everyone to unite in the fight against HIV/AIDS, show support for people living with HIV and to honour people who have died. There are 35 million people living with HIV globally. In Canada, our Public Health Agency reports 76,275 HIV positive cases.

Working with other unions, CUPE works toward benefits for all workers and their families, like harassment-free workplaces, medical benefits and more. CUPE has been at the forefront of the effort to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS and we encourage all our members to take action against this pandemic.

CUPE's recently adopted HIV and AIDS policy shows why this pandemic is both a human rights issue and a workplace issue. It outlines ways we can support members in the workplace. It also acknowledges the crucial work of community-based groups battling on the frontlines of this pandemic, many of whom are CUPE members.

The policy also provides a foundation for CUPE's international solidarity work. This work includes our support for the work of the Stephen Lewis Foundation with grassroots partners in Africa who are on the front lines of the AIDS pandemic. There are currently 25 million people in sub-Saharan Africa infected with HIV and 15 million children orphaned by AIDS.

On this World AIDS Day, and throughout the year, CUPE calls on members and locals across the country to take action and bring attention to the impact of HIV/AIDS.

Visit stephenlewisfoundation.org to find out how you can help turn the tide of AIDS in Africa.

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Read CUPE's HIV and AIDS policy at cupe.ca/hivaids to learn more about this issue and ways to take action in the workplace.

In solidarity,



PAUL MOIST
National President

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CHARLES FLEURY
National Secretary-Treasurer

October 2014

TO ALL CUPE CHARTERED ORGANIZATIONS

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

DECEMBER 3 – INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

The United Nations established December 3 as the International Day for Persons with Disabilities in order to increase awareness of the struggles faced by people with disabilities around the world.

Canada was, in fact, the first country to include legal protection for workers with disabilities in its *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms*, an accomplishment of which all Canadians can be proud.

Last year, CUPE realized the benefits of a yearlong disability rights awareness campaign, “A Solidarity of Abilities”, launched by CUPE’s Persons with Disabilities National Working Group (PWDNWG). This successful campaign resulted in training for staff and members in the accommodation of disabilities; the creation of posters, fact sheets, and pamphlets dealing with disability issues; coalition-building with a number of disability-related organizations across the country, and a variety of local awareness-raising activities and events across the country.

This year, CUPE’s disability activities are focused on the international level, working with organizations like the Canadian Labour Congress, the Council of Canadians with Disabilities, and other civil society groups to ensure that the federal government lives up to its obligations under the UN *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, which was ratified by Canada on March 11, 2010.

On March 20, 2014, Canada released its initial report to the UN Committee, regarding its compliance with its Convention obligations.

During the fall, CUPE’s PWDNWG will be working with Council of Canadians with Disabilities on a shadow report to the federal government’s official report. CUPE is committed to holding the government accountable and ensuring that Canada meets its obligations in a robust and meaningful way that provides real support to the millions of Canadians, and thousands of CUPE members, who live with disabilities every day.

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What can CUPE members do?

- Ensure you understand disability rights. Attend CUPE's weeklong Duty to Accommodate workshop or ask for it to be offered to your local. Visit cupe.ca/union-education for more info. Visit cupe.ca/disability-rights for fact sheets and other materials on disability rights in the workplace.
- Acquaint yourself with the federal government report to the United Nations at ccdonline.ca.
- Write your Member of Parliament about the need for Canada to develop concrete plans for significant and measurable action to advance its international obligations.

Together, we can insure that the rights of our members, and all people with disabilities, are protected and improved.

In solidarity,



PAUL MOIST
National President



CHARLES FLEURY
National Secretary-Treasurer

October 2014

TO ALL CUPE CHARTERED ORGANIZATIONS

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

DECEMBER 6 – NATIONAL DAY OF REMEMBRANCE AND ACTION TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

This December 6 is the 25th anniversary of the 1989 École Polytechnique massacre, where 14 women were singled out because of their gender and murdered. One of those women, Maryse Laganière, was a CUPE member who worked at the school.

Gender-based discrimination and violence remain widespread in our workplaces and communities, as the Canadian Women's Foundation, Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women and others have documented. Yet the federal government continues to walk away from the problem.

As December 6 approaches, CUPE urges the federal government to:

1. Carry out a national public inquiry into missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls

Aboriginal women and girls continue to face extreme levels of violence. Aboriginal organizations and allies across Canada and internationally have called for a national public inquiry. Even provincial and territorial premiers back the demand. Despite this pressure, the federal government refuses to undertake a national public inquiry or even recognize the root causes.

We urge CUPE members to sign the petition initiated by the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) calling for a national public inquiry on this issue at canadianlabour.ca.

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2. Implement a national action plan to end violence against women

The United Nations has called upon governments across the world to develop national action plans to end violence against women. Women's groups in Canada continue to press for action. The federal government has moved us backwards instead, cutting funding to advocacy groups and survivor support programs.

As part of our own actions to ending violence against women, CUPE has joined other labour organizations and Western University to document the effects of violence against women on workers and the workplace. On December 6, the CLC will release the results of this first pan-Canadian survey on domestic violence at work.

CUPE is joining a coalition of organizations across Canada on a women's rights campaign that will be launched in October 2014 and run until the federal election in 2015. The campaign is calling for a nationally broadcast leaders' debate on women's issues – the first in over thirty years. The debate would focus on three core issues: the importance of ending violence against women, taking action to end women's economic inequality, and supporting women's leadership. The 2015 federal election is an opportunity to build a national conversation on gender equality. Look for updates on this campaign as it develops, or contact the Equality Branch at equality@cupe.ca.

The YWCA's Rose Campaign is initiating an action called *Light the Night* against violence. *Light the Night* will light monuments across the country on December 6 to commemorate the date. CUPE will be lighting our national headquarters in Ottawa, and we encourage locals to help secure the lighting of a monument in your area. For more information, contact the campaign through their website at rosecampaign.ca.

Many CUPE members and staff across the country work daily to end gender-based violence and support workers and families affected. As December 6 approaches, CUPE applauds your activism, and we re-dedicate ourselves to ending violence against women.

In solidarity,



PAUL MOIST
National President



CHARLES FLEURY
National Secretary-Treasurer

October 2014

TO ALL CUPE CHARTERED ORGANIZATIONS

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

DECEMBER 10 – INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

A Canadian from New Brunswick, John Peters Humphrey, wrote the first draft of what is perhaps the most comprehensive human rights document in recorded history, the “Universal Declaration on Human Rights”. This declaration continues to be the aspiration of people around the world following the unanimous support it received at the United Nations on December 10, 1948.

CUPE recognizes International Human Rights Day on December 10 each year to salute the courage and determination of the people of the world who are marginalized and oppressed and whose actions everyday confront continuing human rights violations and systemic discrimination. We take this opportunity to recognize the importance of the Universal Declaration for Human Rights (UNDHR), and all related resolutions and protocols, as we hold the Canadian Government and international bodies accountable.

In Canada, the use of immigration policy to violate a range of protected human rights must be immediately challenged. Through the conditions of our temporary foreign worker programs, our immigration detention system, denial of health care for refugees, or two-tier citizenship rights, the Canadian government is creating a system of exclusion and discrimination that is rendering a unprecedented number of people in this country highly vulnerable and subject to exploitation.

The *Justice for Deepan* campaign, a campaign CUPE supports, is an important example of a how people demand the recognition of their human rights in Canada. Deepan Budlakoti is an Ottawa-born man who was rendered stateless by the Canadian government. His citizenship was revoked after he got in trouble with the law as a young person. He is facing deportation to India, a country where he has never lived, has no family and where he is not a citizen.

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PAUL MOIST – National President / Président national **CHARLES FLEURY** – National Secretary-Treasurer / Secrétaire-trésorier national

FRED HAHN – DANIEL LÉGÈRE – LUCIE LEVASSEUR – KELLY MOIST – MARLE ROBERTS – General Vice-Presidents / Vice-présidences générales



Our government's action suggest they may be using Deepan's situation to support their efforts to change the rules of Canadian citizenship from a right that is protected to a privilege that can be revoked on a whim. This example of "double punishment" coincides with the passing of the Bill C-24 "*Strengthening Canadian Citizenship Act*", which makes it easier to revoke citizenship from anyone who can be deported to another country, such as dual citizens. Two-tier citizenship rights in this country could lead to increased criminalization of racialized communities, and could undermine our ability to organize for causes and take political action without fear of being stripped of our rights.

Amnesty International has raised clear concern that "Canada's position of refusing to recognize Mr. Budlakoti's Canadian citizenship runs counter to the country's international human rights obligations with respect to statelessness and leads to other related human rights violations."

In recognition of International Human Rights Day we urge you to visit justicefordeepan.org and consider how you and your local can offer solidarity.

For further information on CUPE's equality initiatives, visit cupe.ca/issues-research.

In solidarity,



PAUL MOIST
National President



CHARLES FLEURY
National Secretary-Treasurer

October 2014

TO ALL CUPE CHARTERED ORGANIZATIONS

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

NOVEMBER 20 – TRANSGENDER DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

The Transgender Day of Remembrance is observed on November 20 around the world in memory of the transgender and transsexual persons who have been murdered out of fear or hatred. People who do not live their lives according to social expectations of their birth-assigned sex continue to be targets of shocking brutality. Trans people are also particularly vulnerable to harassment and exclusion on a daily basis, on and off the job.

Trans rights are human rights. Ending all forms of discrimination and violence is an important struggle, and as Canadian playwright Tomson Highway reminded us at our national convention, unions protect human dignity. CUPE has a proud history of standing up for trans rights and supporting transgender trailblazers in our workplaces and communities.

Audrey Gauthier, one of three trans representatives on the National Pink Triangle Committee, made history last November when she was elected president of CUPE 4041, representing Air Transat flight attendants based in Montréal. She became the first openly trans person elected president of a local in Canada.

City of Regina facilities maintenance worker Deidra Roberts helps raise public awareness by speaking out about her experience as a trans woman. In a recent interview with onmyplanet.ca she spoke frankly about the challenges of transitioning from male to female while still on the job. Sister Roberts is an active member of the union executive of CUPE 21.

There is still much work to be done so that transgender people can enjoy rights most of us take for granted.

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In recent years efforts have been made to provide explicit legal protection for trans people by adding "gender identity" and "gender expression" to the list of prohibited grounds for discrimination in human rights laws. Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and Ontario included both of these grounds, while Manitoba added "gender identity". Bill C-279 would add protection for "gender identity" to the *Canadian Human Rights Code* and the *Criminal Code* hate crime sentencing provisions but it is currently sitting in the Senate for review.

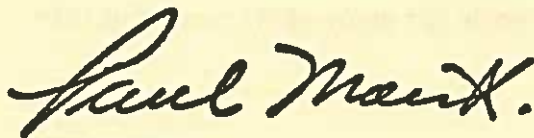
Other basic needs are still unmet. Medicare coverage for the treatments and surgery associated with gender reassignment is uneven across Canada. Getting name and gender changes on essential documents like birth certificates and passports is a hurdle for many trans people. Being able to use public washrooms without fear of verbal or physical attack is another everyday concern. Barriers still exist in accessing housing, employment, health and social services.

What can you and your local do to help ensure that trans people live and work in safety and dignity?

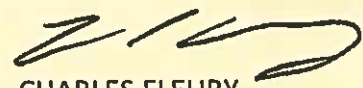
- Learn more about trans issues and how to be an ally for equality. Invite a trans activist to speak to your local. Ask for UDD courses and equality presentations to be presented in your region. View the CUPE presentation on transphobic harassment and discrimination in employment and health care on the CUPE website, or check out the interview with Deidra Roberts at onmyplanet.ca.
- Bargain language to specify that your no discrimination clause covers gender identity and gender expression, and negotiate paid leave for transitioning members.
- Lobby for the inclusion of gender identity and gender expression in human rights and hate crime legislation.
- Support community efforts to extend public funding to gender reassignment surgery and other health care services for trans people.
- Participate in November 20 observances to memorialize the lives lost and to raise awareness about trans issues.

And don't forget to tell us about your actions to promote and defend trans rights. These acts of solidarity keep us strong and inspire others to join the struggle.

In solidarity and pride,



PAUL MOIST
National President



CHARLES FLEURY
National Secretary-Treasurer