



THE CUPW VOICE LOCAL 626

The Official Newsletter of the Toronto Local - Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW)

CUPW contract talks have reached a crucial stage By Tom Godfrey

CUPW officials say they've reached an 'important juncture' in bargaining for a collective agreement as they push to improve working conditions for its more than 50,000 members nationwide.



CUPW's Sylvain Lapointe

members of the union's negotiating committee said. "We are committed to completing these negotiations in the coming weeks."

Chief Negotiators Sylvain Lapointe, of the Urban Unit, and Nancy Beauchamp, of the RSMC Bargaining Unit, in a statement said they're at a crucial stage in talks with some demands as wage increases and protection against inflation are 'not suitable for the mediation process at this time. On

the other hand, certain demands have been discussed on several occasions given their complexity," they said in an April update.

They say the union submitted its requirements and potential solutions in areas including new services, job security, over-burdening and access to information.

"We need information to enforce work rules and to verify the hours of work related to internal staffing," said union negotiators. "We have also submitted our demands concerning the need to create full-time positions when they are warranted by part-time and temporary hours worked."

They also said high priorities include equality for RSMCs and getting better working conditions for all groups.

Union officials said many Locals have held activities in support of the experienced negotiating team and the tough road ahead to obtain a new contract.

"It is important to keep these activities going and step up the pressure so Canada Post gets the message that you support your Negotiating Committee and your demands," according to the update. The union is seeking "Access to Information" on Letter Carriers and Mail Service Couriers to examine how routes are structured. Without this, confirming that routes have the right time values is impossible, according to the negotiators.

"The demand to Access to Information and union participation in all aspects of route restructuring is an integral part of our negotiations," the union officials said. "We have been fighting to get full Access to Information since Canada Post introduced the Georoute software." This information, which was previously available, is required for union officials to address the excessive workload, ensure the right time values are applied and that all rules are respected. Negotiations continue in Ottawa.

Vaisakhi is a time for Sikhs to celebrate

Workers lined up a Gateway to receive delicious samosas with all the spicy toppings to mark Vaisakhi, an annual celebration for our Sikh and Indian co-workers. "Today is the birthday of the Sikh religion and a time of celebration for us," said Pavneet Ver, a Toronto Local official, who helped serve the food. "It is a time in which families get together to celebrate."

Vaisakhi is a historical and religious festival in Sikhism and Hinduism and has its distinct significance for each culture. It is

celebrated on either April 13 or 14 every year depending on the lunar calendar.

Canada has a thriving Sikh population, many who have been here for generations.

For Sikhs, Vaisakhi celebrates the winter harvest, welcomes in the Sikh New Year, and marks the creation of the Khalsas – the community of baptized Sikhs – by Guru Gobind Singh Ji in 1699.

To mark this occasion, families and friends usually get together in Gurdwaras, homes, and Nagar

Kirtans, a Sikh custom involving the processional singing of holy hymns.



Helping out with Vaisakhi celebrations at Gateway are (from left) Kamal Nijjar, Sandeep Saini, Pavneet Ver and Pam Kaura.

National Day of Mourning for our CUPW brothers and sisters

Canada Post workers joined the trades and others nationwide last April 28 to remember those who died or were injured on the job in a National Day of Mourning.

Marc Roussel, a CUPW national Health and Safety representative, said union members spent the day mourning the loss of members at Canada Post and other companies. "We've had to go through the grief and pain associated with the death of a sister or brother," Roussel said. "We've also experienced what it's like to care for a loved one who has been injured or becomes disabled as a result of a workplace accident."

The National Day of Mourning is held yearly to pay tribute to those who have lost their lives, or

suffered injury or illness on the job.

The day-long event was initiated by the labour movement 34-years-ago to increase awareness of on-the-job injuries and fatal workplace accidents. The day was recognized by the federal government in 1991, more than eight years after it was launched by the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) in 1985.

Roussel said the day is recognized in more than 100 countries and is spreading.

"There is still a lot of work to accomplish to improve workers' safety," he stressed. "A number of Canadian legislative provisions dealing with occupational health and safety are deemed exemplary internationally."

He said the Canadian government last year provided extra resources to ensure the provisions are applied.

Roussel called on workers to continue seeking stronger health and safety standards and protection at their workplaces.

"We must all commit to continuing the struggle to force employers and governments to fulfill their obligation to make every workplace a safe and healthy one," he said.

CUPW also marked a Day of Pink last April 11, in which workers were urged to wear the colour in unison to celebrate diversity and bring an end to homophobia, transphobia, transmisogyny and all forms of bullying.

Recognizing Asian Canadians' Contributions in May

Members of CUPW's Toronto Local are supporting our Asian brothers and sisters as they celebrate Asian Heritage Month.

The month of May recognizes the many contributions that people of Asian heritage make to the betterment of Canadian society.

Asian Heritage Month has been celebrated since the 1990s, but the Canadian government officially recognized May as Asian Heritage Month in 2002. The Canadian government's official declaration acknowledges the presence in Canada for two centuries of people from East Asia, South Asia, West Asia and Southeast Asia who immigrated here, bringing their rich cultural heritage of various ethnicities, languages and religious traditions. People from this diverse, vibrant and growing community have contributed to every aspect of Canadian life, including the arts, science, sports, business and government.

In 2001, May was also declared South Asian Heritage Month in Ontario, further evidence that people of Asian heritage are a huge and diverse part of the province.

South Asian immigrants began arriving in Ontario at the start of the 19th century. Working primarily in the sawmill industry, South Asian immigrants settled in

various parts of the province. For South Asians, the month of May has been a time of celebration and commemoration of their arrival from the Indian subcontinent to the Americas beginning on May 5, 1838.



Union seeks paid leave for domestic violence

CUPW negotiators are working to have language included in our upcoming collective agreement that would include a paid leave and protection from adverse actions due to domestic violence. A survey by the Canadian Labour Congress and University of Western Ontario on domestic violence in the workplace found one of three workers in Canada have or will experience domestic violence in their lifetime, with the violence following about half of them to work.

The survey found that more than 80 per cent of those who reported experiencing domestic violence said it negatively affected their work performance; with almost 9% claiming they had lost a job as a result, according to a CUPW March Negotiations Update. The study said domestic violence touches many people with 37% reporting that it affected their co-

workers, who were stressed about the abusive situation that exists. “We need to remove the stigma that domestic violence is a private matter,” negotiations materials said. “The findings shed a light on the overwhelming need for support and interventions in the workplace.”

Union negotiators said language sought for our collective agreement “will not only address the requirements to have paid leave but also protections from discipline and adverse actions because of domestic violence.”

They said the workplace policies must be relevant and accessible to all members.

The union is developing a social steward network to act as a resource centre and provide help to those in need.

They are also urging anyone who are concerned for their own or someone else’s safety to call 911, a friend or domestic violence helpline in their area.

Those seeking help can access sheltersafe.ca to find a list of shelters and their phone numbers in Canada. They can also call an Employee Assistance Program at 1-866-565-4903.

Reach *The Voice*

The CUPW Voice is published monthly by the Toronto Local to keep our members informed of the latest concerns and issues affecting them. The CUPW Voice Advisory Committee is made up of Layout Artist Greg MacDonald, Union activist Mark Brown, Secretary Treasurer Abdi Hagi Yusuf and Editor Tom Godfrey. We are always looking for new members to help with the publication. You can send Tom an e-mail with news items or tips to tgodfrey@rogers.com. The Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) has more than 50,000 members nationwide, with Toronto being the home of its largest Local.

***Passings:* Voula was a real fighter who will be sadly missed**



Voula Hemmerechts is being fondly remembered as an active member of the CUPW Toronto Local who worked hard for her fellow sisters and brothers.

The long-time letter carrier, who was based at 340 Matheson Dr., passed away last April 7. She was 54.

Dozens of CUPW members attended the funeral service to pay their respects to the avid trade unionist, who helped many co-workers over the years.

“She was a real fighter,” recalled Adele Chapman, the 1st vice-president of the Toronto Local.

“She was well-known and well-respected by all our members.” Hemmerechts was a shop steward for a number of years and at one time sat on the Joint Health and Safety Committee. Chapman said Voula often helped with WSIB cases and other tasks at the Local office. Jane Marsh, the Local’s 4th v-p, said Voula was fearless in dealing with management. “Voula was a warrior against the boss and yet the most compassionate kindest person I had ever met,” she said. Voula leaves behind her husband and five teenage children.

Posties pray, lay flowers at deadly crash site

Canadian flags at Gateway and other Canada Post facilities were flown at half-mast in memory of the 10 people killed and 15 wounded on April 23 as a van ploughed into unwary pedestrians for several blocks in North York. Letter carriers from the Willowdale Depot, who deliver mail in the area, prayed, laid flowers and paid their respects to the victims as they visited Olive Square, which has been turned into a memorial of candles, cards and flowers.

Words of kindness were written in English, Korean, Farsi and other languages, which reflects the diversity of the Yonge St. and Finch Ave. W. neighbourhood where the bloody rampage occurred.

“We are on this road every day delivering mail,” one teary-eyed postie mourned, as a group of her co-workers looked on. “This could have been me or anyone of us. It is sad.”

Grieving members of CUPW send our condolences to all the families involved and wish those injured a full and speedy recovery.

The City of Toronto has partnered with others to create the #TorontoStrong Fund so members of the community can have a place to donate. All funds will go to supporting victims, families and first responders affected by trauma.

Donations can be made at torontofoundation.ca/torontostrong. So far more than \$450,000 has been raised.



Photo by Greg MacDonald

Minister Qualtrough probes bullying issues at CPC

The issue of bullying and harassment of postal workers by Canada Post supervisors on the plant floor has reached the top-floor offices of politicians in Ottawa.

Carla Qualtrough, the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, which includes Canada Post, has been made aware of the growing work-floor problems faced by workers and has launched an investigation.

“Her (Qualtrough) office is now looking into the problem of workplace harassment and bullying of staff at Canada Post,” admitted CUPW National President, Mike Palecek. “We have met with the Minister on this issue and she assures us that there will be a follow-up.”

Palecek said the union welcomes an investigation and is pleased that the concerns are being treated seriously by top government officials on Parliament Hill.

“We know the fight isn’t over and we will continue to push this issue until the bullying stops,” he told CUPW members in a bulletin.

“Prime Minister Trudeau needs to back up his words and change the culture of bullying at Canada Post.”

Trudeau was asked last January by CUPW activists in Winnipeg about the harassment of workers at postal facilities nationwide.

Palecek said the PM was “genuinely surprised” by the question, apologized and vowed to take action.

He said there has been an “overwhelming response” from members across the country who claim they are being bullied, harassed or taken advantage of by some Canada Post supervisors.

“We know that it is not easy to come forward but if we all stand together we can break the cycle of bully-bosses at Canada Post,” Palecek stressed.

The union has established a Bully Bosses hotline, where claims by members of bullying can be investigated.

You can reach the hotline by email at jlouisseize@cupw-stt.org. Complaints can also be sent by mail to Bully Bosses, 377 Bank St., Ottawa, Ont., K2P 1Y3.