

Counterpoint



COORDINATED BARGAINING BRINGS PENSION VICTORY

Victory in
Saskatchewan:
Essential services
legislation ruled
unconstitutional

**Profile of
health care
worker and
Shop Steward
DENIS BRUN**

**FOCUS: FAIR
TAXATION –
THERE IS A
BETTER WAY**

A KEEPSAKE POSTER ON THE
BACK PAGE OF THIS ISSUE FOR
APRIL 28 DAY OF MOURNING

HE SAID

Justice Ball said the Saskatchewan government's essential services legislation infringes upon the freedom of association of employees protected under section 2(d) of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Read more on this decision, page 7.

ROBERT CHISHOLM, Member of Parliament, Dartmouth – Cole Harbour

When former Atlantic Regional Director Robert Chisholm announced he would be taking on federal Member of Parliament and Liberal incumbent Mike Savage in the Nova Scotia riding of Dartmouth–Cole Harbour, there were many who thought the popular Savage would be tough to unseat.

Those people did not know Robert Chisholm. The former leader of the Nova Scotia NDP proved to be a giant killer by defeating the son of former NS Premier John Savage and became one of three New Democrats elected federally in that province.

“As a researcher, servicing rep, and finally Atlantic Regional Director for CUPE, I was able to use my deep commitment to fairness, respect and problem-solving to help working people throughout the region,” says Chisholm.

“When it became clear that we were heading for an election in early 2011, I knew I couldn't sit back

and watch the Conservatives dismantle all the things that we, as New Democrats, hold dear. I ran in the riding of Dartmouth–Cole Harbour and was the only candidate in Nova Scotia to defeat an incumbent.”

“As a trade unionist for 25 years, I was very proud to be in the House of Commons as a new MP, alongside Jack Layton, as we fought against the government's attempts to trample on the rights, first of Canada Post employees

and then Air Canada employees, who watched this government make a mockery of free collective bargaining,” says Chisholm.

Chisholm is the deputy finance critic in the Opposition shadow cabinet. He was a candidate for leader of the federal NDP but withdrew his candidacy in the lead up to the NDP convention focusing on his work in the riding of Dartmouth–Cole Harbour.

■ John McCracken



PENSION SECURITY GAINS DURING TOUGH ROUND OF BARGAINING

Front-line workers at Queen's University not only averted a lock-out or strike that would have impacted campus operations; they also gained crucial new pension rights and significantly reduced pension plan changes that the employer had tried to impose.

This was the first time all three CUPE locals at Queen's bargained together. The employer surprised the bargaining team by including pensions for the first time in Queen's bargaining history. Formerly, discussions on pensions for workers at the University involved all seven unions, including the three CUPE locals.

The University was seeking changes to pensions that included a number of benefit reductions and an increase in member contribution rates. The CUPE bargaining team questioned the employer's numbers and with actuarial help was able to develop a detailed counter-proposal that brought significant savings while avoiding the deepest cuts.

The settlement also achieved breakthrough security language, entrenching rights in the collective agreement requiring that any further changes to pension benefits must be negotiated.

■ Janet Szliske

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CUPE / Canadian Union of Public Employees



Meeting the challenge

Like many members, Denis Brun, a care aide at the Dr. Georges-L.-Dumont Hospital, needed his arm twisted before getting involved in his local union.

“When the executive asked me to become a steward, I agreed without



really knowing what I was getting into. I was young and didn't really know anything about the union. The executive members may have sugar-coated things a little when they assured me there was nothing to worry about.”

So Denis jumped in and became the steward for his department. He learned what a shop steward was by taking workshops offered by CUPE. “Those workshops really helped me to do my work as a steward, and the training made me want to get more involved in my union.”

With the support and encouragement of his local, Denis became chief steward for Local 821, which has close to a thousand members.

“The members I represent work hard, often under difficult conditions. My biggest challenge is to ensure that our employer

recognizes and respects our work and the collective agreement.”

One thing led to another, and his involvement in the labour movement has gone beyond his local union. He became a youth representative in the New Brunswick Federation of Labour and a member of CUPE's Young Workers Committee, a position he held until, at age 30, he was “too old” to represent youth. For the past two years, he has served on CUPE's National Environment Committee, a mandate that he hopes to renew.

As well as being chief steward, Denis became a CUPE coordinator. He believes that youth involvement in the union requires training. “We need to find ways to include young people in the union. Young people are reluctant to get involved and it's up to us to seek them out and offer the training they need to become future leaders.”

■ Danielle Savoie



CUPE-Quebec's special meeting on pension plans

More than 600 CUPE-Quebec members attended a special two-day meeting in late February to discuss the future of pension plans. The main conclusion drawn from this think-tank session was the need to step up pressure to preserve pension plans and to reaffirm the right to a decent retirement for all Quebecers.

“CUPE is going to great lengths to protect the mechanisms in place to make sure our members and all Quebecers are able to grow old with dignity. Yes, we are on the heels of a crisis; and yes, we may be forced to make decisions. But we will not let anyone use these hard times to push us down or undermine working people,” said Denis Bolduc, secretary general of CUPE-Quebec, as the meeting came to a close.

■ Sébastien Goulet

NATIONAL PRESIDENT PAUL MOIST

We must be leaders in economic policy

Canadian workers must be ready to take on the Harper government and their fiscal mismanagement. The federal Conservative government track record in managing of our money is stark, and shows a clear disregard for supporting workers and their families.

In the guise of fostering job growth and economic development, Harper's tax policies have been a bonanza for banks, oil and gas companies, and the financial sector. Canadian workers, however, have yet to see much in the way of benefits. Meanwhile, corporate tax cuts have decimated federal coffers, and have laid the groundwork for slashing public spending.

This of course is Harper's real goal – dismantling the public services and programs Canadians depend on by either opening them up to profit seeking private corporations or abandoning them all together. It's plain and simple, the Harper Conservatives are intent on taking the 'public' out of our health care, pensions, and infrastructure.

Tragically, this ideological crusade is devastating Canada's economy. Unemployment remains high, wages are stagnant (except for CEO's and top executives, which continue to grow exponentially), and the infrastructure that fuels economic growth is crumbling around us. CUPE has a responsibility to stand up against this fiscal mismanagement.

While they have proven to be inept financial managers, the Harper Conservatives do excel at successfully

portraying themselves as fiscally responsible. Our first step towards sound economic policies has to be to show Canadians there is a better way.

We must be ready to promote policies that put the economic security of workers ahead of corporate profit growth. This will address our retirement income security crisis and recognize the vital importance of strong and equitable public services.

CUPE is ready to stand up and offer a better way.

As part of this work, I will be hosting an economic literacy breakfast at each of the division conventions this year. It will be an opportunity to learn about what we can do to make sure Canada's economy serves workers, and not just corporate interests. I hope many of you will be able to attend, and I look forward to the discussions.

CUPE members are a vital and integral part of the economy. We must take leadership in the national discussion of this country's fiscal policies. Working together, we can reign in the fiscal mismanagement of the Harper Conservatives and their likeminded political allies, and give Canadian workers their rightful place in Canada's economic future.

PAUL MOIST ONLINE twitter.com/CUPENatPres



 Follow Paul Moist on Twitter

FOCUS:

FAIR TAXATION

Corporate tax cuts – Canada in the race to the bottom

A key measure needed to make our tax system more fair and progressive is for Canada to bow out of the race to the bottom for corporate taxes.

Over the past three decades, successive Liberal and Conservative governments have slashed the corporate tax rate. In 1981, corporate tax rates stood at 37.8 per cent. By 2000, they shrunk to 29.1 per cent. Today, in 2012, they are at 15 per cent.

This 60 per cent plummet in 30 years, has made Canada's corporate tax rate the lowest of G-7 countries.

These cuts were supposed

to make Canada more 'competitive' in global markets to attract business investments, but the opposite has happened. Corporate profits have escalated, and the salaries and bonuses paid out to top executives have skyrocketed, but there has been no pay-off for workers and their families.

Business investments as a share of the economy have declined and average real wages for Canadian workers have remained stagnant. Too many Canadians feel like they are losing ground. They're right.

More and more Canadians including business

friendly organizations are coming to realize that our tax system needs to be more equitable. The International Monetary Fund, the Conference Board of Canada and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development have all recently warned growing inequity is damaging economic growth.

Corporate tax cuts have failed to stimulate economic growth and paying for them is putting vital public services at risk. Canadian workers cannot afford to give this tax break to corporations any more.

■ Greg Taylor

CLOSING TAX LOOPHOLES AND UNFAIR TAX PREFERENCES

Billions in federal government revenue are lost through a wide array of ineffective and inefficient tax loopholes and unfair tax preferences – revenues that could be used to support and strengthen public services.

Stock option deductions allow high paid executives to pay tax at half the rate we pay on our employment income. They are the most inequitable and regressive of the tax loopholes. The vast majority who benefit from this deduction earn more than \$250,000. These tax loopholes helped fuel the reckless stock speculation that led to the global economic crisis. COST: \$1 billion a year.

Corporate meals and entertainment deductions provide businesses with generous tax deductions for the cost of food, alcohol and entertainment, including private boxes at sporting events, and even cruises. COST: \$300 million a year.

Capital gains deductions allow for income from investments and speculation to be taxed at half the rate of employment income. COST: \$6 billion a year.

While some tax credits do help Canadian workers, many are costly, ineffective, and only benefit corporations and high income earners. Closing these loopholes is vital to making our tax system more fair and equitable for all.

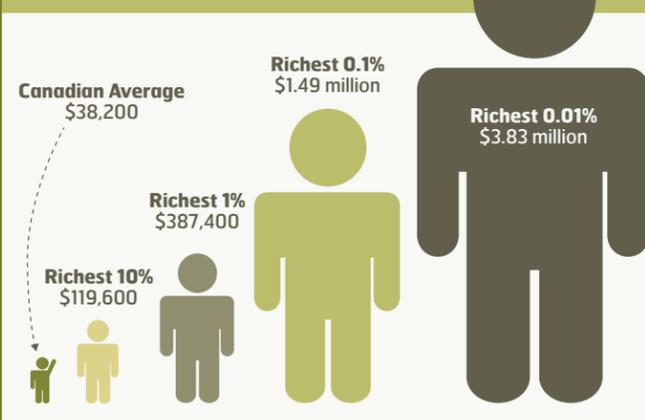
■ Greg Taylor



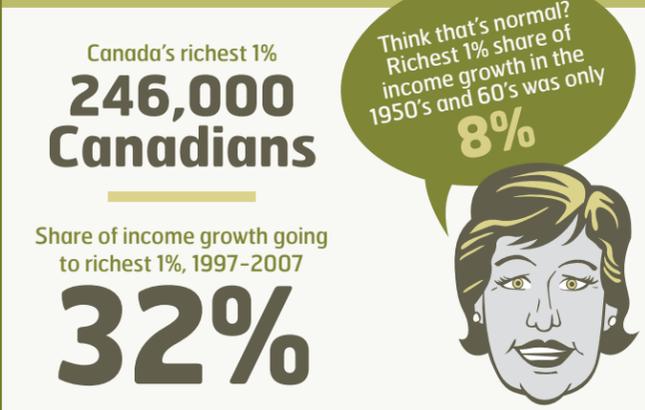
The Growing Gap

Income inequality has been getting worse in Canada, rising at a faster pace than it has been in the U.S. The inequality is being driven by what's happening at the very top of the income spectrum.

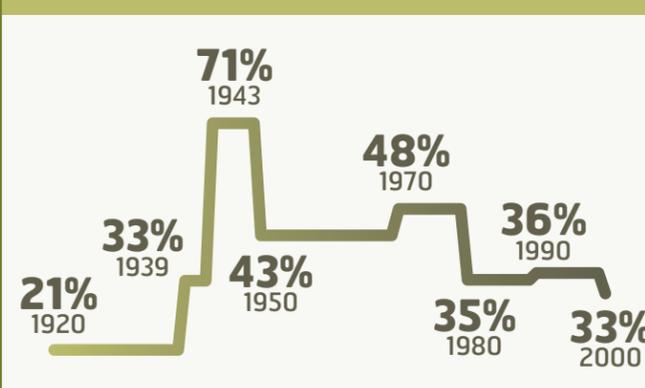
Average Earned Incomes In 2007 (Individuals)



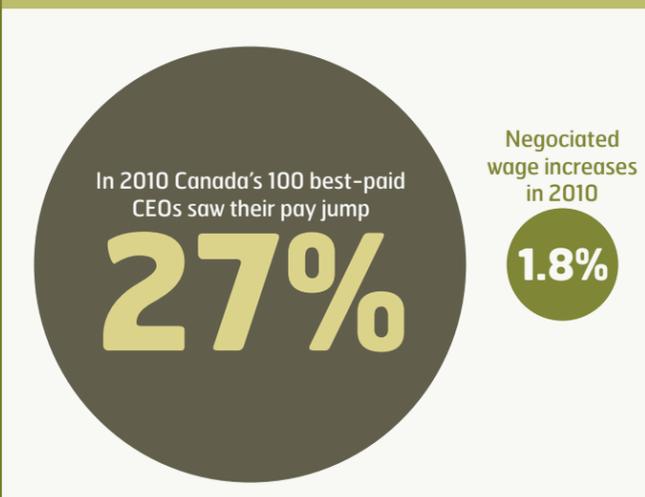
Canada's Richest 1%



Average Taxes Paid by Canada's Richest 0.01%: Then and Now



CEOs and the Rest of Us



Source: CCPA

The International Monetary Fund, the Conference Board of Canada, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development have all recently warned growing inequity is damaging economic growth.

Fair taxation — there is a better way

Over a 15 year period, the overall tax rate for the poorest Canadians increased by 20 per cent. Meanwhile the tax rate for the richest one per cent was cut by ten per cent.

The richest Canadians pay a lower overall tax rate than every other income group in Canada—including the poorest ten per cent.

The government has let federal revenues shrink to the point where the Harper Conservative government is touting cuts to the public services and programs as the way to manage the shortfall in federal revenues rather than reviewing and over-hauling the corporate tax rate.

The federal government has let its corporate tax revenues shrink and shrink, all the while lecturing workers and their families on the sacrifices they will have to endure to make up for the difference.

Federal revenues are around \$48 billion lower today than they were a decade ago. Much of this is due to reckless cuts to taxes paid by profitable corporations, and lower

taxes for Canada's highest income earners.

The economic theory that promises job creation and economic stimulation as a result of corporate tax cuts has proven untrue. Corporate tax cuts have not offered any relief to workers in Canada.

This approach is straining some of our more cherished and vital public services and programs. Our public health care system, vital infrastructure in our cities and towns, public pensions and the retirement security system – all are being threatened by the growing inequities in our tax system.

There is a better way – one that is more equitable, protects the public services and programs Canadians depend on every day and values decent-paying jobs for Canadian workers.

There are some imme-

diated measures that can be taken to move Canada to a fair tax system:

- Reversing corporate tax cuts
- Increasing tax rates for Canada's top income earners
- Closing tax loopholes and eliminating unfair tax preferences.

More and more Canadians – including business friendly organizations – have come to realize we need to explore these broader, more equitable options to safeguard our economy, while protecting the interests of workers.

The public services and programs we are being told must be cut or sacrificed – health care, Old Age Security, funding for municipal public infrastructure – are key social programs and must be supported through a tax system that is fair for all Canadians.

■ Greg Taylor

Têtes-à-têtes!



To learn more about the federal budget and how it affects you please visit CUPE.CA/FEDERAL-BUDGET.

Back the Tap 365 days a year

Across the country, people celebrated March 15, Bottled Water Free Day, by toasting the value of public tap water and taking action on bottled water.

CUPE is part of the Back the Tap coalition that promotes year-round activism to eliminate the sale and distribution of bottled water in public spaces and institutions. Campuses and municipalities are two main targets, but any workplace or institution can back the tap and go bottled water free.

The coalition also includes the Canadian Federation of Students, Council of Canadians, Polaris Institute and Sierra Youth Coalition.

Your local can get involved by visiting **BACKTHETAP.CA** for background, tools and information on events across the country.

A growing number of campuses and municipalities in Canada are ending their use of bottled water – standing up for the environment and standing behind our public water systems.

It makes environmental and financial sense to back the tap. Manufacturing and transporting water in bottles is a resource-intensive and polluting

industry, contributing to climate change. Bottled water costs thousands of times more than tap water – even though in many instances corporations are doing little more than re-packaging treated municipal water. The best quality and most affordable water comes straight from our taps.

Backing the tap counters the bottled water industry's spin that bottled water is somehow safer or more regulated than what comes out of the taps in our communities. It also takes a strong stand against privatization, at what is a critical time for water infrastructure in Canadian cities and towns.

Are you working to back the tap in your home, workplace or community? Let us know what you're doing, and we'll be sure to share your story.

■ Karin Jordan



MUNICIPAL WORKERS IN TORONTO STAND STRONG TO PROTECT SERVICES AND GOOD JOBS

At time of printing, one of four CUPE locals had reached an agreement with the City of Toronto. The city administration has consistently pushed for major concessions in a blatant attempt to gut the contracts of city workers. The four locals representing 30,000 inside and outside city workers along with community centre and library workers are standing strong to protect valuable public services from the agenda of cuts and privatization being advanced by Toronto Mayor Rob Ford.

None of the CUPE locals

has asked for major improvements, but the city has consistently pushed for concessions in an effort to provoke a strike.

In early February the Toronto Civic Employees' Union, CUPE local 416 ratified a four year agreement with the City. The local 416 bargaining team reached a deal in a very difficult environment. "The City came to the bargaining table with a long list of demands for concessions and claw backs, in the hopes of provoking our members into a negative reaction", said Mark Ferguson,

president of local 416.

Inside workers with local 79 are currently in conciliation and talks continue. In early March a no board was issued for library workers. In addition to facing a 17 per cent staff cut, many members are part-time workers, with no benefits and some of them with low-paid work.

The Toronto locals launched a television advertising campaign to profile the important work of our members in the city. To see the ad and for more information visit **TORONTOTOGETHER.CA**.

■ Heather Fraser

in brief

Time for a public day surgery centre in Regina

The long-promised public day surgery centre in Regina would do far more to expand surgical capacity than the use of for-profit surgical clinics. That's the message in CUPE Saskatchewan's new television ad, Build it.

The ad takes aim at the Wall government's decision to invest in private for-profit clinics, instead of the long-awaited public day surgery centre. **CUPE.CA/HEALTH-CARE/REGINA-BUILD-IT**



Take action on the April 28 Day of Mourning

The National Day of Mourning for workers killed and injured on the job is just around the corner.

Here's what you can do:

- Use April 28 to raise awareness and take action on workplace hazards.
- Organize or attend an event with your local.
- Work with local stewards to conduct regular workplace safety inspections.

For posters, t-shirts and other materials, go to **CUPE.CA/HEALTH-AND-SAFETY**.

CUPE to mark the Day of Pink, April 11

The Day of Pink is the international day against bullying, discrimination, homophobia and transphobia in schools and communities.

CUPE pledged to promote and support the Day of Pink.

Homophobic and transphobic bullying is a serious health and safety issue that can cause low self-esteem and negatively affect physical and mental health.

You can help celebrate diversity on April 11 by wearing a pink shirt and by organizing activities in your workplace, communities and schools.

For more info : **CUPE.CA/LGBTT** and **DAYOFPINK.ORG**

ESSENTIAL SERVICES RULING A BIG WIN FOR LABOUR

“It’s an important decision for CUPE and the labour movement because it restores our right to fair collective bargaining”.

Saskatchewan Court of Queen’s Bench Justice Dennis Ball ruled that the Wall government’s essential services legislation, introduced just six weeks after the Saskatchewan Party swept to office in 2007, is unconstitutional.

“It’s an important decision for CUPE and the labour movement because it restores our right to fair collective bargaining,” said CUPE Saskatchewan President Tom Graham about the four-year legal battle.

Justice Ball, the former head of the Saskatchewan Labour Relations Board, said the government’s essential services legislation infringes upon the freedom of

association of employees protected under section 2(d) of the Canadian *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

Justice Ball agreed that the government’s *Public Service Essential Services Act* transferred power to employers and reduced the ability of “employees to engage in meaningful strike action.”

The Justice confirmed that the right to bargain collectively is protected by the Charter and determined that such protection includes the right to strike. “The government’s *Public Service Essential Services*

Act infringes on those rights. . .” he said in his 131-page decision.

Under the essential services legislation, more than 80 per cent of CUPE Saskatchewan health care providers – including seamstresses and librarians – were deemed essential and unable to strike. “The decision restores our collective bargaining rights and that should make a big difference when we return to the bargaining table this year,” said Gordon Campbell, CUPE Health Care Council president.

■ Beth Smillie



NATIONAL SECRETARY-TREASURER CHARLES FLEURY

A budget fit to face the challenges

I’ve had the privilege of serving CUPE as National Secretary-Treasurer for a little over four months. It’s a pleasure to work with Brother Moist and the National Executive Board, and an honour to be able to build on Brother Généreux’s decade of achievements. Thank you once again to all members for placing your trust in me.

From the moment I stepped into my new role, I quickly took on duties such as preparing CUPE’s 2012 budget. Drawing up a budget is not only an exercise in accounting; above all, it’s a way to put our priorities into practice while taking the economic, political, and social contexts into consideration.

Everyone knows that the political situation is precarious. Our members are facing unprecedented attacks at all levels of government, be it federal, provincial or municipal. We must continue to fight the battles we have already begun while anticipating the ones we may face down the road.

We have no shortage of work ahead to defend workers’ rights, protect pension plans, promote public services and step up our political action while continuing to maintain the same level of services to our members. The budget that was unanimously approved by the National Executive Board in December reflects the

priorities established in the strategic directions document adopted at the 2011 CUPE National Convention. I encourage our members to read this document to get a full picture of our priorities for the next two years.

The 2012 operating budget is set at \$169 million. With a projected increase in revenues for 2012 and higher than anticipated revenues for 2011, we can afford to reinforce provincial divisions, consolidate real estate assets, and create 9.5 additional positions within the organization.

In addition, the budget includes another \$2.5 million for the Anti-Privatization Fund. Our public services are under constant attack by large corporations that are attempting to privatize services with the support of right wing governments. We must continue to free up the necessary resources to counter this trend. We also need to do the same for all CUPE campaigns that are deemed a priority, such as the campaign to strengthen and improve public pension plans for all Canadians.

The National Defence Fund allows us to invest in cost-shared campaigns with local unions. A total of \$2.45 million has been provided to this end for 2012, which amounts to an increase of \$150,000 over the 2011 budget.

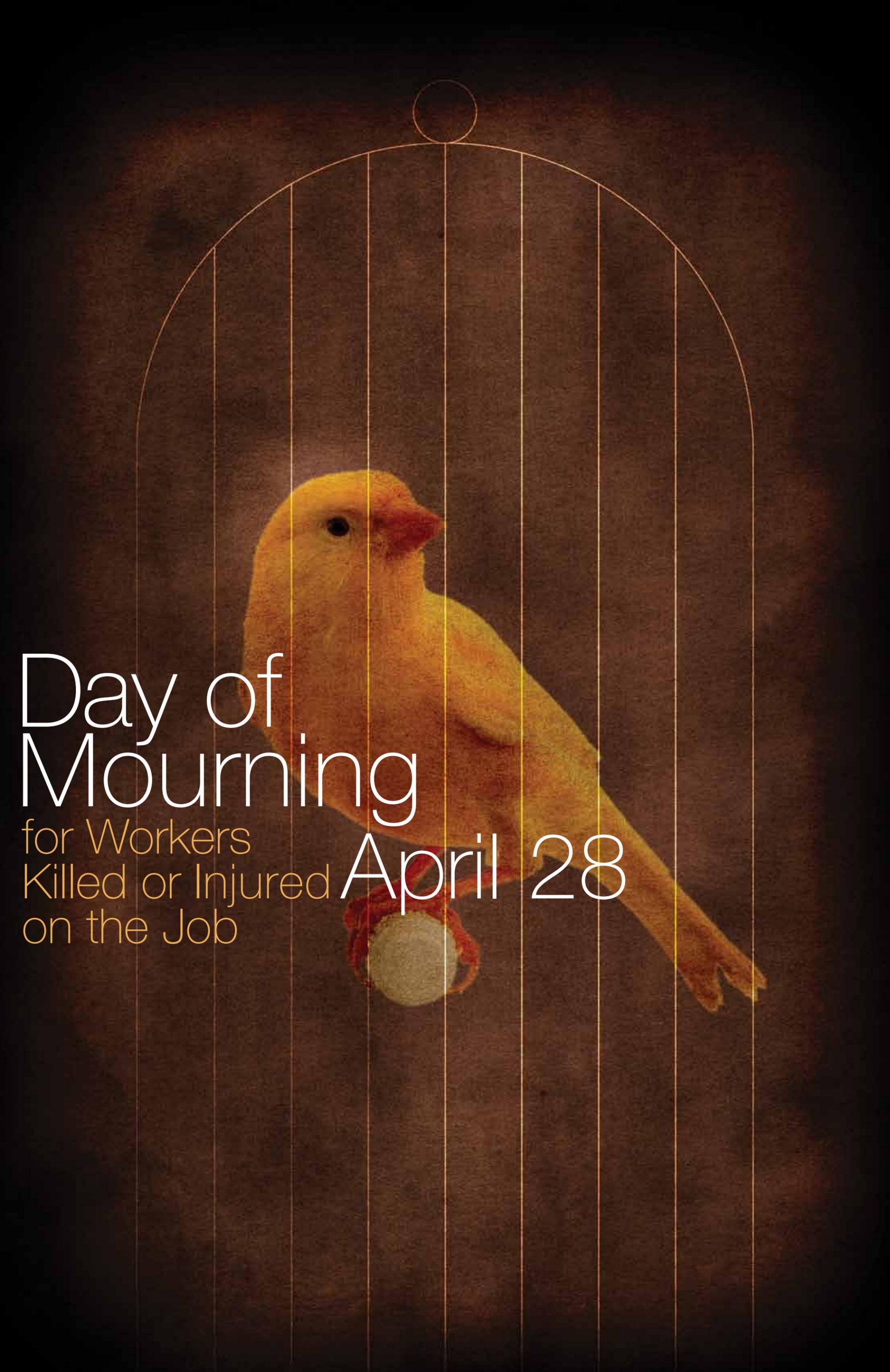
As for the National Strike Fund, it is solid and strong. On January 1, it was standing at \$53 million. This gives us a base from which to defend our members and show employers just how strong we are.

The challenges ahead are huge, which is why the National Executive Board adopted a 2012 budget that will allow CUPE to financially support and defend all of its members in their battles at the negotiating table, before elected officials, and, if necessary, in the streets.

For more information, go to:
CUPE.CA/STRATEGIC-DIRECTIONS
CUPE.CA/CHARLES-FLEURY

■ Charles Fleury



A yellow bird is perched on a red and white toy inside a wire cage. The cage is set against a dark brown background. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

Day of
Mourning
for Workers
Killed or Injured
on the Job

April 28