

October 2012

TO ALL CUPE CHARTERED ORGANIZATIONS

DECEMBER 10 – INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

Human rights violations continue to occur around the world. Events are held worldwide on December 10 to educate people on their human rights and the importance of upholding these rights in their own communities, schools, organizations, and countries. It was on December 10, 1948 that the UN General Assembly adopted the Declaration of Universal Human Rights, which has become a universal standard for the promotion and protection of human rights worldwide. This declaration is considered to be the most translated document in modern history. It is available in more than 360 languages and new translations are still being added.

Under Canada's Conservative government, it is more important than ever to fight to uphold the UN's Declaration of Universal Human Rights. Workers everywhere are still struggling in the fall-out from the 2008 economic crisis and subsequent austerity measures. Plus, the Harper government has made huge cuts to aid for NGOs that have been working to advance human rights in countries such as Burma, South Africa, Nicaragua, and Colombia, to name a few.

In our own country, the Conservative government is trampling workers' rights to bargain collectively, while its expansion of the Temporary Foreign Worker program is creating a Canadian workforce without basic protections and subject to widespread abuse.

Our rights to health care, social services, and education are under attack due to funding cuts and privatization. Aboriginal communities in Canada are denied the basic rights to water, education for their children, and control of their land. Voices for human rights in Canada have been stifled due to cuts to equality-seeking organizations.

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CUPE is a major part of this struggle through its ongoing financial support for organizations that fight for human rights in Canada and internationally. We also lobby the Canadian government directly to demand that human rights be upheld and advanced. Through our Global Justice Fund, we promote human rights by supporting grassroots projects in countries like Burma, Nicaragua, Honduras, and Colombia.

There are thirty articles in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights that are as important today as they were 64 years ago. Workers continue to play a critical role in giving meaning to the declaration by speaking out and saying no to discrimination, exploitation, and violence of all forms.

On Human Rights Day 2012, we encourage CUPE members to organize and participate in events that celebrate human rights and call for the accountability of governments when human rights are violated.

- Support CUPE's Global Justice Fund: cupe.ca/globaljusticefund
- More information on CUPE's human rights and equality initiatives in Canada: cupe.ca/equality
- The Declaration of Universal Human Rights: ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/60UDHR/bookleten.pdf

In solidarity,



PAUL MOIST
National President



CHARLES FLEURY
National Secretary-Treasurer