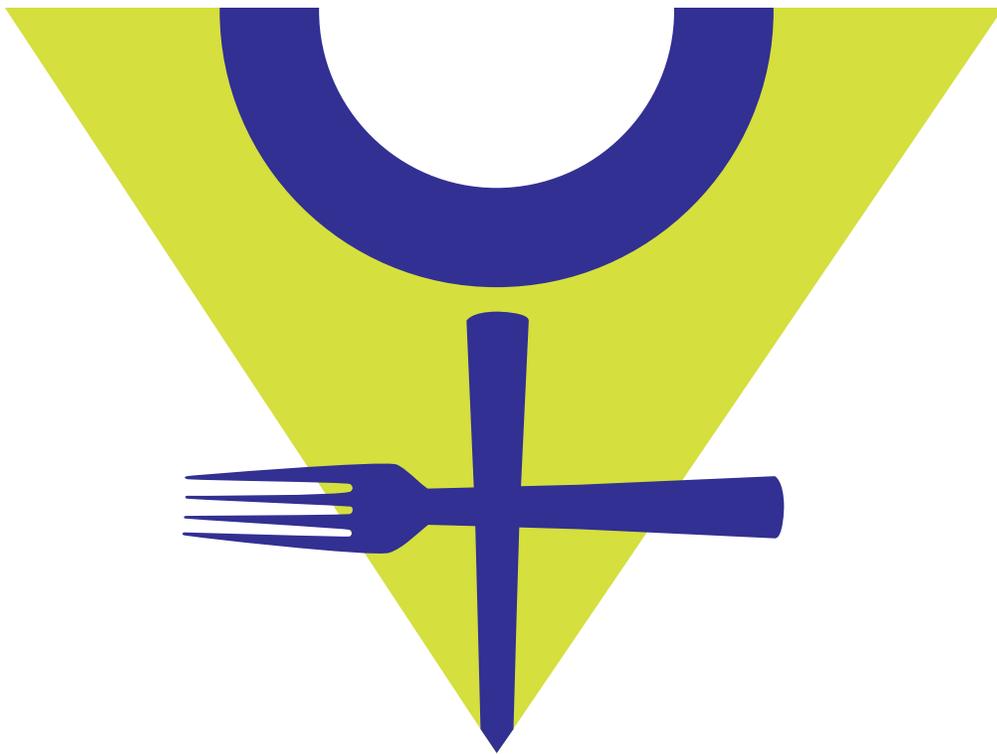




RECIPES FOR

SETTING THE TABLE



**BARGAINING WOMEN'S EQUALITY CONFERENCE
FEBRUARY 2009**



CUPE / *Canadian Union
of Public Employees*

Recipes for Setting the Table: Getting What You Want in Bargaining

National Bargaining Women's Equality Conference
February 2009

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Introduction: Let's Get Cooking!

Women need equality at home and at work and this will require deep-rooted social change.

When unions are seen as part of the community, women feel more comfortable.

We have to talk about the facts of today – women face discrimination and it's systemic. Women of equity seeking groups face even more barriers. That's the truth. We cannot shy away from the discussion. We need to be provocative.

National Women's Task Force, *What We Heard: Key Themes from Face to Face Consultations with CUPE Members* (January 2007)

Building bargaining strength to advance women's equality and setting reachable targets on bargaining issues for women are the important goals of this first national women's bargaining conference. The key to advancing these goals is to make connections between our objectives and the challenges faced by all women in the workplace.

The recent downturn in the economy and the strong possibility of a recession creates both challenges and opportunities for women's equality at the bargaining table. In this new reality, employers are likely to seek layoffs, contracting out and contract concessions, challenging the five areas that are critical for women's equality:

- minimum living wage for all members and improved benefits for all members including part-time workers;
- retention of full-time jobs in the public sector;
- pension plan membership for all members;
- improved provisions to provide work/life balance; and,
- elimination of violence and harassment in the workplace.

These economic challenges illustrate the need for renewed investment in public services and the importance of public policies that promote fair workplaces and effective workers. A strong response to these challenges requires collective strength that can only be accomplished by members acting together with strategies and principles that are rooted in the principles of equality, because those to be affected first and most by economic downturns are women and other equity-seeking groups.

Why bargaining women's equality matters

- Full equality between men and women means full equality in the workplace.
- Women's participation in the workforce is a permanent and growing factor in Canada.
- A large proportion of women with children under 16 living at home are part of the employed workforce (73 per cent in 2006).¹
- Poor women result in poor children and poor families.
- Economic inequality between men and women reduces Canada's overall economic performance.
- Where gains in reducing inequality are made through collective bargaining and then spread to non-union workers, rates of unionization increase, because everyone sees the benefits of unions.

To achieve equality we need **all** of the ingredients: wages, benefits, provisions for work/life balance, job protection, and safe workplaces. There is a direct link, for example, between pay equity provisions and women's pension benefits, because good pension benefits are dependent on better wages for women.

We must also make the connection between bargaining women's equality within the union and the promotion of equality in the workplace for all women, not just unionized workers. We must advocate for strong public pensions, improved employment insurance maternity and parental leave, a national child care program, fair minimum wages, employment and pay equity, and effective laws to prevent violence and harassment in the workplace.

Women have always taken responsibility for what goes on the table in the home. In the following pages, we've laid out tried and true recipes for the bargaining table in the workplace on wages, benefits, retention of jobs, pensions, work/life balance, and combating violence and harassment. So don your aprons and let's get cooking!

The Recipes

Recipe 1 Wages à la Table

In this recipe, we want a minimum wage for bargaining unit members of at least \$15 per hour.

What We Need: Several Kilos of Facts

How women's wages and incomes compare to men's

Women have lower incomes than men in every category, and the wage gap between women and men continues to be a major factor in women's inequality.

In 2006, Canadian women earned less than 71 per cent of the income of men. When income from all sources (i.e., income from a pension or government benefits) is included, women's income dropped to 62 per cent of men's income in 2006.²

The majority of poor in Canada are women.³

Women are more likely to have lower incomes than men in every category

Working women still earn less than men. In 2005, a woman working full-time for a full year earned an average of \$39,200, or 70.5 per cent as much as men who earned an average of \$55,700.⁴

In 2006, 28 per cent of women who were single parents were more likely to have low incomes compared to only 7 per cent of men who were single parents.⁵

The low incomes of female, single parents compared to incomes of two-parent families are even more shocking. Women who head single-parent families are **four** times more likely to have low incomes than two-parent families. In 2006, the rate of low incomes among two-parent families was 6.6 per cent, while the rate for single-parent families headed by women was 28.2 per cent.

Single women are also much more likely to have lower incomes than single men. The rate of low incomes in 2006 for women between the ages of 16 and 65 was 37 per cent compared to 31 per cent for men of the same age.⁶

Women are much more likely than men to be poor if they are older and living on their own. In 2006, women represented three out of every four seniors living on their own on low incomes.⁷

The low-income rate for senior women is still double that of senior men. In 2005, the low-income rate for senior women living on their own was more than 20 per cent.⁸

Young women also face discrimination in the workforce compared to young men. Despite the progress that young women have made in completing university compared to young men and in obtaining full-time jobs, young women with a university education earned almost 20 per cent less than university educated young men in 2001.⁹

Women also greatly outnumber men in part-time work. In 2007, there were just under one million men employed part-time in the labour force compared to over two million women.¹⁰

Although some women work part-time due to family or personal responsibilities, a large number of women work part-time because they are unable to find full-time employment. In 2006, almost a quarter of all female part-time workers said that they wanted full-time work but could only find part-time work.¹¹

Women from other equality seeking groups face more discrimination

Aboriginal women are much more likely to have low incomes. In 2000, 36 per cent of Aboriginal women had low incomes, compared to 32 per cent of Aboriginal men and 17 per cent of non-Aboriginal women.¹²

In 2000, the average income of an Aboriginal woman was the lowest in Canada at \$16,519, compared to approximately \$22,000 for an Aboriginal man or a non-Aboriginal woman.¹³

In 2000, 73 per cent of Aboriginal women who were single parents lived below the poverty line.¹⁴

Aboriginal women are twice as likely as non-Aboriginal women to be unemployed. In 2001, 17 per cent of Aboriginal women in the labour force were unemployed, compared to 7 per cent for non-Aboriginal women.¹⁵

Women of colour and immigrant women have low incomes despite having higher rates of university education than other women in Canada. For example, in 2000, the average total income for a woman of colour was \$20,000, more than \$3,000 less than the figure for white women in Canada.¹⁶ Women of colour were also much more likely (26 per cent) than men of colour (17.2 per cent) to be low-wage earners in 2000.¹⁷

Immigrant women are less likely to be employed than non-immigrant women and much less likely to be employed than immigrant men.¹⁸

Foreign-born women are much more likely to work part-time or part-year than non-foreign-born women or foreign-born men.¹⁹ When they are employed, foreign-born women earn much less than foreign-born men.²⁰

Foreign-born women are also much more likely than foreign-born men to have low incomes. In 2000, 23 per cent of all foreign-born women had low incomes compared to just 16 per cent of foreign-born men.²¹

Women with disabilities are much more likely to be without full-time employment than any other category, including women without disabilities and men with disabilities.²² In 2001, only 40 per cent of women with disabilities were part of the Canadian workforce, compared to 69 per cent of women without disabilities.²³

Even when employed, women with disabilities have low incomes. They have lower rates of pay than women without disabilities and much lower rates of pay than men with disabilities. In 2000, women with disabilities were more than twice as likely (26.3 per cent) as men with a disability (15.1 per cent) to be a low-wage earner.²⁴ In 2000, women with disabilities had an average income of \$17,200, compared to \$26,900 for men with disabilities.²⁵

Transgendered women also report a loss of pay and authority in the workplace, compared to transgendered men.²⁶

Unions reduce inequality between women's and men's wages

Union coverage raises wages for women in the public and private sector.

In general, unionized women's wages are significantly higher than non-unionized women's wages (more than \$6 per hour over non-unionized women's wages).²⁷

In the public sector, unionized women's wages are higher than non-unionized women's wages (more than \$2 per hour over non-unionized women's wages).

Women still have a long way to go to achieve wage equality with men

There is still a pay gap between women and men in the public sector. In 2003, the average hourly wage for a unionized woman in the public sector was \$22.10, compared to \$24.71 for a unionized man.²⁸

In the private sector, the wage differences between unionized and non-unionized women and men are shocking. In 2003, the average hourly wage of women covered by a union was \$15.46 compared to \$20.29 for a unionized man. For women and men **not** covered by a union, the average hourly wage was \$13.98 for women and \$18.24 for men.²⁹

The wage gap between unionized women and men in the private sector is actually slighter higher than that between non-unionized women and men in the private sector.³⁰

An increase in the provincial minimum wage is critical for women

The minimum wage in the provinces and territories currently ranges from \$7.50 per hour to \$8.75 per hour.

Women account for almost two-thirds of minimum wage workers but less than half of all employees, which means that a much higher proportion of women work for minimum wage than men.³¹

Compared to men, women are overrepresented as minimum wage workers in every age category from teenage women workers to women workers over 55 years old.³²

A full-time job at minimum wage does not provide a family with enough money to escape poverty. In 2006, 40.2 per cent of low-income children lived in families where at least one income earner worked full-time for the whole year.³³

A recent study in Toronto showed that for a family with two children to live above the poverty line, two parents working full-time each need an hourly wage of \$16.60 per hour.³⁴

Studies have shown that minimum wage increases have a positive effect on wages in collective agreements, especially in lower-waged unionized sectors.³⁵

Pay equity is critical to reducing the pay gap between men and women

Pay equity means equal pay for work of equal value. It is a fundamental human right that has been recognized in human rights legislation and in specific pay equity legislation.

Pay equity legislation calls for jobs traditionally worked by women to be compared to jobs traditionally worked by men. If the jobs are determined to be of equal or comparable value, then the female dominated jobs must be paid at least the same as the male dominated jobs.

Manitoba, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, and Quebec all have pay equity legislation. The legislation mostly applies to the public sector, but in Quebec and Ontario the legislation also applies to private sector employers with ten or more workers.

Saskatchewan, Newfoundland and Labrador, British Columbia, and Alberta do not have pay equity legislation. These provinces, with the exception of Alberta, have made policy decisions to implement pay equity within the public sector.

Pay equity legislation also places obligations on unions to negotiate a pay equity plan with the employer. These plans must be posted by the employer so that all workers covered by the plan know how they may apply to them.

We have to work to support both improved pay equity legislation and minimum wage laws in every province. These two measures go hand in hand because minimum wage laws are also a form of pay equity.

Right now we have a patchwork of pay equity laws across the country and some provinces don't have any pay equity laws. Some laws apply pay equity only to workers in the public sector and most put the onus on workers, rather than employers, to ensure that there is pay equity.

Reducing women's economic inequality benefits the economy

Studies have confirmed the direct relationship between the amount of equality between men and women in a country and that country's economic performance. Reducing gender inequality actually improves productivity and economic growth in all countries, non-industrialized or industrialized.³⁶

Studies in industrialized countries show that when women increase their participation in the workforce families do not decline as may be generally assumed.

When a country's economic policies, such as child care subsidies, make it easier for women to work and have children, the result of these better choices is that they support families.³⁷

What We Need to Do

Step One: Figure out if there is wage discrimination in your workplace

Are the jobs done by women similar to those done by men?

Are the jobs women doing paid less than the jobs men are doing?

Are the entry level rates for the jobs women do less than those for the jobs men do?

Do women's jobs have more incremental steps than men's jobs?

Do part-time workers get lower pay rates and benefits than full-time workers doing the same jobs?

Are there different overtime rates for women's jobs compared to men's jobs?

Is the job evaluation system used in your workplace gender-neutral?

Does the job evaluation scheme value all aspects of women's work?

Step Two: Negotiate equal base rates for male and female entry-level jobs

Inequality between women's and men's wages is based on the fact that women and men are still mostly employed in different kinds of jobs. For example, women are more likely to be employed as clerical workers, while men are more likely to be labourers.

The reality is that employers generally pay lower base rates (the entry level wage rate for a job classification) for the jobs that women do compared to the jobs that men do.

One way to deal with the inequality between base wage rates is to negotiate a minimum entry level rate by bringing all classifications with low-wage rates up to a minimum rate, or a minimum wage of at least \$15 per hour.

Step Three: Reduce/remove increment steps

An incremental or step-wage system provides salary increases based on how long you've been in the job. Long increment systems or wage systems that contain a number of steps for salary increases are much more common for jobs typically held by women, such as clerical jobs, than for jobs typically held by men.

This kind of system keeps wages low by stretching out the period that people have to work until they are making the job's full rate of pay. This hurts women much more than men and keeps their wages lower than men overall.

Many CUPE locals have achieved gains for low-wage workers by eliminating the entry rate, especially for the lowest wage job categories.

Step Four: Negotiate flat-rate wage increases, not percentage wage increases

The problem with percentage wage increases is that they don't do anything to narrow the wage gap. Their effect is to maintain the existing gap between wages.

Flat-rate wage increases are wage increases that give each worker the same cents-per-hour wage increases. This prevents the wage gap from widening between the lowest and highest paid.

Flat-wage rate increases boost the bottom-wage rates more than the top rates and are, therefore, much more effective in reducing the pay gaps between men and women.

Step Five: Negotiate special wage adjustments for lowest paid categories

Because more women than men work part-time or in casual employment, raising wages for part-time workers is an important way of reducing the wage differences between men and women.

Negotiate bringing the wage rates for part-time and casual workers up to full-time rates.

Recipe 2 Benefits à la Table

The aim of this dish is to improve benefits for all members and to extend benefits to part-time workers.

What We Need: A Bowl Full of Facts

The quality of workers' benefits has a huge impact on their well-being and their families.

Benefit coverage is an increasingly important component of a worker's overall wages. If coverage isn't extended to as many workers as possible, an employer will hire workers who don't have coverage as a way of reducing costs. These actions will eventually wear away the bargaining unit.

Women's increased participation in the workplace means that they need benefits that will help them to be productive and effective in the workplace.

Women's access to benefits is limited

Women's access to benefits is limited by their often marginalized attachment to the workforce, based on factors like class, race, sexuality, age, health status, and geographical location.

In the workforce, women get fewer benefits primarily because their jobs tend to be part-time, casual, subject to privatization and contracting out, or organized in smaller locals.

Part-time jobs are much less likely to provide benefits than full-time jobs. In 1999, just 19 per cent of part-time workers were covered by a supplementary medical insurance plan compared to 59.5 per cent of full-time workers.³⁸

Unionization improves women's access to benefits

Unionization improves benefits. The percentage of unionized workers covered by medical, dental, life insurance, and disability plans is 83.7 per cent; only 45.4 per cent of non-union employees are covered.³⁹

Employers try to save money by restricting benefits to full-time employees only and by hiring more part-time and casual workers. Negotiating benefits for **all workers** removes that option for employers and ensures that more women have access to benefits. In CUPE, slightly more than 33 per cent of agreements have benefit coverage for permanent part-time workers so there is much room for improvement.

Benefit coverage for permanent part-time workers in the public-sector bargaining units of more than one hundred people grew by over 12.5 per cent from 1999 to 2004. Research shows the importance of the size of the bargaining unit in the availability of benefit coverage for part-time workers in the public sector.⁴⁰

Benefits are under attack by employers

Benefit plans are increasingly under attack by employers due to rising costs. Drug costs are the main driver of higher costs. There are worker friendly ways to reduce costs. (See “Drugs: Can We Negotiate Cost Savings” at cupe.ca.)

Employers are seeking concessions by introducing “flexible benefits” and “Health Spending Accounts” (HSAs).

Flexible benefits result in fewer benefits and, eventually, an erosion of benefit coverage. For employers, they are not only a way of containing costs, but of shifting the burden of cost to employees. (For more information see “Flexible Benefits” at cupe.ca.)

Health Spending Accounts are introduced as a way of paying for benefits not covered by the workplace plan. Where HSAs have been agreed to, employers cut back the insured benefits and increase what has to be covered by the HSA, passing on the costs and risks to workers. (For more information on this issue, see “Health Spending Accounts: Smoke and Mirrors?” at cupe.ca.)

HSAs place the costs of rising health care expenses on the workers not on employers. They restrict access to a wide range of benefits, and they disadvantage lower income members who have less extra income to purchase benefits that are not insured.

What We Need to Do

Step One: Review the collective agreement to see what benefits are provided and who pays.

Step Two: Check out what deductibles, caps, and cost-sharing provisions exist in our benefits plans, and try to reduce them. Women still earn less on average than men, and deductibles, etc. make it harder for workers with less disposable income (usually women) to access benefits.

Step Three: Get as much detail about the benefit plan as you can into the collective agreement. This allows the union to grieve when claims are denied, instead of individuals having to fight Big Insurance.

Step Four: Negotiate a joint benefits committee so the union can influence what benefits are provided and who pays.

Step Five: Consider ways of “pooling” to increase the number of workers covered by a benefit plan. One way of doing this is to coordinate benefits bargaining by employer, region or sector. The larger the group covered, the cheaper it is to provide benefits.

Step Six: Negotiate group life insurance as part of the benefits package. It offers women needed protection because women suffer more financially from the death of a spouse than men. Research shows that widows who are seniors see their family incomes **decline** continuously in the five years following the death of their husbands. On the other hand, a widower’s income **increased** five years after his wife's death compared to the couple’s income prior to that event.⁴¹

Step Seven: Negotiate the contribution and the level as well as the right to benefits to ensure the employer is responsible for providing the benefit.

Step Eight: Obtain coverage for workers not covered under the benefits plan.

What a good benefit plan should look like

Extended Health Care Plan premiums should be one hundred per cent paid by employers. The plan should include all prescription drugs, vision care, medical devices, paramedical services such as massage, alternative therapies such as acupuncture, private duty nursing, and sex-reassignment surgery.

Dental Plan premiums should be paid by one hundred per cent paid by employers. There should be no age limit and no deductible and should include six-month checkups, and 100 per cent reimbursement for checkups, x-rays, cleaning, and fillings at current Dental Fee Guide rates.

Group Life Insurance premiums should be paid for by employers for a mutually agreed upon Group Life Insurance policy that includes a lump-sum death benefit and a monthly survivors’ (and/or bridge) benefit, prorated over a two- to three-year period, at the beneficiary’s discretion.

A Long Term Disability Plan has no exclusions for pre-existing conditions; the premium should be 100 per cent employer paid.

Benefits should be extended to part-time and casual workers and should be covered during parental leave, compassionate care leave, sick leave, and long-term disability.

There should be a broad definition of dependant coverage.

Recipe 3 Full-time Jobs in the Public Sector à la Table

This recipe calls for keeping jobs in the public sector and ensuring they remain full-time.

What We Need: A Big Bunch of Facts

Temporary and part-time work is on the rise

Full-time permanent jobs have been declining in Canada since the 1990s, while temporary part-time work and self-employment have been growing since the 1990s. This change has had a major impact on women because they are much more likely than men to have temporary, part-time or precarious jobs.⁴²

Privatization of work is a key reason full-time and permanent jobs are disappearing in the public sector.

Temporary employment is growing much more rapidly than permanent employment. It accounted for almost one-fifth of the overall growth in paid employment between 1997 and 2003, which was a period of economic growth and good employment conditions.⁴³

Temporary work is becoming more common in the public sector, representing 15.9 per cent of public workers. Temporary full-time work grew from 8 to 10 per cent of public sector employment from 1997 to 2004.⁴⁴

The growth of casual, temporary and non-unionized jobs in the workplace contributes to lower wages. In 2003, temporary workers earned 16 per cent less per hour than those in permanent jobs.⁴⁵

When unionized workplaces bring in non-unionized workers, workers are paid less and have fewer benefits.

A recent world health study has found that workers who do not have job security are much more likely to experience anxiety and depression compared to permanent workers and are much more likely to die earlier than permanent workers.⁴⁶

Negotiating protections against contracting out and job security is one way to ensure decent wages and working conditions for new workers and to maintain the bargaining unit into the future.

Women are much more likely to be part-time or temporary than men

Women are more likely to hold down multiple jobs than men and the financial need to hold multiple jobs for women has been increasing in the last twenty years.

Women represented 55 per cent of all those who held multiple jobs in 2004, up from 42 per cent in 1987. The percentage of women holding more than one job increased from 4 per cent in 1987 to 6 per cent in 2004.⁴⁷

Women are also more likely than men to have temporary employment (a job that has a set end date). In 2004, 14 per cent of female workers compared to 12 per cent of male workers had a temporary job.⁴⁸

Studies have found that women are less likely than men to make the transition from temporary to permanent employment.⁴⁹

Women are much more likely than men to work part-time. In 2006, 26 per cent of all women in the paid workforce worked less than 30 hours per week at their main job compared to only 11 per cent of employed men.⁵⁰

In 2006, over 20 per cent of women in the 25-to-44 and 45-to-54 age range worked part-time, compared to less than 5 per cent of men in these age groups.⁵¹

Women aged 55 to 64 were three times as likely as men in this age range to work part-time (30 per cent versus 11 per cent).

Women under the age of 25 are more likely than young men to work part-time. In 2006, 52 per cent of employed women aged 15 to 25 worked part-time, compared to 37 per cent of employed men in that age group.⁵²

Temporary and precarious work affects equity seeking groups

For Aboriginal peoples, people of colour and immigrant workers, precarious work has historically been an extension of their precarious, marginalized and excluded condition in society.⁵³

Historically, systemic discrimination has seen these workers in the least desirable and marginalized jobs.⁵⁴

Women in these equity seeking groups have historically been even more marginalized into temporary and precarious work due to gender discrimination.⁵⁵ This condition continues to the present day for women in equity seeking groups.

Women with disabilities are much more likely to have part-time employment than those without disabilities.⁵⁶

Women of colour are more likely to have temporary work than other workers. Studies have found that women of colour are least likely to be employed all year and have the fewest weeks of employment in a given year.⁵⁷

Women of colour are less likely to have full-time permanent jobs than men of colour.⁵⁸

Women of colour are much less likely to be unionized than white women.⁵⁹

Part-time, temporary and privatized jobs leave women poorer than men

Precarious employment leaves women poorer than men and creates significant economic insecurity for women and their families.

Women who are temporary workers earn less than men who are temporary workers and less than other women in permanent jobs. In 2003, female temporary workers earned \$15.75 per hour compared to \$17.75 per hour earned by men.⁶⁰

In 2007, the median weekly wage for temporary male workers was \$500, compared to \$869 for permanent male workers. The median weekly wage for temporary female workers was \$367, compared to \$600 for permanent female workers.⁶¹

In the areas of employment where women dominate, there is a significant pay gap for women who work in non-unionized and privatized workplaces. For example, in 2003, a home support worker in a non-unionized, private, for-profit agency earned an average of \$11.79 an hour, while a home support worker in a unionized government or regional health authority earned \$14.65 an hour.⁶²

Early childhood educators and assistants represent a female-dominated workplace where temporary work and privatized workplaces are common. The average income of a worker in early childhood education overall is much lower than the average income of women overall in the workplace. In 2007, the average annual income for women in full-time occupations in general was \$34,892 compared to \$21,519 for a full-time early childhood educator or assistant.⁶³

There is an enormous difference in income between those who work in child care centres where there is a CUPE workforce and those who work in private, home-based care. In 2007, the annual income of an early childhood educator or assistant who worked in home-based child care was \$14,916, compared to \$21,519 for a worker in centre-based child care.⁶⁴

Privatization of work can take many forms

There are many ways the delivery, financing, management, operation, and sometimes even ownership of public services and infrastructure can be privatized. But the end result is the same: Control of public funds, services and infrastructure is transferred to private hands. Some of the more common forms of privatization are contracting out, public/private partnerships (P3s), Alternative Service Delivery, competitive bidding, and individualized funding.

When services are privatized, private companies promise governments they can perform the same services at a lower cost. The result is usually staff pay cuts and layoffs, service cuts, user fees, and lower quality of services overall.

The most common form of private delivery is the transfer or subcontracting of the operation of a public service, such as cleaning services in a school or hospital, to a private company.

Some of the sectors that have been most affected by privatization are in services that are primarily dominated by women, such as schools, health care and social services. However, all sectors are at risk from privatization.

Privatization of work that has a major effect on women occurs when paid, public service work, which is mainly provided by women, is transferred to the private sphere, where it is performed as unpaid care in the home by women. This form of privatization may be the result of service cuts or changes in management policies. In the hospital sector, staff reductions have resulted in earlier patient discharges, placing more pressure on unpaid care givers, who are mostly women.

It has been estimated that if the 156 million hours that women spend annually in the home providing medical care to family members was shifted to the paid workforce, it would be equivalent to approximately 77,000 full-time jobs.⁶⁵

Another form of privatization occurs when public funding for a service is taken from an existing service agency and provided directly to individuals. A recent example of this has occurred in Ontario where government funding for services for persons with developmental disabilities will now take two forms.

The government will fund agencies to provide services, but the government will also provide funding directly to persons with developmental disabilities to purchase services. This will diminish the community-based, non-profit sector that formerly provided these services. It encourages private, for-profit brokers to find individual support workers for families who choose direct funding. These brokers are like employers without the accountability measures that are in place for community-based service agencies.

Privatization and pay inequality are directly linked

Studies in the United Kingdom have shown that there is a direct link between privatization and pay inequality. The privatization of public services that took place in the early 1980s and in 2000 in the United Kingdom, affected services that were dominated by women: cleaning, catering and care. The result was that women's average working hours were reduced more than men's and the pay gap between women and men increased.⁶⁶

Research in Ireland also shows that the privatization of work leads to deteriorating conditions of employment that have particularly affected women. The changes included larger wage reductions for women compared to men, loss of benefits, and a decline in employment policies that specifically assist women, such as sexual harassment policies.⁶⁷

Employment equity is critical to the fight against casualization and privatization

Employment equity is a process for achieving equality in all aspects of employment. It starts from the principle that discrimination towards equity seeking groups in the workplace is systemic. The discrimination doesn't have to be deliberate, but may be rooted in patterns of behaviour and policies and practices in the workplace, creating employment barriers for equity seeking groups.

To solve the problem, the employer must actively adopt policies and practices that ensure fair representation of equity seeking groups in the workplace.

There is federal employment equity legislation that applies to federally regulated workers, but there is no provincial employment equity legislation. (Quebec has legislation that requires equal access to employment for public servants.)

Most provinces and territories have human rights legislation that prohibits systemic discrimination and allows for "special programs" to overcome historic systemic discrimination. Therefore, the lack of specific employment equity legislation does not prevent unions from negotiating special employment equity initiatives into collective agreements.

What a good employment equity policy should look like

The employer should ensure that its employment policies and practices, including its policies and practices with respect to recruitment, hiring, retention, treatment and promotion, are free of barriers, both systemic and deliberate, that discriminate against women, Aboriginal peoples, people with disabilities, members of racial minorities, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered persons.

The employer should implement positive measures with respect to the recruitment, hiring, retention, treatment, and promotion of women, Aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities, members of racial minorities, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered persons.

The employer should implement supportive measures with respect to the recruitment, hiring, retention, treatment and promotion of women, Aboriginal peoples, people with disabilities, members of racial minorities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered persons, which also benefit the workforce as a whole.

What We Need to Do

Negotiate limits on contracting out.

Negotiate limits on the ratio of part-time to full-time positions.

Negotiate provisions that ensure that full-time jobs are not replaced with part-time or temporary positions.

Negotiate conversion of long-service casual workers to regular full-time.

Include part-time and casual workers in the bargaining unit.

Negotiate employment equity provisions.

Negotiate contracting in provisions.

Negotiate provisions requiring employer disclosure and consultation with respect to proposed privatization in the workplace.

Negotiate training provisions to give women opportunities for improved job skills and job mobility within the workplace.

Recipe 4 Pension Plans à la Table

This recipe calls for every union member to have a pension plan by 2013.

What We Need: Several Cups of Facts

Fewer women have workplace pensions than men

Women's participation rates in pension plans compared to men's participation is much lower, although they have increased over the last decade. As of January 1, 2006, the percentage of men who were members of pension plans was 52.3 per cent while women's participation rate was 47.7 per cent.

Women in the public sector have a much stronger participation rate in pension plans. In 2005, women members of public sector employer pension plans numbered over 1.5 million while men numbered just over 1.0 million.⁶⁸

Pensions are an equality issue for women

Workplace pensions are wages. Workers set aside part of their income during their working years so that they can draw on that income in their old age. When employers don't provide pensions to their workers, they deny them a critical piece of their total employment package.

A good workplace pension can mean the difference between a retirement in poverty or in some comfort.

Having good pensions is particularly important for women because the general population is living much longer than it used to and women live longer than men, so the number of years that women may have to depend on a pension has increased.⁶⁹

It has been estimated that, by the year 2030, women may spend as much as 38 years in paid employment and 47 years out of employment.⁷⁰

The amount of a workplace pension is normally based on what you earned while working and your years of paid workforce service.

Women's wages are generally lower than men's and they have more stops and starts in the workforce than men due to child care or other family responsibilities. Women are also much more likely to work part-time than men. The result is that women are often not eligible for pensions because of their part-time or off-and-on work status.

In 1999, just one in five part-time workers (18.9 per cent) was covered by a workplace pension plan compared to 41.6 per cent of full-time workers.⁷¹

Even when women are eligible for pensions, the amount of their workplace pension income may not be sufficient when they retire, unless they have negotiated provisions in the collective agreement that strengthen their income and, therefore, their pension entitlement.

Public pensions are key sources of pension income for women

The three elements of our national public pension system are the Canada Pension Plan (CPP), Old Age Security (OAS) and the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS).

The CPP is available to all working Canadians, including the self-employed and its benefits are related to employee and employer contributions based on the employee's income.

The OAS and GIS are programs available to all Canadian seniors who meet the requirement of living in Canada whether they were employed in the workplace or not.

The OAS is a flat-rate benefit, which means that the amount received is not related to income, unless income is over a certain threshold (\$63,511 in 2007), in which case the OAS benefit is reduced.

The GIS is income-tested, which means that the amount of benefit is related to income. It is geared to low-income seniors.

If income is low, pensioners are much more likely to depend on the public pension system in retirement than those with middle or higher incomes. A recent study showed that public pensions (CPP, OAS and the GIS) accounted for over half the incomes of lower income individuals in their late sixties, while workplace pensions accounted for only about 17 per cent of the incomes of higher income earners.⁷²

Comparative studies have shown that countries with strong public pension systems reduce the overall level of inequality that would otherwise be the case when someone moves from middle age to retirement age.⁷³

In Canada, women are much more dependent on the public pension system than men in their retirement years. From 1983 to 2003, the share of retirement income from private pensions and RRSPs for men increased from 16 per cent to 40 per cent, while for women it only increased from 9 per cent to 26 per cent.⁷⁴

In 2003, OAS, GIS and the Spouse's Allowance (an allowance for low-income persons whose spouse or common-law partner has died) accounted for the largest share of income received by senior women (31.7 per cent).⁷⁵

Strengthening the public pension system would strongly benefit women

Senior women are much more likely than senior men to have low incomes. In 2006, three out of four seniors living on their own and experiencing low incomes were female.⁷⁶

The low-income rate for senior women is double that of senior men and it is particularly high for senior women who are living on their own. In 2005, the low-income rate for senior women living on their own was 20 per cent, an increase over 2004 of 3 per cent.

Not surprisingly, a woman's income from a public pension that is based on her previous income is much lower than a man's. In 2005, the average monthly retirement pension from the Canada Pension Plan for women was \$333 per month, compared to \$529 per month for men.⁷⁷

Senior women are much more likely to draw on the public pension system. In September 2008, women represented 75 per cent of new retirement and survivor pensions.⁷⁸

Pension Legislation

Workplace pensions are regulated under the jurisdiction in which they are registered. The legislation that lays out minimum standards that apply to most workplace pensions, such as rules for membership, benefits, funding and disclosure, sets out minimum standards for wages, benefits and working conditions for all workers. This legislation is currently under review in some jurisdictions. We need to ensure that this legislation protects existing workplace pensions and that it promotes more inclusive coverage of women and other equity seeking groups in workplace pensions.

The Canada /Quebec Pension Plan

Unions have called for an increase in the income replacement rate of the Canada/Quebec Pension Plan beyond 25 per cent of the average industrial wage. In 2008, an Ontario Expert panel recommended that governments investigate the feasibility of expanding the Canada Pension Plan.

What a good pension plan should look like

- It has a defined benefit.
- It allows for immediate enrolment.
- It includes the full 2 per cent formula.
- It contains leave provisions.
- It has early retirement provisions.
- It has a bridging benefit.
- It includes survivor benefits.
- It contains coverage for same-sex spouses.
- It is indexed.
- It is portable.
- It includes past service.
- The union has a role in decision-making.
- It is written in clear language.

How to get a pension plan in your workplace

A workplace pension is a deferred wage and it is as important as your current wage. Negotiating good pensions is the way to ensure that women will be financial secure in their retirement years. A fifty-year-old woman can expect to live an additional thirty-three years on average.

If there is no pension plan in the workplace, there are existing pension plans that cover more than one employer that may apply.

CUPE runs two multi-employer pension plans.

The Multi-Sector Pension Plan (MSPP)

This national plan is available to all CUPE members, no matter what the size of their bargaining unit. It is fully run and controlled by CUPE and another union, the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). It is a defined benefit plan, which means that it determines the wages received at retirement according to a formula

that isn't decided by the ups and downs of the marketplace (like RRSPs are). For more information, see [Multi-sector Pension Plan \(mspp.ca\)](http://mspp.ca).

The Nursing Home and Related Industries Pension Plan (NHRIPP)

This is a national plan available to CUPE members who work for a private nursing home or a broadly related industry. The plan is fully controlled by participating unions, including CUPE and is a defined benefit plan. For more information, see [Nursing Homes and Related Industries Pension Plan – Home Page \(nursinghomespension.com\)](http://nursinghomespension.com).

How to keep a pension plan in the workplace

The recent difficulties in financial markets have hit many pension plans very hard. In some cases, plans that were already facing difficulty are facing serious funding needs. In others, previously healthy plans may now face unexpected shortfalls.

Many employers are responding with the kind of proposals they have been pushing for years: benefit cuts, member contribution rate increases, and conversion of defined benefit-type pension plans to risky defined contribution plans. The effects of these proposals are bound to hit women workers particularly hard.

Women workers are overrepresented in low-wage and precarious jobs and have a pattern of fewer years of service within their pension plans.

How should unions be responding to this challenging situation? Given the variety of different types of plan with different approaches to cost sharing and decision making, it is difficult to set out any one single plan of action. But there are a few pension questions to focus on in the preparation of any strategic response, including:

- Do we have a defined benefit pension plan for all of our members (including part-timers)?
- What was the financial picture of the plan as it was most recently measured?
- Who faces contribution level increases in the event of underfunding of the pension plan (the employer, the members, or both)?
- How soon is the next report regarding the funded status of the plan due to be filed with the regulators?
- How is the union represented regarding pension issues: a pension committee, a board of trustees, the bargaining table, or some combination?
- How much do members know about their pension plans, and are they prepared to fight to defend them?

How to improve the pension plan in the workplace

What are the rules about enrolling in the pension plan?

- Is joining the plan mandatory for all workers?
- Does the plan require a level of contribution?

What about coverage for part-time workers?

- Getting part-timers into the pension plan can be done at minimal cost to the employer.
- Is the pension plan mandatory for part-time workers?
- Check to make sure that pension plan eligibility rules don't have the effect of excluding women because they are in part-time or part-year jobs.
- Are pension deductions proportionate to a worker's wages? When pensions are optional for part-time workers, many can't afford to buy-in because the plans are expensive proportionate to the hours they work. Many people can't afford the percentage contributions to the plans.

What about a pension for a worker's spouse?

- Does the pension plan explicitly provide for same-sex spousal benefits?

Are leaves of absence and breaks from the workplace pensionable?

- Ensure that workers who take time out of the workforce to care for children or other family members do not lose out in the pension plan for these gaps in service.
- What does the plan say about whether the worker can contribute to the plan while on a leave of absence?
- Does the plan require the employer to contribute to the pension plan while a worker is on a leave of absence?
- Does the pension plan take into consideration time away from the workforce and possible reduction in pay during maternity/parental leave?

What happens to the pension plan if the worker leaves her job?

- Can the pension be taken to the worker's next job?
- Is there an agreement with other pension plans to fully cover a transfer?
- Is the worker entitled to a pension regardless of how long she remains in the job?
- Do the termination benefits ensure that the worker's pension builds from workplace to workplace?

Recipe 5 Work/Life Balance à la Table

The goal of this dish is provisions in collective agreements that will help provide balance between the demands of the workplace and family needs outside of the workplace, including family leave provisions, child care provisions, and flexible work hours, as well as top-ups to employment insurance for maternity and parental leaves.

What We Need: A Batch of Facts

Demands on women to balance work and family are greater than ever

Canadian women now have one of the highest rates of participation in the labour force in the world.

Canadian women with children and particularly small children have a strong presence in the workforce. In 2006, 64 per cent of women with children under 3 were employed, more than double the percentage of women with young children who were employed in 1976 (28 per cent).⁷⁹

The length of a woman's paid work day is increasing.

The level of women's participation in the labour force is also related to their need to balance work and family responsibilities.

The increase in single-parent families has resulted in more difficulties balancing work and family life.

Many women work part-time because of family responsibilities.

In 2006, 15 per cent of female part-time workers indicated they worked part-time in order to care for children, while 4 per cent reported other family or personal responsibilities as the reason they worked part-time. In contrast, only 3 per cent of male part-time workers cited personal or family responsibilities as the reason they did not work full-time.⁸⁰

Women are much more likely than men to lose time from work due to personal or family responsibilities. A recent study found that during an average week, 5 per cent of all full-time female paid workers in Canada lost some time from work for personal or family responsibilities, compared to just 2 per cent of male workers.⁸¹

Some family responsibilities are not recognized in the workplace. Definitions of family that exclude same-sex partners mean that some workers don't get family-

related leaves. Many close, extended family relationships are not recognized in collective agreements for the purpose of obtaining leaves.

Women with disabilities face particular challenges balancing work and family life, as workers with disabilities are less likely to work flexible hours despite the fact that they identify modified work hours or days as the most important job accommodation.⁸²

Pressures to balance work and family life impact women and men

The length of men's paid work day is also increasing. There are more families in which both partners are working outside the home.⁸³

More Canadian workers have responsibilities to care for aging parents or are caught between caring for children still living at home and caring for aging parents at the same time.⁸⁴

A national study in which both men and women participated in almost equal numbers found that a majority reported they felt overloaded balancing work and family life.⁸⁵

Women still do most of the unpaid work at home

Women continue to do the majority of the unpaid work at home – child care, housework and shopping – compared to men. In 2005, women spent an average of 4.3 hours per day doing unpaid work compared to 2.5 hours by men.⁸⁶

But men are increasing their participation in housework and are doing more housework than in the past. From 1986 to 2005, the daily participation rate of men in housework rose from 54 per cent to 69 per cent.⁸⁷

Women report more stress about work/life balance than men

Women's multiple roles and the difficulty of balancing work, family (partner, children, extended family, home) and community responsibilities create more stress for women. Women report more dissatisfaction than men with their work/life balance. When two-income families were asked about whether they feel stressed for time, more women than men expressed that they felt this stress.⁸⁸

Canada has a weak record of providing for maternity and parental leave

A study of 176 countries found that 106 of them provide mothers with **complete** wage replacement during maternity leave.⁸⁹

In Canada, women are guaranteed only 55 per cent of their insurable earnings during maternity leave. Quebec is an exception in granting between 70 and 75 per cent of insurable earnings.

A recent survey of parental leave policies in 21 high-income countries found that Canada ranks 13th in total parental leave available (both paid and unpaid added together) jointly to couples.⁹⁰

EI maternity and parental leave provisions need to be strengthened

Amendments to the *Employment Insurance Act* in 2000 increased the length of paid parental leave (this is what kicks in after 17 weeks of paid maternity leave under EI that is available to women ends). Paid parental leave is now available to either parent in the amount of a minimum of 10 weeks to a maximum of 35 weeks. The result is that the participation of fathers in the program has risen from 3 per cent to 11 per cent.⁹¹

Expansion of maternity/parental leaves is a major gain for working women in recent years, but to qualify a woman must have worked 600 hours in the previous year. About three-quarters of all women giving birth to a child do qualify, and about 60 per cent claim a benefit. But a full year of leave is much more likely to be taken by women who qualify for a reasonable benefit or whose employer supplements the EI benefit.⁹²

Access to benefits is still a significant problem for all workers and a significant issue for women, who have fewer hours of insurable earnings.

Labour and anti-poverty groups have been advocating key reforms to the EI program such as a reduction in qualifying hours for regular benefits to 360 hours in all regions (from the current requirement of between 420 to 700 hours), an increase of up to 50 weeks of regular benefits, and an increase to at least 60 per cent of insured earnings replaced by EI benefits.⁹³

Canada hasn't met need on child care and early childhood education

Women with young children are a significant and permanent part of the workforce and have a growing need for accessible and high quality child care.

By 2006, 64 per cent of women with children under the age of three were employed, compared to 28 per cent in 1976.⁹⁴

In 2006, 70 per cent of women who were single parents with children under 16 living at home were employed.⁹⁵

Over half of Canadian children aged 6 months to five years are in some kind of non-parental child care arrangement.⁹⁶

Access to early childhood education and care services varies widely across the country.

There is no region of Canada providing fully funded and accessible child care to meet the needs of the majority of families and children.

Access to regulated child care in Canada does not begin to meet the need. The number of children who have regulated child care spaces rose to only 17.2 per cent from 7.5 per cent between 1992 and 2006.⁹⁷ At this rate, it will take another 60 years to meet the need of every child in Canada.⁹⁸

Public funding for child care is very low in Canada compared to other countries. In 2006, Canada stood last of 14 industrialized countries in public spending on early childhood education and care, well below even the US, which placed ninth.⁹⁹

Polls show that Canadians prefer a national child care system to the current federal government policy of providing a \$100 monthly cheque to parents of children under the age of six, by a margin of 2 to 1.¹⁰⁰

Quebec's family policy and child care is ahead of the rest of Canada

Quebec has introduced three major initiatives that have had direct benefits for children and their parents.¹⁰¹

Quebec provides affordable daycare that costs \$7 per day and has created 35,000 new child care spaces. Quebec's daycare program serves 70 per cent of the province's children under 5 years old.¹⁰²

A monthly child benefit, which is non-taxable, was introduced.

Quebec has implemented its own parental leave program that is more generous and offers wider coverage than the federal Employment Insurance program as well as an improvement in maternity benefits.¹⁰³ Over 50 per cent of new fathers use the parental leave program in Quebec, compared to 11 per cent in the rest of Canada.¹⁰⁴

These efforts have greatly contributed to school test scores. Once the lowest in Canada, they are now the highest.¹⁰⁵

Quebec now has the highest enrolment of women in post secondary education in Canada and tax revenues from working mothers cover 40 per cent of child care costs in Quebec.¹⁰⁶

What We Need to Do

Negotiate employer supplemented income protection for maternity/parental leave.

Negotiate the accrual of seniority during maternity/parental leave.

Negotiate flexible work scheduling in which workers may vary start and finish times as long as they are present during a core period.

Negotiate a compressed work week in which workers work the same number of hours in three or four days as they would normally work over a standard work week of 5 days.

Negotiate the ability to refuse or limit overtime.

Negotiate the option of converting overtime into time off.

Negotiate workers' rights in job-sharing programs. Such programs must be voluntary with no reduction in full-time positions in the bargaining unit. There must be pro-rated benefits and pension coverage for job-sharers and established procedures to create and end such time-limited arrangements.

Negotiate paid leave for personal and family responsibilities.

Negotiate extended unpaid leave for significant, temporary care giving responsibilities.

Negotiate child care provisions.

Negotiate elder care provisions.

Negotiate an inclusive definition of family

Recipe 6 Eliminating Violence and Harassment à la Table

In this dish, strong anti-harassment and anti-violence provisions in collective agreements are a must.

What We Need: A Barrel of Facts

According to a 2004 survey by Statistics Canada, 17 per cent of all self-reported incidents of violent victimization, including sexual assault, robbery and physical assault occurred in the workplace.¹⁰⁷ The same study showed that sectors in which women generally form the majority of the workers in the workplace¹⁰⁸ are at much greater risk for workplace violence.

These are workplaces in which direct service to vulnerable populations is the core aspect of the job. For example, 33 per cent of all violent workplace incidents involved a victim who was working in social services or health care services such as hospitals, nursing or residential care facilities. Fourteen per cent of incidents involved victims working in accommodation or food services. Eleven per cent of incidents involved those working in educational services.¹⁰⁹

Equality seeking groups are much more vulnerable to violence and harassment. Aboriginal women are much more likely than non-aboriginal women to be victims of violence and harassment.¹¹⁰

Women and men of colour are subject to racial harassment and discrimination in the workplace. A 2001 national opinion survey found that one in four persons of colour reported that they had been subjected to workplace harassment or discrimination in the past year.¹¹¹ A recent Canadian report on violence against personal support workers in long-term care facilities noted that racial insults were a daily workplace occurrence.¹¹²

Young women are much more likely to be sexually assaulted and criminally harassed than any other female age group.¹¹³

Many lesbians, bisexual and transgendered workers remain “in the closet” because they fear the intolerance, harassment, intimidation, and physical assault that may occur in their workplaces if they “come out.”

Workplace policies on violence and harassment need to take into account violence in the home, which has a direct effect on the workplace.

Provincial occupational health and safety legislation is inadequate

Currently, there is no province or territory that addresses domestic violence in the workplace in occupational health and safety legislation. Some provinces and territories even restrict the definition of violence in their legislation to physical violence. Some do not even define “violence in the workplace” in their legislation.

One of the recommendations of a coroner’s jury into the death of an Ontario nurse, who was killed by her former partner in the hospital where they both worked, was that a review of the province’s occupational health and safety legislation be conducted. This review was to look at the possibility of including domestic violence (from someone in the workplace), abuse and harassment as factors for investigation and action by the ministry of labour when the safety and well-being of an employee is at issue. The review was also to consider whether safety from emotional or psychological harm, not just physical harm, should be part of the ministry of labour’s responsibility.

The Ontario government recently conducted a review of its occupational health and safety legislation and has asked whether domestic violence in the workplace should be included in the legislation. It also proposed a definition of workplace violence that involves physical harm alone.

What We Need to Do

Ask questions about your collective agreement

Does it prohibit harassment and violence?

In the case of harassment, does it cover all the grounds listed under human rights legislation?

Are harassment and violence defined?

Does your agreement clearly list behaviours that constitute harassment and violence?

Does it have a definition of violence that includes emotional or psychological harm as well as physical harm?

Does it prohibit personal harassment and harassment on the basis of gender identity and HIV/AIDS?

Does it address harassment and violence by management, co-workers, the public, and users of the services CUPE members provide?

Does it address incidents of harassment and violence that occur outside the workplace at conferences, social functions related to work, and in clients' homes?

Does it address domestic violence and provide assistance to victims?

Are there suitable protections for the victim(s) of harassment and violence?

Is there a ban on working alone, especially late at night?

Is the employer required to review job design and staffing levels in order to combat violence?

Is the employer required to provide members with alarms, pagers, and cell phones?

Is there a process of investigation with timelines?

Is there an expedited grievance procedure for the settling of harassment and violence complaints?

Can the perpetrator(s) of harassment and/or violence be transferred and not the victim?

Is counselling or the services of an Employee Assistance Program available to members who have experienced harassment and violence on a confidential basis?

Is there a Joint Health and Safety Committee?

Is there paid leave for members to attend workshops aimed at combatting harassment and violence?

Negotiate collective agreement language

That includes a basic statement that the employer views violence, bullying and harassment as workplace hazards and that the employer should aim to eliminate these hazards and the factors that lead to violence, bullying and harassment.

That provides for workplace measures that lower job stress and help to lower the rate of violence.

That helps workers cope with stress (having more control over the way their work is organized; adequate staffing levels; proper ergonomics; no conflicting work demands; eliminate working alone; improved management training; etc.) and also decreases violence.

That addresses clear reporting procedures for incidents of violence with follow-up procedures to eliminate future incidents.

That allows workers to participate in the creation of workplace violence policies, procedures, investigations, and workplace changes.

That provides for the workplace violence prevention policy to be posted in a place accessible to all workers.

That informs workers of any factors that contribute or might contribute to workplace violence, including past incidents of violence, violence that takes place in similar workplaces, workers' reports of violence or potential violence, and reports of violence from the joint health and safety committee.

That allows for prevention measures to be reviewed on an ongoing basis with the input of workers.

That includes emergency notification procedures that provide immediate assistance in response to workplace violence.

That includes notification of the joint health and safety committee or the health and safety representative in the event police investigate an incident of workplace violence, unless notification is prohibited by law.

That specifies that the employer must provide assistance to workers who have been affected by workplace violence, including but not limited to counselling services where there is no Employee Assistance Program in the workplace.

That makes sure employers provide information and training before assigning an employee to a new activity in which violence has, or might, occur.

That provides for information and training to include the nature and extent of workplace violence and how workers might be exposed, reporting procedures that must be taken, prevention policies that have been developed, the communication system used to inform workers about workplace violence.

That provides for the employer to review information and training once every year or sooner if there is a change in the risk of workplace violence or if new information on the risk of workplace violence becomes available.

Let's Get Cooking: Strategies for Building Collective Responses

Survey your members, identify their equality concerns and find out who the equality seeking members are in the local. In the survey ask members if there are any provisions in the collective agreement that have a negative impact on equality seeking groups.

Review grievances in your local since the last round of bargaining to determine which equality issues were grieved.

Use the responses to the membership survey, the analysis of grievances and the obligations unions have under the law (i.e., human rights legislation) to determine areas in which your collective agreement needs strengthening.

Develop short- and long-term priorities to move your issues forward.

Enact bylaw changes to support women's participation in the union.

Enact constitutional changes to ensure women's participation in the union.

Reform union meetings to provide food at meetings as well as child care or reimbursement of expenses through a dependent care policy.

Provide orientation to meetings and conferences.

Review and revise local bylaws to incorporate more inclusive practices.

Provide education and training for women.

Provide education and training in gender and cultural sensitivity for union staff.

Produce an orientation kit for new members.

Challenge the union culture and harassment.

Make union work less demanding.

Ensure rules and practices are transparent.

Hold workshops on priorities for the next round of bargaining.

Promote discussion, understanding and support on the issues by using statistics to demonstrate the need for improvement and by comparing your collective

agreement with others to show what can be achieved, and by giving examples of how members can benefit from equality gains.

Develop community support where there is positive potential, for example, by emphasizing that employment equity opens up more jobs to community members and pay equity brings more money into the community economy.

Encourage members to get involved. The more open the process, the more you will build trust, understanding, support, and a stronger union.

Take it to the employer. Once you have membership support, plan the bargaining process. Use many of the same arguments with the employer that you use with the membership, such as: "It's the law"; the number of grievances, and "Workers are more productive when equality issues, such as harassment, are addressed."

Keep the members informed with a newsletter during bargaining.

Keep equality issues on the table by showing the employer the strong support of the members. Remember that in most CUPE locals a majority of your members will be equality-seekers.

Evaluate what happens in bargaining, during and after the process. Learn from what worked and what didn't. Use that knowledge in the next round.

Remember, making gains takes time. What you don't win this round will lay the foundation for the next round.

Put in place structures that will promote coordinated bargaining within the union.

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