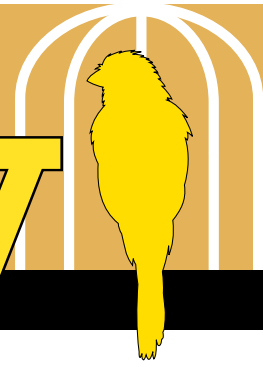


# THE canary



FALL 2011

WORKPLACE TRAGEDY **COMMUNITY**

## Vigils honour crash victims

### THOUSANDS ATTEND VIGILS IN YELLOWKNIFE AND OTTAWA FOR VICTIMS OF TRAGIC FIRST AIR CRASH

Close to 1,000 people attended a vigil in Yellowknife for victims of the August 20 crash of First Air flight 6560. The event, held August 24 in an Arctic Sunwest hangar, showed how deeply the whole community was affected.

Twelve people, including four crew members and eight passengers, were killed when the First Air flight crashed during its final approach to Resolute, Nunavut. Two of the flight's crew, flight attendants Ann-Marie Chassie and Ute Merritt, were CUPE members. Pilot Captain Blair Rutherford, also lost in the crash, is survived by Tatiana Rutherford, the secretary-treasurer of the CUPE First Air Component.

Speakers at the vigil included Yellowknife mayor Gordon van Tigmen and First Air representative Michael Olson. Readings were given by local union member Renée St-Cyr and pilot representative Jeffrey Bowden. The ceremony also included a flypast of some

fifteen aircraft from different airline and helicopter companies, ending with a Canadian North Boeing 737, the same model as the plane that crashed.

A candlelight vigil was also held in Ottawa at the Canadian Labour Congress workers' monument. Several hundred people attended, including CUPE National President Paul Moist and National Secretary-Treasurer Claude Généreux.

Moist addressed the crowd and offered condolences to the family and friends of the victims on behalf of CUPE's 600,000 members.

"First Air is a family. It's a family that's been hit hard. At times like this we close ranks, and offer our solidarity to the families of the vic-



Some 1,000 friends and family gathered at the Arctic Sunset hangar in Yellowknife for a fond remembrance of passengers and crew lost in the crash. PHOTO: BILLBRADENPHOTO

tims, to the First Air family, and to the broader flight attendant family as well," said Moist.

"We mourn the death of these people not just today and not just on the next April 28th, but every day."

April 28th is the National Day of Mourning for workers killed or injured on the job.

The Ottawa ceremony ended with a touching display, as 12 balloons were released into the sky one at a time in honour of each victim.

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**CUPE** / Canadian Union of Public Employees

# Ontario introduces key changes to health and safety act

Ontario has made significant changes to the province's health and safety act.

Bill 160, An Act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997, received royal assent on June 1.

The primary change in the new legislation affects the structure of governance of health and safety issues in the province. Re-

sponsibility for occupational injury and illness prevention will be transferred from the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) to

the Ministry of Labour.

The new law also includes the creation of a new prevention organization headed by a Chief Prevention Officer. George Gritziotis was recently appointed to the position and his

responsibilities will include coordinating and aligning the prevention system and establishing a multi-stakeholder prevention council with representatives from labour, em-

ployers and safety experts, to advise the CPO and the Minister of Labour.

Among important changes that may affect CUPE members, there is a

The new legislation was spurred by the deaths of four construction workers on Christmas Eve, 2009



new requirement that employers who receive written recommendations from a joint health and safety committee (JHSC) co-chair must respond in writing within 21 days. Previously, recommendations to employers had to be made jointly by the employer and worker co-chairs. There are also improved provisions for dealing with reprisals against workers who have

## A NEW LOOK

### CUPE'S HEALTH AND SAFETY PUBLICATION GETS A NEW NAME: THE CANARY

As part of CUPE's continued effort to improve the quality of material for members, we're proud to present to you the first issue of *The Canary*: CUPE's health and safety newsletter.

*The Canary* picks up where our former publication, *Health and Safety Update*, left off. In these pages we'll bring you important news, developments, and helpful resources on workplace health and safety.

Why call it *The Canary*? Canaries were once used in mines to warn workers about changes in air qual-

ity. Workers knew that if the canary died, the air in the mine was quickly becoming poisonous, prompting immediate evacuation. Since then, the canary has become not only a symbol of occupational health and safety, but also an important reminder of dangerous working conditions.

But there's more to it than that. As public sector workers, CUPE members often spend long hours working in environments where they are frequently – in many cases constantly – exposed to a wide variety of hazards. As frontline workers in hospitals, schools, municipal-

ities and other sectors, members are often among the first to respond in a crisis, sometimes with limited protection for themselves. Though faced with danger, members often press forward because of the importance of their work. In that sense, many have become the canary, as they are first to suffer consequences in dangerous or hazardous situations.



CUPE has long-used the symbol of the canary on health and safety materials and as a symbol for the annual April 28th National Day of Mourning. It's an important symbol for our members and for the work we do to make sure they come home from work safe. In

tried to use the OH&S Act to address concerns in their workplace.

Changes are expected to be implemented in full by April 2012.

The new legislation was spurred by the deaths of four construction workers on Christmas Eve, 2009, when their scaffolding collapsed. A fifth worker was seriously injured in the incident. As a response, the Ontario government launched a comprehensive review of the province's health and safety system.

The review was conducted by a 10-person expert advisory panel, chaired by Tony Dean, a professor at the University of Toronto's School of Public Policy and Governance and former secretary of the cabinet in Ontario. Last December, the panel released an 80-page report with 46 recommendations for changes to the way the government administers health and safety in the province.

the end, what else could we call it?

You'll notice that our new publication is in full colour, features sections, headings and topic indicators, and links to more information and material on our website. It's all meant to help you find what you're looking for.

Plus, *The Canary* is available online and via email subscription!

Head over to [cupe.ca/subscribe](http://cupe.ca/subscribe) to add your name to our growing list of subscribers, or check out [cupe.ca/publications](http://cupe.ca/publications) to find *The Canary* and other quality CUPE publications online.

Like what you see? Keep your eye out for more changes as we continue to improve CUPE's health and safety resources for members.

## LEGISLATION **WORKPLACE VIOLENCE**

### Stronger protective measures in Manitoba mean workplaces must now inform workers about violent incidents

**M**anitoba's NDP government recently passed new health and safety regulations designed to better protect workers in jobs with an elevated risk of violent incidents.

While some of the provisions in the legislation are not new, there are certainly improvements.

Employers were always required to develop and implement a violence prevention policy in the workplace, and to train workers on steps for reporting violence and getting help. With the new changes, the workplace policy must now include descriptions of where violence has occurred in the past, and mandates an annual review of violent incidents in the workplace.

CUPE Manitoba's health and safety representative, Steve Edwards, was very pleased with the changes to the regulations. "We have been fighting for better protection from violence committed toward our members for many years," said Edwards. "Members in the health and education sectors in particular have been faced with this issue for some time. These new regulations are a great step forward."

**"Now workers will know who has a history of violence in their workplace, and they'll be able to take necessary precautions."**

Workers also now have a right to additional information about workplace violence. The new regulations state that workers must be provided with "any information in the employ-

er's possession, including personal information, related to the risk of violence from persons who have a history of violent behaviour and whom workers are likely to encounter in the course of their work."

"This is a big change," acknowledged Edwards. "Now workers will know who has a history of violence in their workplace, and they'll be able to take necessary precautions. Employers can no longer hide behind so-called confidentiality issues when it comes to protecting our members."

The new regulations come into effect August 31, and primarily affect health care workers, including paramedics, workers in hospitals, clinics, community health centres, long term care facilities, or "any other workplace where physical or mental health treatment or care is provided to a person." Education workers are covered as well. Workplaces not specifically mentioned in the bill will have to follow the increased measures where it has been determined that violence is a problem.

These changes are the second time this year that the Manitoba government has made improvements to the province's health and safety regulations. Earlier changes, which came into effect February 1, 2011, included new requirements to protect workers from psychological harassment in the workplace, such as intimidation, bullying and humiliation.



## 4 steps TO RESOLVING A HEALTH AND SAFETY PROBLEM

In future issues of *The Canary*, this page will be dedicated to highlighting specific health and safety hazards that CUPE members may face in the course of their work. With the launch of this new newsletter however, we thought we should dedicate this issue to reviewing the steps to take if you have a health and safety problem in your workplace.

### 1 Tell your supervisor.

In all Canadian jurisdictions, the respective occupational health and safety acts state that it is the primary duty of the employer to provide workers with a safe workplace. Your supervisor is the first link in a chain that goes to the top, so they need to be told about the hazards and dangers you discover in the workplace.

**An important note: no job is worth dying over.** In all jurisdictions, workers have the legal right to refuse to perform a task that they feel will cause harm to themselves or others. If you feel the task is unsafe or dangerous, tell your supervisor that you are refusing to do the task because you feel it is dangerous. This should set into motion a series of steps that will lead to the hazard being removed, or an investigation with your local health and safety representative or a committee member. For more information on the right to refuse unsafe work, check out [cupe.ca/health-and-safety/refuse](http://cupe.ca/health-and-safety/refuse).

### 2 Make sure your co-workers, your union health and safety committee, and your local executive know about the hazard.

It is the law that your employer must tell all employees about the hazards of the workplace, however not all do. To help protect each other, tell co-workers, especially those who will be potentially exposed to the hazard.

### 3 Make sure your joint health and safety committee (JHSC) knows about the problem.

All hazards should be reported to members of your JHSC or your health and safety representative, but this is a particularly important step if your supervisor does not take action to fix the hazard. A well-functioning committee will address problems brought to its attention, and will conduct regular health and safety inspections to make sure that working conditions are safe. For more information on health and safety committees check out [cupe.ca/health-and-safety](http://cupe.ca/health-and-safety).

### 4 Contact your CUPE staff representative.

All CUPE locals have access to a national staff representative. If you have a health and safety issue that you cannot get rectified, your local staff rep can help or refer you to the proper person for assistance.

**OUR WEBSITE HAS IMPROVED!** [cupe.ca/health-and-safety](http://cupe.ca/health-and-safety)

• more information on workplace health and safety issues • fact sheets and guidelines on a wide range of topics • the latest health and safety news AND MORE