



WHY PUBLIC SERVICES AND UNIONIZED WORKPLACES MATTER FOR PERSONAL SUPPORT WORKERS

CUPE HOME AND COMMUNITY CARE PERSONAL SUPPORT WORKERS FORUM

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In the debate over health care there are many who say that it doesn't matter if home care is delivered by public agencies or by private, for-profit agencies. There are also those who say that it doesn't matter if you are unionized. This short paper will explain why personal support workers are better off if they work in a unionized environment and better off still if they are in a unionized public agency.

CANADIAN HOME CARE HUMAN RESOURCES STUDY

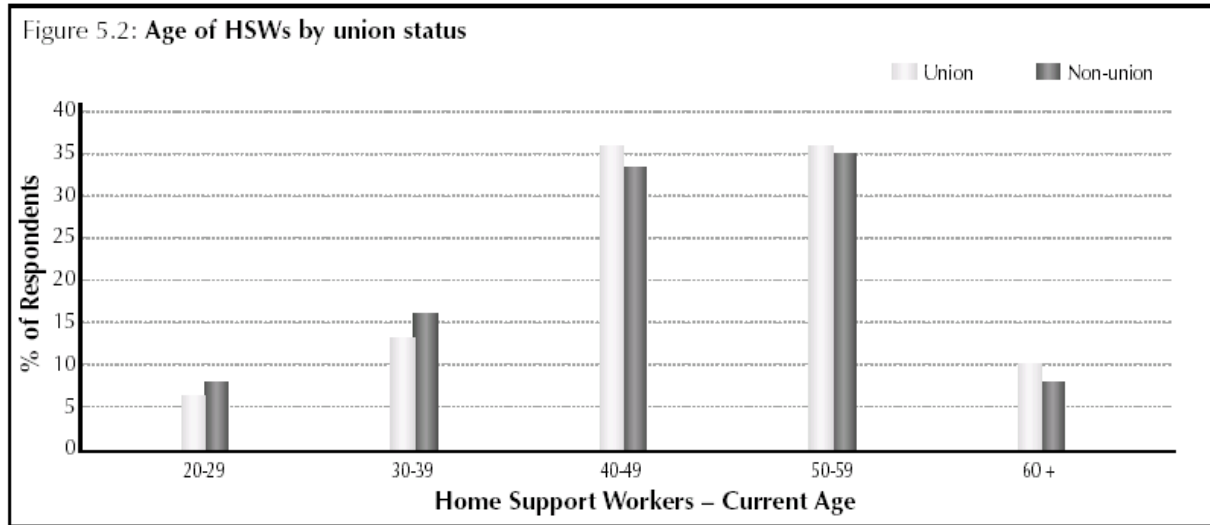
Over the past three years, CUPE was a partner in a home care human resources study funded by Human Resources Development Canada. The study focused on factors associated with the home care labour force – including of recruitment, retention, education, wages, benefits, and working conditions. The final report was issued in December 2003.

The findings of the study show why personal support workers should be supporting publicly funded and publicly delivered home care.

Study Findings

There are over 33,000 home support workers across Canada and they earn \$12.62 an hour on average. Over 45% of home support workers are 50 years of age or older while only 21% are under 40 years of age and approximately 10% are over 60.

Younger workers are less likely to be unionized than older workers. This means that we not only have to organize home support workers generally but that we have to develop some strategies to attract younger workers to the union.



NOTE: The above data is national in scope. It should be noted that this grouping of data might not reflect important differences that exist by region, province, delivery model, employer types, etc.

Source: Canadian Home Care Human Resources Study, Technical Report, December 2003

Table 1 shows clearly that joining a union pays off for personal support workers – better pay, greater satisfaction with the pay, and a greater likelihood that overtime and cancelled shifts will be paid. Unionized personal support workers also stay with their employers longer – reducing turnover in the workforce and ensuring greater continuity of care.

Characteristic	Union	Non-Union	Overall
Average hourly wage	\$13.71	\$11.63	\$12.62
Full-time	\$14.05	\$11.95	\$12.95
Casual	\$13.99	\$12.24	\$13.31
% satisfied with wages	45%	32%	38%
% paid overtime	73%	43%	59%
% paid for cancellation shifts	32%	18%	25%
No. of unpaid hours	2.6 hours	2.4 hours	2.6 hours
Length of time with Current employer	7.6 years	5.1 years	6.3 years
Public	9.4 years	8.2 years	9.2 years
Not for profit	9.3 years	7.0 years	7.2 years
For profit	7.5 years	7.0 years	7.1 years
Overall	9.1 years	7.2 years	8.1 years
% satisfied with current job	73%	72%	73%
% intend to leave	12%	19%	16%

Source: Canadian Home Care Human Resources Study, Technical Report, December 2003

Table 2 shows a corresponding clear advantage for personal support workers who work for public agencies compared to those who work for not-for-profit or for-profit agencies.

Wages are higher, overtime and cancelled shifts are more likely to be paid, satisfaction is higher and they are more likely to stay with a public agency longer.

Characteristic	Public	Not-for-profit	For-profit	Overall
Average hourly wage	\$14.52	\$11.64	\$12.03	\$12.60
Full-time	\$16.28	\$11.58	\$12.68	\$13.39
Part-time	\$13.25	\$11.74	\$12.68	\$12.13
Casual	\$14.49	\$11.11	\$12.58	\$13.28
% satisfied with wage	80%	22%	32%	38%
% paid overtime	77%	56%	49%	60%
% paid for cancellation shifts	40%	22%	15%	25%
No. of unpaid hours	1.8 hours	2.8 hours	2.9 hours	2.6 hours
Length of time with:				
Current employer	7.5 years	7.0 years	5.3 years	6.3 years
Full-time	10.4 years	9.0 years	7.6 years	8.8 years
Part-time	8.7 years	7.9 years	7.0 years	7.7 years
Casual	7.6 years	6.2 years	5.1 years	6.5 years
% satisfied with current job	78%	74%	69%	73%

Source: Canadian Home Care Human Resources Study, Technical Report, December 2003

ELECTION UPDATE: ONLY ONE PARTY SUPPORTS PUBLICLY FUNDED AND PUBLICLY DELIVERED HEALTH CARE

Home care has not been a priority for the federal Liberals while they have been in office. They have steadfastly ignored the pleas of Canadians and the recommendations of both the Romanow Commission and the National Forum on Health to create a national home care program.

Details on the party positions are below.

New Democratic Party

The NDP are the only party that recognizes the value of public services and the value of funding public services. They stand for public health care services in all areas (acute care, home care, long terms care) and the public delivery of those services. Their platform includes:

- Increase federal spending on health care to 25% of total provincial health expenditures in order that provinces can provide adequate health services including home care.
- Implement public or non-profit-based home care, based on the successful Manitoba model. Care in hospitals is \$9,000 to \$16,000 more expensive per patient per year than community-based home care, which plans for an aging population while relieving the burden on families and especially women, who disproportionately care for elderly relatives.
- Include home care as an insured service under the *Canada Health Act*.

Conservative Party of Canada

The Conservatives are in favour of the private, for-profit delivery of health services including home care. Ralph Klein, the Conservative Premier of Alberta, will release a health care plan promoting private, for-profit delivery of services just days after the federal election. If Stephen Harper and the federal Conservatives are elected as the federal government there will be no federal resistance to this plan. Harper and Klein are of like mind.

The Conservatives plan is to do the bare minimum. They promise to:

- Support the 2003 Health Accord – the same one that the Liberals struck and have not carried through on. It is likely that the Conservatives will not be any more committed to the Health Accord than the Liberals are;
- Would develop a common list of home care services eligible for coverage.

Neither of these objectives will make a substantive difference for the delivery of home care services to Canadians.

Liberal Party Of Canada

The Liberals have already implemented the largest ever cuts to public health care, abandoned promises to reduce the patent length of prescription drugs and deleted a clause from the *Canada Health Act* that protected vital home care services from privatization. Liberal cuts in the mid-1990's threw the health care system into crisis – a crisis from which it has not recovered.

In terms of home care they promise to:

- Implement a National Home Care Program
 - Home care services for post-acute patients, including coverage for medication and rehabilitation services;
 - Home mental health case management and intervention services;.
 - Palliative home care services to support people at the end of life.
- Establish Home Care Fund of \$2 billion over 5 years for provinces that have established a minimum basket of home care services.

The Liberal funding plan for home care is a paltry \$400 million a year. A National Home Care Program cannot be maintained on this small funding commitment.

The Liberals have had the opportunity to fulfill these promises during their term in government and they have failed to do so. They have done nothing to ensure that home care services are covered under the *Canada Health Act* and do not care if services are delivered by for-profit providers. They have failed to challenge privatization attempts in all areas of health services and if past experience is any indication, will likely cave to Ralph Klein's health reform plan to be released after the election.

WHAT ARE THE PROVINCES AND TERRITORIES DOING?

Premiers' Meeting, July 27 – 28, 2004

On July 27 – 28, 2004, the Premiers of all the provinces and territories will be meeting in Niagara on the Lake to reach consensus on a series of health care issues. They have formed a "working group" on home care which will develop a proposal as to what services should be included in the home care "basket." Rest assured that any consensus position developed by the provincial and territorial governments will be based on the lowest common denominator i.e., the pro - privatization positions of Ralph Klein in Alberta, Gordon Campbell in B.C., and Bernard Lord in New Brunswick. After the election, Klein is expected to release a plan for health care reform that includes massive privatization and a major role for for-profit, corporate providers.

The Premiers will try to put together a united front to meet with the federal government in an anticipated First Ministers' meeting at the end of August in Charlottetown.

First Ministers' Meeting August 2004

Paul Martin has proposed a First Ministers' meeting to be held in Charlottetown in late August. Martin's proposal is to host the meeting in an effort to develop a 10-year plan for health care. The outcome of the federal election may change this plan. If there is a Conservative government the meeting may not happen at all. In any case, a Conservative government would drastically change the dynamics of the meeting as those who support privatization will have a decided advantage to push their plans through.

CONCLUSION

It is time to stand strong against those who will turn public services (including home care) over to for-profit corporations. The evidence presented above demonstrates that personal support workers are better off with public delivery of their services. And when personal support workers receive decent wages and benefits, are satisfied with their working conditions so that they stay with their employer longer and can provide greater continuity of care, home care clients are better off.

The outcome of the federal election will have significant consequences for personal support workers. Parties that support private, for-profit delivery of home care services are a threat for our wages, benefits and working conditions.

It is time to vote for public services.

CUPE Research
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