

# Ready and able

Creating an ability-smart  
work environment



# CUPE works for inclusive workplaces

Persons with disabilities have a right to employment without discrimination.

The right to have a disability accommodated in the workplace is a human right in Canada. Employers have a legal duty to accommodate workers with disabilities at all stages of their working lives. They are obligated to adapt work and workplaces unless they can prove it would cause undue hardship, considering factors like financial cost or health and safety risks.

Workers have a legal right to accessible workplaces. Workers are also legally protected against disability-related discrimination, including negative perceptions about a disability and its impact on an individual's work.

CUPE works to make sure that work and workplaces are accessible, safe and healthy for everyone. Nearly 750,000 Canadians with disabilities say they could work if given the chance.

## Disabilities take many forms

Some people are born with a disability. For others, it's a result of illness, accident or aging. It can happen to any of us at any time.

CUPE has successfully challenged outdated perceptions. The law now recognizes many forms of physical, mental, episodic, learning and other disabilities that can prevent people from working. Some examples of disabilities include addictions, depression, cancers, chronic conditions like HIV/AIDS, or chemical and environmental sensitivities. There are many more examples.

# CUPE works for change

- **We listen** to our members and help them identify their disability-related needs.
- We negotiate **individual accommodation** agreements that ensure our members with disabilities are able to work.
- We work with employers to find the **tools and technology** that assist workers.
- We advocate on behalf of workers who need **short- and long-term disability coverage** and workers' compensation top-ups.
- We negotiate contracts that uphold the principles of the **duty to accommodate**.
- **We arbitrate** cases involving disability-related discrimination, harassment and accommodation needs.
- We **provide workshops** on the duty to accommodate to members, staff and employers. We encourage ability-smart practices.
- We break down barriers and **confront discrimination** and assumptions about whether a worker has a disability and the impact of the disability on work.

Many CUPE members make it their job to help people with disabilities thrive. They work in developmental services, recreation centres, schools, community care, transportation, or not-for-profit organizations. They are committed to inclusive workplaces and communities.

# Communication is key

An estimated one million working Canadians have one or more disabling conditions that may be permanent, temporary, episodic or hidden.

It may be hard to talk about a disability with your co-workers or employer. Many people feel vulnerable sharing personal medical information. They worry about being harassed or fired. Once informed, your employer has a legal duty to accommodate you and to respect your confidentiality. You and your CUPE representative can work with the employer to find solutions.

# An ability-smart workplace is better for all workers

For more information [CUPE.ca/disability-rights](http://CUPE.ca/disability-rights)  
This document is available in alternate formats.

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