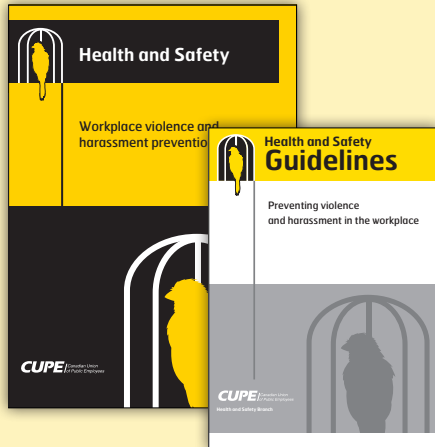
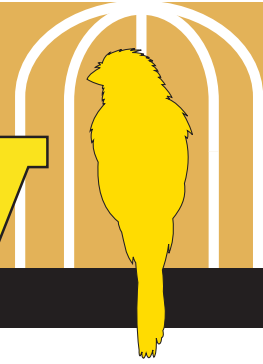


THE **canary**

WINTER 2016



NEWS **STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS**

2016 proclaimed CUPE's Year of Health and Safety

The Strategic Directions document approved at the 2015 CUPE National Convention calls for 2016 to be the Year of Health and Safety. To promote health and safety, CUPE will support each division holding a Health and Safety Conference in 2016. CUPE will also be providing educational materials and staff assistance to each division putting together a conference.

To coincide with the Year of Health and Safety, CUPE will be launching the new Health and Safety Learning Series. Modelled after the successful Steward Learning Series, the new Health and Safety Learning Series will include a nine-hour introductory course and a selection of three-hour modules. The three-hour modules have been designed to be run at the convenience of the locals. Following the introduction, participants will then be encouraged to take the four skills courses

(inspections, law, committees, and investigations) followed by the perspectives courses (women's health and safety, international health and safety, mental injuries) and prevention courses (violence, musculoskeletal injuries, and harassment).

There are currently 10 modules completed, and the Health and Safety branch will continue to work with the Union Development Department to develop more. Modules currently in development include challenging oppression, mobilising members, infection control, air quality, and more.

To access the courses, speak to your CUPE servicing representative or your regional union development education representative. Stay tuned for more details as the Year of Health and Safety is rolled out.

■ **Troy Winters**

RESOURCES

VIOLENCE PREVENTION

New workplace violence and harassment prevention kit ready

Workplace violence is a serious hazard that many CUPE members face every day. In response to this hazard, the CUPE health and safety branch is pleased to announce our most recent resource, the updated Workplace Violence and Harassment Prevention Kit.

The purpose of the kit is to provide CUPE members with resources to help protect them against violence and harassment in the workplace. Far too often,
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CUPE WORKPLACE VIOLENCE KIT

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employers develop policies and procedures that only react to violence and harassment. This approach is not good enough. CUPE's new kit focuses primarily on preventing violence and harassment in the workplace before it happens.

The backbone of the kit is the updated Violence Prevention Guideline. The guideline gives members the basics about violence and harassment, the risk factors and consequences of violence and harassment, and the employer's requirements under various provincial and federal legislation. It also provides a framework for how workers, unions, and health and safety committees can work together to prevent workplace violence and harassment. Where additional information is needed, more specific resource materials have been developed. These resources include a paper on developing a workplace violence and prevention policy, several checklists for hazard assessments and inspections, and finally, a sample letter in response to a violent incident in the workplace. New materials will be added to the kit throughout the year.

Find the guidelines and order the kit online at cupe.ca

VANCOUVER
CUPE-SCFP 2015



CONVENTION FORUM

Health and safety forum explores psychological injury

Stress was the major focus in the health and safety forum at the CUPE National Convention in Vancouver.



Julie Kaisla addresses health and safety forum.

CUPE members heard from two experts, exchanged ideas, and received tools and advice for a better understanding of the causes of stress, its effects on our health, and ways to prevent it.

Julie Kaisla, from the Canadian Mental Health Association's British Columbia Division talked about the different psychological wounds caused by excessively heavy workloads, as well as some general

strategies for reducing the effects of stress.

Participants also heard from Cassie Loveless, Paramedic/Emergency Medical Dispatcher at BC Ambulance Service, and member of CUPE 873. Loveless told members about her personal experience with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and the ways that she deals with this "silent" illness. She explained various strategies to prevent the escalation of psychological injury.

CUPE health and safety advisors described the tools and resources available to members to help them understand and prevent psychological injury. A new violence prevention kit produced by the CUPE Health and Safety Branch was also launched at the forum, along with the new Health and Safety learning series. For more information on the series, see the story on page one.

The forum ended with a Q & A and a round table on stress prevention.

■ James Chai

The Canary, CUPE's health and safety newsletter, is published four times a year. Canaries were once used in mines to warn mineworkers about changes in air quality. Since then, the canary has become a symbol of workplace safety, and an important reminder of dangerous working conditions. For more information on the importance of the symbol, check out cupe.ca/canary.

Editors: Wes Payne and Troy Winters

Please email Troy Winters at health_safety@cupe.ca with corrections, questions or suggestions.

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CUPE Canadian Union
of Public Employees



TRAILBLAZING ACTIVIST PEARL BLOMMAERT WINS HEALTH AND SAFETY AWARD



For more than 25 years, Pearl Blommaert, CUPE's 2015 National Health and Safety Award winner, has worked tirelessly to improve health and safety standards for workers in Saskatchewan and across Canada.

In the early 1990s, Blommaert was instrumental in forcing her employer, the Sunrise Health Region of Saskatchewan, and then the entire province of Saskatchewan, to adopt violence prevention policies and legislation. This was a first in Canadian Health and Safety Law; since then, all provinces except one have adopted similar legislation.

Blommaert, a continuing care assistant by trade, plays many roles within CUPE. To name only a few, she's currently president of her local, CUPE 4980 representing health care workers. She's also the health sector representative on the CUPE Saskatchewan executive and sits on the national health and safety committee.

"It is with recognition for the tremendous support of my local and CUPE members in Saskatchewan that I accept this award," said Blommaert. "I want to thank CUPE National's Health and Safety committee and staff – who taught me that violence is not part of my job and for helping us improve health and safety regulations in Saskatchewan."

Blommaert has influenced provisions in the provincial collective agreement for health care workers, and in provincial health and safety regulations. She's made improvements in areas like musculoskeletal injury prevention, rules for working alone, shift work, and psychological harassment.

A passionate leader, Blommaert is also the first woman to win CUPE's health and safety award. She continues to work tirelessly for members. CUPE is proud to salute her ongoing efforts.

■ James Chai

Health and safety resolutions passed

Delegates at the 2015 CUPE National Convention passed a series of resolutions related to health and safety. Here's a rundown:

Resolution No. 144 commits CUPE to provide resources for a campaign to raise the issue of mental health in the workplace. The campaign will provide education toolkits and will include specialized mental health resources for each sector. It will support members to be able to recognize and understand mental health issues, and offer the necessary tools to aid members in effectively dealing with mental health issues in the workplace.

Resolution No. 145 calls on CUPE to promote awareness of workplace violence and harassment legislation. Divisions will be encouraged to work with members to lobby for better legislation and enforcement against employers in violation of the legislation. Divisions will also be encouraged to promote awareness of member rights, educate members about their responsibilities and develop workplace risk assessment standards.

Resolution No. 166 commits CUPE to lobby provincial governments to properly enforce existing working alone legislation.

Watch for developments on these resolutions in the coming months.



3 essential rights in health and safety

Across Canada, health and safety laws are based on the concept of the internal responsibility system, which says workers and employers should be able to meet and solve their health and safety issues as partners. To that end, health and safety laws in this country enshrine the following three rights to most workers.

1 THE RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE

All workers have a right to participate in keeping the workplace healthy and safe by taking part in health and safety activities like the selection of health and safety representatives or joint health and safety committee members, or by being a committee member themselves. With this right comes a worker's responsibility to report all hazards to their employer, without fear of reprimand, reprisal, or punishment. Through participation in health and safety-related activities workers participate in deciding what hazards can be tolerated in the workplace, and what hazards must be mitigated.

2 THE RIGHT TO KNOW

All workers have a right to know about all hazards present in their workplace that they may be exposed to, and how those hazards may hurt them. Employers are required to provide the information, training,

and supervision a worker needs to avoid being hurt by hazards in the workplace. Training and information about hazards should be provided before a worker is exposed so that they know how to protect themselves. Unlike what many employers claim, there is no law that supersedes a worker's right to know about hazards in the workplace.

3 THE RIGHT TO REFUSE

Health and safety laws give workers the right to refuse work that they believe is unsafe. Workers can refuse work that they believe to be dangerous to themselves or their co-workers. Ultimately, the right to refuse is provided so that a worker never needs to decide between their health and safety and having a job. A worker cannot be punished for refusing to do work that they believe will hurt themselves or others.

It is not up to the worker to prove whether their belief is justified. The investigation following the refusal will determine if the refusal should continue. Each jurisdiction has slight differences in the investigation process.

For any questions on your health and safety rights, contact your CUPE servicing representative, or your CUPE health and safety specialist. **Visit cupe.ca/health-and-safety for more information.**

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE! 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