

December 2016

TO ALL CUPE CHARTERED ORGANIZATIONS

Dear friends, sisters and brothers:

DECEMBER 3 – INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

On December 3, we draw attention to the ongoing challenge of ableism in our workplaces and communities, and we recommit to a disability rights agenda.

People with disabilities (PWD) experience higher rates of poverty, unemployment, discrimination, incarceration, harassment and violence. Those marginalized by racism, sexism, homophobia or transphobia face additional barriers and harm. This is unacceptable.

As a society, we continue to create disabling social, physical and economic environments. As a union, we can help dismantle those systems.

Delegates to the 2015 CUPE National Convention adopted Resolution 112, committing CUPE to lobbying for a National Disability Strategy. This strategy would be a comprehensive, unified, national approach to policy and program development to improve the lives of Canadians with a disability, as well as their families. It would be entitlement-based and fully-funded by the federal, provincial and territorial governments with the federal government contributing at least fifty per cent of the total cost.

There are three concrete things you can do, to help us advance the goal of a National Disability Strategy:

1. Participate in the federal government's consultation on accessibility legislation before February 28, 2017. It's vital that the new legislation is far-reaching, well-funded and enforceable. CUPE is developing its own recommendations for the survey and submissions. To request a copy for help in making your own, email equality@cupe.ca.

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2. Call or email your Member of Parliament (or the MPs on the Finance Committee) to demand that the federal government include the disability "drop out" in Bill C-26, the CPP expansion. For background, see this CUPE article and follow the Council of Canadians with Disabilities.
3. Demand that municipal and provincial governments improve crisis services for women with disabilities and that the federal government implement the National Action Plan on Violence Against Women and Girls Blueprint.

As union leaders, we also encourage you to take the following actions:

- Bargain employment equity, duty to accommodate, short and long-term disability coverage and other disability rights into your collective agreement.
- Create a more inclusive union by using resources like this CRIAW/DAWN toolkit to plan events. Take CUPE workshops on disability issues. Involve members with disabilities in union leadership and activities.

There are a number of opportunities to influence government policy right now, with accessibility legislation and gender-based violence on the federal agenda as well as several provincial agendas.

CUPE has been a union leader on disability rights and represents advocacy and service agency workers. We bring a lot of valuable experience to bear on this work, and we encourage you to draw on that experience as we play our part in creating a society that truly enables all its members.

In solidarity,



MARK HANCOCK
National President



CHARLES FLEURY
National Secretary-Treasurer