



MONTREAL ACTIVIST WINS CUPE NATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY AWARD



Brother Pierre Raby of Section locale 1983 du SCFP, la Société de transport de Montréal (Transportation Society of Montreal) was the 2009 recipient of the CUPE National Health and Safety Award. CUPE National President Paul Moist and National Secretary-Treasurer Claude Généreux presented the award during the National Convention in Montreal. Brother Raby was selected for his tireless efforts to make life safer for bus drivers and subway operators.

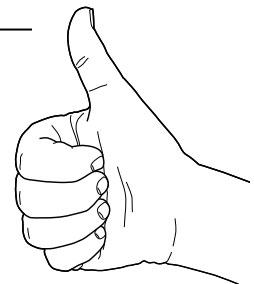
Brother Raby has worked as a bus driver since 1976 and has been working on health and safety

issues directly since 1995. Now recognized as an expert in his field by all the significant players in urban transportation, Brother Raby convinced his employer to fund ergonomics studies, pushed to have safety cameras installed on buses, and worked with bus manufacturers on the design of buses to make them safer. Some of his other numerous accomplishments and activities have included:

- ▶ Working with CUPE Quebec's Provincial OH&S Committee.
- ▶ Serving as a representative for the transportation sector on the Association paritaire pour la santé et la sécurité du travail secteur affaires municipales (Joint Association for Health and Safety in Municipal Affairs).
- ▶ Implementing numerous ergonomics studies and safety projects through his workplace Joint OH&S Committee.
- ▶ Being selected by the Société de transport de Montréal to travel to Paris, France, to study improved safety enhancements in the transportation industry, including anti-assault cabs on Parisian buses.
- ▶ Lobbying government for enhanced protection of bus drivers under the *Criminal Code* of Canada.

GETTING BACK ON TRACK

It's been a while since our last newsletter, and since that time a



lot has happened. The 10th National Health and Safety Conference took place in Saint John's, Newfoundland, the 24th National Convention took place in Montreal, and influenza pandemic has swept across the globe. With this issue we'll be getting back on track and you can expect our regular quarterly newsletters to resume.

We all would like to congratulate Brother Raby for this award and as well recognize the other nominees for all their outstanding work in the field of health and safety: Sister France Pelletier, CUPE 4091; Brother Gary Orsten, CUPE 38; and Sister Judy MacDonald-Power, CUPE 3986. Keep up the great work everyone!

HEALTH AND SAFETY RESOLUTIONS PASSED AT CONVENTION

National Convention delegates passed three key health and safety resolutions. The first, resolution no. 185, called on CUPE National to offer health and safety training for local union executive members. Its passage shows the commitment of CUPE leadership to make health and safety a concern for CUPE members at all levels.

The second, resolution no. 195, directed CUPE National to lobby political authorities to have the *Criminal Code* amended to protect bus drivers, metro operators, flight attendants and paramedics from violence at the workplace. This would provide public workers with the same protection that the *Criminal Code* provides to police officers who are assaulted while working. This resolution was passed primarily in response to the increase in reports of assaults at work on CUPE members in the public transportation sector.

During the floor debate, Brother Claude Benoît of section locale 1983 du SFCP made an impassioned speech and pointed out that, "for 10 years the union has been working to increase the

security on the buses and subways. Approximately 160 assaults a year occur against women and men who work in the public transit system in Montreal. This is unacceptable."

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Such assaults have devastating effects on the victim's health as well as that of their co-workers. Similar to police officers, CUPE members who work in the public transportation sector provide an essential public service to the population, and should be protected from all forms of assault while on the job.

On the forefront of one of the largest pandemics in recent history, resolution no. 277 was passed to "coordinate a strategic plan to create awareness on the need for pandemic planning at all local

levels." Since convention, CUPE has been very proactive, developing a pandemic plan and helping locals develop their own plan.

The key to any successful pandemic plan is the need for governments and employers to ensure that CUPE members are provided with full information, education, protective equipment and clear protocols. This resolution also dealt with the fact that many Joint Health and Safety Committees have not been developing contingency plans for H1N1 should it strike their workplace. As Sister Becky Jacobson of B.C.'s Hospital Employees Union (HEU) stated during debate, "This pandemic is on our doorstep (and) will hit us at some point. Our members will be the first affected and the first to fall."

CUPE members must be aware that the right to refuse unsafe work should prevail where there is no proper direction, protocol, education and sufficient personal protective equipment. More information on the H1N1 flu can be found at cupe.ca.

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CONVENTION FORUM: SARS LESSONS FOR H1N1



A well-attended health and safety examined how the lessons of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak of 2003 have direct comparisons and consequences to the planning for H1N1. Out of the SARS failures, the idea of a fourth right of health and safety was revisited. Along with the right to participate, to know and to refuse unsafe work should be the **right to the precautionary principle**.

Originally developed more than 10 years ago, the idea behind this new right was skillfully described by Justice Campbell. He wrote, *"The point is not science, but safety... When it comes to worker safety in hospitals, we should be driven by the precautionary principle that reasonable steps to reduce risk should not await scientific certainty... Until this precautionary principle is fully recognized, mandated and*

enforced in Ontario's hospitals, workers will continue to be at risk."

The application of this principle to the current H1N1 means that union members should not wait until we know that our patients have H1N1. We should assume that they are infected and take all steps possible to reduce transmission to ourselves, our families and the general public. Moving forward, it is now up to us as union members to negotiate precautionary principle language and protections into our collective agreements. At the same time, we must lobby for the enforcement of a precautionary model as a new occupational health and safety law.

A STRATEGIC DIRECTION FOR HEALTH AND SAFETY

Adopted by delegates at National Convention in Montreal, the Strategic Directions document, **Taking Action**, reaffirmed health and safety as a vital part of our union's work.

The goal is to increase our union's commitment by:

- ▶ Providing tools and resources to CUPE members to encourage activism.
- ▶ Continuing to research, educate and communicate with members about current and emerging health and safety hazards.
- ▶ Bargaining health and safety into collective agreements as part of our free collective bargaining plan.
- ▶ Providing member health and safety training at all levels.
- ▶ Encouraging health and safety militancy to protect CUPE members' lives.
- ▶ Ensuring the "Year of the Steward" actions include health and safety training for stewards.

A copy of the Strategic Directions document, **Taking Action** can be downloaded at: <http://cupe.ca/updir/Taking-action-as-adopted-strategic-directions-2009-2011.pdf> or search *Strategic Directions 2009* on the cupe.ca main page.

AS ADOPTED
BY THE CUPE 2009
NATIONAL
CONVENTION

DAY OF MOURNING: THE FIGHT CONTINUES

In 1984, the CUPE National Health and Safety Committee recommended the creation of a day of remembrance for workers hurt or killed while on the job. Last April 28th marked the 25th year that all Canadian labour unions under the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) umbrella have come together on the Day of Mourning to remember those who gave the ultimate sacrifice while simply trying to provide for themselves and their families.

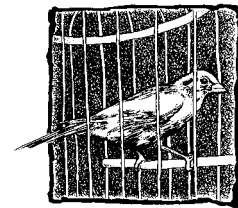
In those 25 years, 122 CUPE members have lost their lives on the job. In the last issue of the *Health and Safety Update*, the *Honour Wall* at the CUPE National office was introduced. This wall serves as a memorial to all CUPE members who lost their lives on the job. Sadly, since the last *Health and Safety Update*, nine more CUPE members were killed while at work.

- ▶ Oliver Patrick (Ollie) O'Rourke, CUPE 7000, Delta, BC
- ▶ Nicole De Lafontaine Demontigny, section locale 930 du SCFP, Verdun, QC
- ▶ Martin McEwen, CUPE 407, Vancouver, BC
- ▶ Clifford Payne, CUPE 3148, Corner Brook, NL
- ▶ James Robert "Jamie" Vecchio, CUPE 3, Sault Ste. Marie, ON
- ▶ Sheldon Miller, CUPE 189, Medicine Hat, AB
- ▶ Jacques Tremblay, section locale 1500 du SCFP, Forestville, QC
- ▶ James Best, CUPE 416, Toronto, ON
- ▶ Pierre Leclerc, section locale 301 du SCFP, Pierrefonds, QC



During the last day of mourning, ceremonies were held across the country from coast to coast. In Nova Scotia, CUPE National President Paul Moist spoke, "We vow that an injury to one is an injury to all. We demand the enforcement of health and safety laws... We denounce those who place profits before workers health, and we proclaim our right to safe workplaces and respect on the job."

April 2010 will mark the 26th year of the Day of Mourning. The past 26 years have seen improvements to collective agreements, and major gains have been made in legislation across the country. However, conservative estimates are that three people are killed at work every day in Canada. Those disturbing statistics, make it clear that we, as a union, must not rest when it comes to issues of Health and Safety.



Health and Safety Update is published four times a year by the CUPE National Health and Safety Branch. Is there Health and Safety news in your region, community or local? Let us know, and maybe your story will be featured in an upcoming update. For more information, please contact:

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