

April 2012

TO ALL CUPE CHARTERED ORGANIZATIONS

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

CUPE'S MAY DAY STATEMENT

There is no denying that as trade unionists, we are facing tough new challenges that threaten many of the rights and values we've fought so hard to maintain over the years. The Harper Conservatives are continuing their assault on workers' rights and public services, as they interfere with collective bargaining and impose austerity measures that force the poorest among us to carry the greatest burden. Meanwhile, provincial and municipal governments in many jurisdictions are using heavy-handed legislation and tough bargaining tactics to force union members into a corner.

These struggles are echoed all over world. Workers in many countries across Europe face attacks on wages, benefits, and pensions. Trade unionists in Colombia have been murdered or face death threats. Workers in Iran have been imprisoned. Our own fight may be local, but the struggle goes far beyond our borders.

May Day has come to symbolize the international spirit of the labour movement. We face difficult challenges all over the world, but our movement was built on tough fights in the face of adversity. Workers' rights were not handed over by the good grace of governments or employers.

Think of the hundreds of thousands of workers across North America who took to the streets in 1886 to fight for an eight-hour workday. The resulting riots that took place days later in Haymarket Square in Chicago led to international recognition and annual commemoration of May Day. Think of the women who filled the streets of New York following the Triangle Shirtwaist factory fire in 1911 to protest inhumane and unsafe working conditions. Think of the workers of Winnipeg who took to the streets in the general strike in 1919 to protest low wages in the face of rising inflation and unacceptable working conditions. These are proud moments in labour history that led to real change, but none came with ease. These workers put their livelihoods and even their lives on the line to fight for basic rights we enjoy today.

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PAUL MOIST – National President / Président national CHARLES FLEURY – National Secretary-Treasurer / Secrétaire-trésorier national

TOM GRAHAM – FRED HAHN – DANIEL LÉGÈRE – LUCIE LEVASSEUR – BARRY O'NEILL – General Vice-Presidents / Vice-présidents généraux



Our movement is one defined by struggle, and this new era is no different. May Day was founded to commemorate the tenacity and commitment that the labour movement showed then and continues to show today in the face of adversity

On May Day, we should take stock of how far we've come - and the distance we must still go to protect and improve conditions for all working people.

Governments are increasingly targeting public services to pay the price for the crimes of big banks and multinational corporations. CUPE members are fighting to protect jobs, pensions and the important public services that we provide that are even more vital to Canadians during tough economic times.

We will continue to utilize our collective knowledge and frontline expertise to advance alternatives that will protect services, create jobs in all sectors and build stable, prosperous communities. And we continue to grow. Now more than 618,000 strong from coast to coast, CUPE members can be proud of the accomplishments of our union. We're bigger, better, and stronger than we've ever been before.

This May 1, we encourage you to celebrate what we have accomplished and reaffirm your commitment to our struggle and our collective vision for change.

In solidarity,



PAUL MOIST
National President



CHARLES FLEURY
National Secretary-Treasurer