

In this issue:

March News-Update on Local Events

- Your Union
 - ◆ Updates for the Month
 - ◆ What the Survey Says...
 - ◆ Bill 124 and our Employer
 - ◆ Workload Overload
- Motivation Lives On
 - ◆ Spot the Support!

March News

This month is traditionally a month of uneasy weather. Not sure what is happening from one day to the next. Sort of like our workplace some days! That is why we have created this newsletter. We will try to let you know what is or has happened since last newsletter. Give you some food for thought too. So sit back, relax with a coffee and take a few minutes to read what your union has been up to this past month –FOR YOU.

Updates for the Month:

The first months of each year the Executive have some “must do’s” to take care of . We met for half day in Feb. to take care of these yearly items. For example: planning the budget, and reviewing the by laws to ensure they are up to date.

Allison Prusky– The **President** has been working with the various committees to ensure your voice remains heard. The role of president can be overwhelming at times. She knows she can rely on her Executive Committee to assist whenever possible.

Jill Paquin- Vice President position was vacant last month when we put this newsletter out. We are happy to announce Jill stepped up to the plate and accepted this role. The Executive has promised to assist Jill as she learns the roles. Jill has been assisting our members and continues to grow her knowledge of the role.

Lora Johnson– The **Recording Secretary** has been working on getting staff education information out to all of you so you can sign up before the courses get filled up. Check your emails often.

Tina Gauthier –The **Secretary Treasurer** Attended with the Executive in February when they were creating the budget to present. Paid the bills for the month and set up automatic payments for the rent and CUPE National.

Chief Steward– VACANT– If you have been considering involving yourself in the union, please consider this position. If you have the education already, that is a bonus! But, you can take the courses and get the knowledge you need as well. We welcome your nomination at the March 18th Membership Meeting.

Kim Montgomery– Membership Officer. Kim continues to be the crazy energy at the meetings. She keeps track of the attendance, she sends out the links for those who can’t come in person. And sends out this newsletter.

Ami Gilmour– Is your current fully trained **Shop Steward**. Ami is currently taking some time off from this role and will return once she is confident she can support others. Kim Montgomery, Ami Madsen and Hillary Pearse are taking the Steward Training soon. This will help them get a better sense of what a steward does and how they help support staff who may require assistance when pulled into their supervisors office. When a staff feels something is not right, and has questions about our C.A.– reach out to a Steward and hopefully answers can be found. The union is always looking for interested members to learn more of how they can support one another. Consider joining.....

Trustee –Two Vacancies at this time • This volunteer position is only for once a year for approx. 1 day. Plus training of the position which is a two day course. All paid for by the union. You do not lose any pay. It is all done during company time but paid for by the union. The 3 Trustees perform an audit of the Secretary-Treasurer’s reports, receipts, transactions. Ensure attendance has been taken. Then sign off and send to Ottawa head office as well as present any recommendations they have from the report in January during the first membership meeting of the year. That’s it! Painless eh? So who wants to sign up? This small commitment would mean so much.



Continued from Page 1

Updates for the Month:(cont'd)

February 23rd Sault Ste. Marie CUPE Activist Day-Attended by a few of your Executive. A chance to network with other CUPE locals and hopefully gathered support as well as giving support for causes. The energy in that room was infectious in a good way. We gave our support behind a few initiatives that are important to CUPE. For example, Black River-Matheson Municipal workers have been locked out of their jobs since October 2023. "We overwhelmingly rejected an offer forced on us": Locked out Black River-Matheson municipal workers continue to fight for better wages for all - CUPE Ontario And best of all, they are not giving in. The tiny office with 14 unionized workers (**2 SCABS**) are doing this for the greater of all future workers. "We held out this long for a reason – we will not let the Township attack our wages, especially those of the next generation of workers, and that means rejecting the offer they put before us during the forced vote." They have the support of Ontario CUPE workers and continue to stand strong. With a town population of only 2600 (according to 2021 statistics) and their CAO making over \$182,000 a year. Last yr his average raise **62.7%** Township of Black River-Matheson salary info | Ontario Sunshine List Their unwavering strength is something to be proud of.

There was also mutual support given for a rally in front of Ross Romano's office on Friday March 1st at NOON. If you read this newsletter in time and can come down to show your support regarding the shortage of physicians in our city. This affects us all! Stand together with all our other union brothers and sisters on this very important issue.



What are our TOP Priorities going into talks?

Because you all have been asking what the survey results are.

No secret here folks– it's what everyone, everywhere across the country is asking for....

- 1) fair wage increase
- 2) safe working conditions

You need to realize– we CANNOT put anything specific out there, this would just give our Employer the heads up and allow them to prepare for negotiations with ammunition in attempts to shoot us down.

Please know, your surveys were all read, notes were taken and charts were made. The negotiation team has all of the top concerns loaded and are working on getting our proposals all put in good legal wording to present to the Employer on May 3rd 2024!

Bill 124 - Ontario will repeal def. of repeal a) [to rescind or annul by authoritative act]

b) [to revoke or abrogate by legislative enactment]

c) [ABANDON, RENOUNCE: to summon to return : RECALL]

a wage-cap law on public sector workers that the Court of Appeal found unconstitutional recently.

The law from Premier Doug Ford's government — known as Bill 124 — capped salary increases for public sector workers at one per cent a year for three years. A lower court struck it down as unconstitutional and the Appeal Court, in a 2-1 decision, largely upheld that decision, writing that the infringement couldn't be justified. "Because of the Act, organized public sector workers, many of whom are women, racialized and/or low-income earners, have lost the ability to negotiate for better compensation or even better work conditions that do not have a monetary value," the court wrote in its majority opinion. The Progressive Conservatives enacted the law in 2019 as a way to help the government eliminate a deficit.

The province argued the law did not infringe constitutional rights, saying the charter only protects the process of bargaining, not the outcome. In a news release Monday, the Ontario government said it will not appeal the court decision and will instead "take steps to repeal Bill 124 in its entirety in the coming weeks." "To solve for the inequality of workers created by today's court decision, the province will urgently introduce regulations to exempt non-unionized and non-associated workers from Bill 124 until it is repealed," the release said.

The Ontario Appeal Court wrote that governments are entitled to try to hold compensation increases to a certain level, but the issue is how they do that. "Ontario has not been able to explain why wage restraint could not have been achieved through good faith bargaining," the court wrote. "In the absence of any evidence for the need for expediency or that the same goal cannot be achieved through collective bargaining, it is hard to understand on what basis the Act's salutary effects outweigh its beneficial effects.

5269 UNION NEWS



Continued from Page 2

Decision of Bill 124 seen as 'big victory' for unionized workers

The Appeal Court found, however, that the lower court judge erred by striking the entire statute. The law applied both to unionized workers and those not represented by a bargaining organization, and the Appeal Court said the act is only unconstitutional for workers represented by unions, who have different rights because they bargain collectively.

So what exactly does this all mean? Well this worker is just as confused as anyone... so I reached out to our President who explained it for us. "The Union sent a letter to the Employer requesting to re-open the collective agreement under the letter of understanding that was included in our most recent contract. The Employer responded indicating that this was not the intent of the letter of understanding and they would not agree to re-open the negotiations around the wage freeze governed by Bill 124. The Union then filed a Grievance which the Employer denied and this lead to the grievance moving on to arbitration on May 17th."



Workloads:

There was lots of comments on the survey about workload. The Employer told us that the overload of cases each worker has was only temporary while they hired and trained new staff. Of course we understand it takes time to sufficiently train new staff so they can take on their own cases. So if we all do our part to take on a bit more in the meantime—Who are we kidding? How long does temporary last anyway? And how overwhelmed can we get before we just shut down?

Unfortunately the task starts with YOU. As per **Article 34 in our current Collective Agreement [2021-CA.pdf \(cupe.ca\)](#)**, we, the worker must approach our Supervisor and request a Caseload review. {Where an employee identifies that their workload is becoming unmanageable, an employee may request a workload review by their immediate supervisor. d) Workload review will be a collaborative process between Supervisor and worker...}

Click on the link above to review your rights that the previous Negotiation Committee has successfully achieved for you. YOU must initiate and if the results are not achieved, then we can work with you to see what other way to achieve a healthy work balance. The last thing anyone wants is staff leaving or going on stress leave because the Employer didn't do what is set out in our C.A.



SPOT THE SUPPORT?

Your Bargaining Committee— Craig MacKinnon, Ami Madsen, Kim Montgomery, Allison Prusky and Jill Paquin (Alternate) will begin bargaining along with your National Representative Jay Berberick starting May 3rd. Other known dates are May 6-7 and 13-14th. We can show our support for them ever so silently yet effectively. Catch your coworkers in their union attire, take a picture and post it on our facebook site! It's that easy. At the end of March a winner will be randomly chosen and announced on the facebook site as well. What else do you have sitting at home that you can wear or place in

your office to show your silent support? Kim Montgomery will have more painted rocks available to anyone who would like to dress up their desks. The message is "We see you- We are with you-We are here for you."

Next Month— April 28th is National Day of Mourning— Remembering those lost due to workplace injury.

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