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# TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION: CUPE TAKING ACTION THROUGH COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

CUPE National Human Rights Branch

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**CUPE**

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# 1 | CHECKLIST

This checklist is a summary of the recommendations in this guide. To see a full explanation, please read the corresponding sections.

## **Your local should:**

- Make a commitment to take action towards reconciliation.
- Insert a question in your bargaining survey that asks about self-identification of Indigenous identity, and how to support Indigenous members.
- Ensure there are Indigenous members on committees, including the bargaining committee.
- Encourage Indigenous members to apply for union positions.

## **Your collective agreement should include:**

- An equity statement that includes Indigenous people and Two-Spirit people.
- An Indigenous territorial acknowledgement in the preamble.
- Recognition that Indigenous communities have their own cultural values and priorities.
- A non-derogation clause to make it clear that Indigenous rights under the Canadian constitution, treaties, and other legislation cannot be negated.
- A non-discrimination clause that allows preferential hiring of Indigenous people.
- A representative workforce clause that aims to increase Indigenous employment at all levels of the organization.
- Provisions for Indigenous designated positions that include the language for job posting and hiring.
- Provisions for in-service training for Indigenous workers.
- Cultural safety/Indigenous awareness training for non-Indigenous members.
- The option of the presence of Indigenous Elders in the grievance process or other meetings with the employer dealing with Indigenous members.

- An Indigenous dispute resolution process for Indigenous members.
- A travel benefit for workplaces in remote locations.
- A clause that states that workers will not be penalized for being unable to travel to the work site because of hazardous conditions.

**The bereavement leave section of the collective agreement should:**

- Include a very broad definition of family that includes extended family members, members of the same tribe, and Indigenous Elders.
- Provide enough time off for members to attend to Indigenous ceremonial protocols and responsibilities.

**Other leaves in the collective agreement should include:**

- Leave of absence for members to vote in Indigenous elections.
- Leave of absence for members who wish to run for positions in Indigenous governance.
- Leave of absence for Indigenous cultural/ceremonial events, and other Indigenous observances.

**The Paid Holidays section of the collective agreement should include:**

- National Indigenous Day – June 21
- Louis Riel Day – February 21
- National Day for Truth and Reconciliation – September 30
- Language that recognizes any other holiday proclaimed by the federal or provincial governments.
- Recognition of the right of a First Nations Band Council to declare a paid holiday.

## 2 | INTRODUCTION

This guide is for CUPE local unions, bargaining committees, members, CUPE staff, and other activists to support Indigenous members and reconciliation efforts. It provides guidance in negotiating contract language that assures all our Indigenous members enjoy dignity and equality in the workplace.

Negotiating decent work terms and conditions is at the heart of a union's mission. CUPE collective agreements cover everything from wages, classifications, job postings and promotion procedures, various leaves of absence, employment benefit plans, health and safety clauses, job security and technological change clauses, protection from discrimination and harassment, and many more issues.

CUPE is committed to ensuring that locals have access to resources that support the union in their reconciliation work. One of the ways that CUPE locals can support reconciliation is by bargaining language into collective agreements that supports Indigenous workers. This resource is for those who want to put reconciliation into action at the bargaining table.

It is important to understand that historically, unions have not always fought for the rights of Indigenous workers. Because of this, unions have not always been places where Indigenous people feel welcomed.

Many Indigenous CUPE members are carrying the weight of colonial trauma. This includes surviving the residential school system, the sixties scoop, or being an intergenerational survivor of these systems.

It is the duty of all unions, including CUPE, to begin repairing this relationship. In order to begin restoring the trust of Indigenous workers and communities in unions, actions must be taken that show a commitment to reconciliation.

Indigenous members want the same things as non-Indigenous members: decent wages and working conditions and the right to be treated fairly and with dignity in the workplace.

Whether they work for Band Councils or Indigenous organizations, or whether they work side by side with non-Indigenous CUPE members in other workplaces around the country, Indigenous members may have different needs which require the negotiation of Indigenous-specific contract language.



### 3 | KNOWING YOUR MEMBERSHIP

It is important to know your membership. It is not possible to know how many Indigenous members your local has unless you have surveyed your membership and collected demographic information.

Consider adding a question to the bargaining survey, or another survey of your local's membership, regarding self-identification of Indigenous identity. For example: "I am an Indigenous person (First Nations, Métis or Inuit)". Note that not all Indigenous members will be comfortable self-identifying for a variety of valid reasons, meaning that there might be Indigenous members in your local of whom you are unaware.

A survey is also an opportunity to reach out to Indigenous members and ask them about their needs. Building relationships with Indigenous members is part of building a strong union. Part of building those relationships is reaching out to Indigenous members and encouraging them to be part of local committees and applying for union positions.

Even if you may not have identified any Indigenous members in your local, it is still recommended that the union move forward on reconciliation initiatives. Taking action towards reconciliation is the responsibility of all unions and union members. This document can help guide those discussions. Another helpful document is [Walking the talk: A practical guide to reconciliation for CUPE locals](#).

### 4 | LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND INDIGENOUS SOVEREIGNTY

The preamble in a collective agreement is a great place to put language that recognizes Indigenous traditional territories, people, and culture. The sample language ranges from land acknowledgment to the recognition of Indigenous sovereignty, cultural values and priorities. It is important to put this language in the preamble because it frames the entire collective agreement and guides the union and employer in their work together. This helps to create awareness of the Indigenous people and culture, and is a reminder to work towards reconciliation.

## Here are a few examples from existing CUPE local collective agreements:

- **From the collective agreement between McMaster University and the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 3906, expiring August 31, 2022:**

*1.05 The parties recognize and acknowledge that McMaster University is located on the traditional territories of the Mississauga and Haudenosaunee nations, and within the lands protected by the “Dish With One Spoon” Wampum agreement.*

- **From the collective agreement between Public Interest Alberta Society and the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 474, January 1, 2021 – December 31, 2021:**

*Public Interest Alberta and the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 474 agree that our work takes place on the land referred to as Treaty 4, 6, 7, 8, and 10 which are the traditional meeting grounds and home to many diverse Indigenous Nations. Our work will reflect the intention of the Treaties, the intention of peace, friendship and understanding, and that the purpose of this Agreement is:*

- (a) To maintain a harmonious and co-operative relationship between the Employer and the Employees covered by the Union’s certification Number CR-05173.*
- (b) To provide an amicable method of settling differences or grievances, which, may arise between the Employer and Employees.*
- (c) To promote the mutual interests of the Employer and the Employees.*

- **From the collective agreement between The Community Health Services (Saskatoon) Association Limited and the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 974, April 1, 2017 – March 31, 2022:**

*The parties to the agreement recognize that the Employer objectives include service to First Nations, Métis and other ethnic communities and the promotion, preservation, protection and interpretation of their histories, languages, cultures and artistic heritages using ways of knowing and understanding.*

- **From the Collective Agreement between Anduhyaun Inc. and the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 4232, September 16, 2016 – August 31, 2020:**

*1.03 The Union acknowledges that the mandate of – Anduhyaun is to support Aboriginal women and their children in their efforts to maintain their cultural identity, their self-esteem, and their economic, physical and spiritual wellbeing. Both parties endeavour to promote the understanding of and respect for Aboriginal traditional cultural values in their relationship with each other and with the employees covered by this Agreement.*

- **From the Collective Agreement between School District No. 92 (Nisga’a) and the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 2298, July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2022:**

*WHEREAS the School Trustees of School District No. 92 (NISGA’A) have been given a mandate from the people of the Nass via the Nisga’a Tribal Council to maintain Nisga’a control of Nisga’a Education; and*

*WHEREAS the Union shares the philosophy of Nisga’a control of Nisga’a Education; and*

*WHEREAS it is the desire of the Board and the Union:*

1. to provide an effective, efficient and ongoing education system for the District;
2. to maintain and improve harmonious relations;
3. to recognize the mutual value of joint discussions;
4. to promote the morale, well-being and security of the employees.

## 5 | INDIGENOUS RIGHTS AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

For some Indigenous members and Indigenous employers, it may be important to know that their rights cannot be overridden by language in a collective agreement. A non-derogation clause regarding Indigenous rights can be a protection that recognizes that the language in a collective agreement does not trump existing Indigenous and constitutional rights. The following language is taken from a collective agreement where the place of employment is located on federally recognized reserve lands – the Oneida Nation of the Thames.

- **From the collective agreement between Oneida Nation of the Thames Emergency Medical Services and the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 35.6, January 30, 2019 – March 31, 2021:**

### 3.04 Non Derogation

*For greater certainty, nothing in this agreement shall be construed so as to abrogate or derogate from the protection provided for existing Aboriginal or treaty rights of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada by the recognition and affirmation of those rights in section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.*

Hiring Indigenous people should not be considered discrimination against any other group. At the same time, Indigenous people should be protected from discrimination in the hiring process. Make sure to list Indigenous people as an equity-seeking group, and consider also including Two-Spirit people. Two-Spirit is a term that is preferred by some Indigenous people who identify as LGBTQ2+.

- **From the collective agreement between the University of Ottawa and the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 2626, September 1, 2019 – August 21, 2022:**

### No Discrimination

10.5 \* With respect to the interpretation of Article 10.1 and certain words used in the article, the Parties agree as follows:

a) "Sex/Gender/Gender Identity" includes but is not limited to the right to equal treatment without discrimination, intimidation, interference, restriction or coercion because an Employee (i) is pregnant or may become pregnant, (ii) is breastfeeding or (iii) is not cisgender (including but not limited to: transgender, non-binary, genderqueer, genderfluid, agender, intersex, Two-Spirit, etc.) where cisgender refers to a person whose assigned sex at birth matches with their gender identity.

- **From the collective agreement between Mohawk Council of Akwesasne and the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 5458, April 1, 2021 – March 31, 2024:**

*ARTICLE 4 – NO DISCRIMINATION OR HARASSMENT*

*4.1 There shall be no discrimination with respect to any employee or individual in or outside the bargaining unit for any reason prohibited by the Canadian Human Rights Act, as amended, by reason of race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, family status, disability, political affiliation and conviction for which a pardon has been granted, or membership/activities with the Union. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Parties acknowledge the Employer has a preference for hiring members of the Mohawks of Akwesasne and other recognized members of other Indigenous peoples, Métis and Inuit, and that hiring and promotion practices that conform to this preference do not constitute a violation of this Article, nor does funding provided exclusively to natives of the Akwesasne community constitute discrimination within the meaning of this Article.*

## **6 | REPRESENTATIVE WORKFORCE**

The principle behind employment equity or a representative workforce program is simple: the proportion of any particular group in the broader community should be reflected in the percentage of that group in the workplace, at all levels and sectors of employment.

For example, if 13 per cent of the population of a province is Indigenous, at least 13 per cent of the workforce of that province should include Indigenous workers. Indigenous people should have opportunities in all occupations and all sectors, especially in the public sector.

Indigenous workers have been historically excluded from the workforce, due to harmful colonialist policies and government legislation. Reconciliation calls on the labour movement to challenge and rectify this. This is particularly crucial for workplaces that service a predominantly Indigenous community, but also for all workplaces and communities across Canada.

- **From the collective agreement between All Nations Healing Hospital and the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 3404, April 1, 2017 – March 31, 2022:**

*23.04 Representative Workforce*

*a) Principle*

*The principle of a representative workforce for Aboriginal workers is where Aboriginal people are employed in all classifications and at all levels in proportion to their representation in the working age population within the community or the provincial population.*

The parties will address proactive processes that support a representational workforce which shall include but not be limited to identifying employment opportunities, education and training, and preparing workplaces.

#### b) Workforce Representation

The parties agree to the principle of a representative workforce for Aboriginal workers. The parties agree to charge the Employment Strategy Committee with the responsibility to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate pro-active initiatives designed to ensure Aboriginal People are present in all occupations in their proportion to the provincial working population.

Therefore, when hiring new employees, the Aboriginal representative principle shall be applied, providing there are qualified Aboriginal applicants for the vacancy.

- **From the collective agreement between Ryerson University and the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 233, July 2018 – June 30, 2022:**

#### Letter of Understanding

The University and CUPE Local 233 have a strong commitment to fostering equity, diversity and inclusion within its community, including a strategic vision to Indigenize Ryerson and increasing the number of Indigenous employees.

The Parties recognize that although there is a higher number of Indigenous employees in Facilities Management and Development (approximately 3%), where the number of Indigenous employees overall at Ryerson is not representative of the provincial population, which is about 8% as of March 1, 2018. The Truth and Reconciliation at Ryerson University, Community Consultation Summary Report calls for the University to increase the number of Indigenous employees at Ryerson.

The Parties agree that moving forward:

1. External postings shall reflect an open call to Indigenous applicants and will invite applicants to self-identify if they wish to be considered.
2. Each Director within Facilities Management and Development will indicate to their hiring manager(s) the needs and commitment in relation to this initiative.
3. The Parties agree to establish a standing item at the Union Management Committee meetings to review the current collective agreement and implementation of policies and procedures currently in the Agreement for recruitment, hiring and retention of Indigenous CUPE 233 Bargaining Unit employees. Where appropriate, joint non-binding recommendations to further Indigenize the Bargaining Unit will be submitted to the Assistant Vice-President, Facilities Management & Development and the President of CUPE Local 233.

## 7 | TARGETED HIRING AND JOB POSTING

When targeting Indigenous workers in hiring, there can be issues that arise regarding seniority. However, seniority can be respected while also making provisions to ensure that Indigenous people are hired into positions that are designated for them.

There are many reasons for targeted hiring. For example, the funding source for the positions might specify that the positions be filled by Indigenous workers; and/or the clients of the services provided are largely Indigenous. In addition to this, hiring notices can explicitly state the preference for hiring Indigenous people. This invites Indigenous workers to know that they are welcome in the positions, and that they will be supported across the workplace.

- **From the collective agreement between the Community Health Services (Saskatoon) Association Limited and the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 974, April 1, 2017 – March 31, 2022:**

*Letter of Understanding*

*Re: Designation of Aboriginal Positions at the Westside Clinic*

*In a Letter of Understanding dated April 1, 2001 between CUPE 974 and C.H.S.A. the parties agreed to designate specific permanent positions at the Westside Clinic to aboriginal people, and articulated in that letter of understanding is the methodology that would be used to recruit for and employ these positions.*

*The parties acknowledge that the understandings reached in that letter will continue to govern the designation of positions at the Westside Clinic to aboriginal people until such time as another letter of understanding concerning the designation of positions at the Westside Clinic to aboriginal persons and the procedures of recruitment for them is arrived at.*

*The positions governed by that letter of understanding included five (5) permanent positions at the time, namely:*

*One (1) Receptionist; two (2) Registered Nurses, of which one (1) would be a Community Health Nurse BSN (Outreach), one (1) Native Health Worker (Outreach), and one (1) Counsellor [sic] II position.*

*The positions noted above have since evolved and their titles changed through the Joint Job Evaluation process. At present, the same five (5) positions remain designated, but are titled as follows (as of April 1, 2001):*

*One (1) Westside Clinical Office Assistant Reception;*

*Two (2) Registered Nurses, including one (1) Community Clinic Outreach Nurse, Westside; and one (1) Registered Nurse, Westside;*

*One (1) Westside Aboriginal Community Worker; and*

*One (1) Counsellor II, General Service Westside.*

- **From the collective agreement between Board of Education of School District No. 50 (Haida Gwaii) and the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 2020, July 1, 2019 – June 30 2022:**

*Letter of Understanding*

*RE: Indigenous Education Hiring for Positions Funded Through Indigenous Targeted Funds*

*The Collective Agreement is applicable to all employees covered by this Letter of Understanding.*

*This Letter of Understanding applies to the following positions funded from Indigenous Targeted funding:*

- 1. First Nations Resource Worker.*
- 2. Haida Education Administrative Assistant.*

*Postings for these two positions will include a caveat stating:*

*“Preference will be given to qualified applicants with Indigenous ancestry and knowledge of the Haida Nations.”*

*The selection of candidates for these positions will be done by an interview/selection subcommittee of the Haida Education Committee.*

*The selection of the above noted positions will not be subject to the Articles 13.01 and 13.04 in the Collective Agreement.*

*When a vacancy occurs in any classification covered by this Agreement, or in the event of a new position being created, notice thereof shall be posted for five (5) working days and a copy shall be sent to the President of the Union.*

*First preference will be given to Union members with regular seniority and of Indigenous ancestry and knowledge of the Haida Nation.*

*Second preference will be given to Union members with recognized secondary seniority of Indigenous ancestry and knowledge of the Haida Nations.*

- **From the collective agreement between McMaster University and the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 3906, expiring August 31, 2022:**

*Criteria for Hiring*

*(d) For vacancies posted in accordance with Article 13.02(i) in the Indigenous Studies Program and courses with primarily Indigenous-related content, preference will be given to qualified applicants who self-identify in their application as First Nations, Métis and Inuit persons.*

- **From the collective agreement between University of Saskatchewan and the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 3287, September 1, 2019 – August 31, 2021:**

*16.06 SUNTEP Program*

*In accordance with the objectives of SUNTEP as set out in the Agreement between the Gabriel*

Dumont Institute, the Province of Saskatchewan, and the University of Saskatchewan and the affirmative action initiatives of the Gabriel Dumont Institute, the parties agree that there may be special considerations in selecting sessional lecturers to teach courses for SUNTEP providing the applicants selected have qualifications comparable to those required to teach the same courses as part of the regular program or special qualifications required to teach the courses in that program. Accordingly, the Employer shall retain the right to override the normal right of first refusal provisions in order to appoint aboriginal persons to teach courses for SUNTEP. The Employer will advise the Union any time an appointment is made under this affirmative action program.

- **From the collective agreement between Oneida Nation of the Thames Emergency Medical Services and the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 35.6, January 30, 2019 – March 31, 2021:**

#### 10.06 Job Posting

(d) i) In the selection of the successful candidate to any job posting (including promotions and staff transfers), where skills and qualifications are relatively equal between candidates, seniority shall govern.

ii) The filling of any part time or full time vacancy may include preference to aboriginal ancestry and, in particular, Oneida of the Thames ancestry, at the discretion of the employer, providing the candidate has the required skills and qualifications. This preference will not be applied against any person who is of non-aboriginal ancestry and who was employed as of the effective date of this first collective agreement.

- **From the Collective Agreement between Anduhyaun Inc. and the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 4232, September 16, 2016 – August 31, 2020:**

#### Letter of Understanding

RE: SPECIAL EMPLOYMENT

The Board of Directors of Anduhyaun Inc. has passed a resolution, set forth below, authorizing special hiring practices pursuant to the Ontario Human Rights Code. This resolution has been endorsed by the Union and is set forth below as a joint statement of the Agency and the Unions commitment to uphold the culturally based service mandate of the Agency.

1. Due to the nature of the organization's culturally based social services and based on our experience and the needs of our clients as well as feedback from clients, it is agreed that the organization must ensure, as best as possible, that all employees who serve clients directly be of Aboriginal descent.

2. Such preferential hiring is legally sanctioned and constitutes "Special Employment" for purposes of Section 24(1) (a) of the Ontario Human Rights Code.

3. Anduhyaun Inc., will consider interviewing and hiring non-Aboriginal candidates for such positions as noted in Section 1 above, but only in circumstances where it has been determined that no qualified Aboriginal candidates are available.

4. In the event that a non-Aboriginal person is the successful candidate, who will have direct contact with clients, such positions will be contractual for a period of one (1) year in order to maintain the organizations commitment to ensure the position is filled by a person with Aboriginal descent. For further clarity, in the event that a non-Aboriginal person is contracted for such a position, the

organization will continue to accept applications in order to determine if such position can be filled by a person of Aboriginal descent.

5. Contract employee's contracts can only be terminated as asset out in Section 3 of the Employment Contract.

6. Efforts to ensure employees are Aboriginal has been the practice of the organization since inception in 1973. This policy has been drafted to ensure that such practice remains in place.

## 8 | IN-SERVICE TRAINING FOR INDIGENOUS WORKERS

Indigenous workers should feel valued in the workplace. They should be prioritized in receiving training as part of a commitment to their professional development. Having access to workshops, professional development, and career path support is a great way to show that Indigenous workers are supported and appreciated. CUPE also provides offerings through Union Education that locals can consider.

- **From the collective agreement between Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations and the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 5430, April 1, 2017 – March 31, 2022:**

### *In-Service Training*

*The parties agree to facilitate educational opportunities which may include literacy training and career path counseling/planning.*

## 9 | CULTURAL SAFETY/INDIGENOUS AWARENESS TRAINING

As workers who deliver public services, it is important to be educated on Indigenous peoples' history, treaty rights, and Indigenous law. Training like this should be delivered using an anti-racist, human rights, and cultural safety framework. Cultural safety training for public employees is one of the 94 calls to action made by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Locals can negotiate clauses with employers to receive training on Indigenous issues and reconciliation, and promote culturally safe practices at work and in delivering public services. This training should be directed especially to non-Indigenous workers.

**From the collective agreement between Eatonia Oasis Living and the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 4174, April 1, 2020 – March 31, 2021:**

*Workplace Preparation*

*The parties agree to implement educational opportunities for all Employees to deal with misconceptions and dispel myths about Aboriginal People. This will include enhanced orientation sessions for new employees to ensure a better understanding of respectful work practices to achieve a harassment free environment.*

## **10 | LEAVE OF ABSENCE CLAUSES**

This section accounts for various cultural reasons that Indigenous workers may need leave. It includes language on bereavement and leave for voting in Band elections, cultural events and other observances. Many of the examples are from workplaces where there are a large number of Indigenous CUPE members. As part of reconciliation, CUPE locals should negotiate this language regardless of how many Indigenous members they have or are aware of.

### **10.1 | BEREAVEMENT**

Many Indigenous communities have expanded definitions of family that include family members that wouldn't be considered for bereavement leave under European, colonial values. Examples of this are family gained through Indigenous cultural adoption and Indigenous Elders. Indigenous communities also may have culturally specific mourning ceremonies to attend. The following collective agreements include bereavement language that recognizes Indigenous kinship structures and Indigenous ceremonial mourning duties.

- **From the collective agreement between the University of Northern British Columbia and the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 3799, July 1, 2014 – July 30, 2019:**

*24.02 Bereavement Leave*

*In the case of bereavement in the immediate family, an employee, not on leave of absence without pay in excess of twenty (20) calendar days, shall be entitled to bereavement leave at his/her regular rate of pay. Such leave shall normally not exceed an employee's average weekly hours of work in a normal work week as defined in Article 18.01;*

*(b) Immediate family is defined as an employee's parent, step-parent, spouse, common-law spouse, same sex partner, child, step-child, brother, sister, father-in-law, mother-in-law, grandparent, grandchild, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, and any other relative permanently residing in the employee's household or with whom the employee permanently resides;*

(c) An employee may request and shall be granted additional bereavement leave without pay for any additional period that they wish to be absent from work. This may include established cultural practices such as headstone moving, tribal feast, special family bereavement and Clan or Tribal requests related to bereavement.

- **From the collective agreement between School District No. 92 (Nisga'a) and the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 2298, July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2022:**

#### 15.04 Compassionate Leave

Upon request, the Board shall grant an employee five (5) days leave of absence without loss of pay at the death of a parent, spouse, child(ren), brother, sister, bother-in-law, sister-in-law, grandparents, grandchildren, mother-in-law, father-in-law, aunt, uncle, nephew or niece. Family as defined in this article shall include adopted family according to well established cultural practices, providing that Nisga'a citizenship is established with Nisga'a Lisims government.

The Board shall grant an employee an additional two (2) days leave of absence without pay for travel purposes should travel one way exceed two-hundred kilometers (200 kms) beyond the employee's place of employment.

An employee may be granted compassionate leave without pay by the Board, on application, in the case of death of someone not included above.

Where a person employed by the Board is required to administer burial responsibilities, then that person shall be granted reasonable leave of absence without pay to carry out those responsibilities. Any leave under this Article over five (5) days must have Board or Designate approval.

#### T'il luulak' Leave

An employee who is of the T'il luulak' Wilp may be granted leave up to five (5) days without pay to carry out burial responsibilities.

#### Xts'ihln'iinak'amskw Leave

An employee who has to attend a Wo'om pdeekhl to Xts'ihln'iinak'amskw may be granted one (1) day off without pay to fulfil their responsibilities.

- **From the collective agreement between EPCOR Water Prairies Inc. and the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 7667, December 29, 2018 – December 17, 2022:**

#### 19.03\* Bereavement Leave

A permanent employee shall be granted time off with pay, at the regular rate of pay, for the position to which such employee is permanently appointed or serving a required probationary period thereof, for the purpose of making arrangements for, or attending, a funeral in accordance with the following:

When death occurs in the employee's immediate family – that is, current spouse, parent, or child, the employee, on request, shall be excused for five (5) regularly scheduled consecutive working days without loss of pay at the employee's regular rate of pay.

For the loss of a grandparent, grandchild, guardian, parent of current spouse, Indigenous Elder\*, brother, sister, step brother, step sister, step parent, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, grandparent of current spouse, or a related dependent of the employee, the employee, on request, shall be excused for three (3) regularly scheduled consecutive working days without loss of pay at the employee's regular rate of pay.

\*Note: An Indigenous Elder is designated as such by their Indigenous community.

a) In addition to the above noted bereavement leave, a permanent employee may be granted additional unpaid bereavement leave past the day of the funeral if there is a demonstrated need.

b) One-half (1/2) day's leave with pay to attend funeral services of persons related more distantly than those listed in article 19.03 shall be granted upon request. Upon demonstrating the need for additional time due to extenuating circumstances, this bereavement leave shall be extended up to one (1) day.

c) The word "funeral" when used in respect of bereavement leave shall include the initial memorial service which is held in conjunction with a cremation.

d) The term "extenuating circumstances" may include travelling time, shift schedule conflicts, or such other reasons which may be applicable to the individual circumstance.

e) A permanent employee on leave of absence other than annual vacation leave shall not be eligible for bereavement leave.

## **10.2 | LEAVE FOR VOTING IN BAND ELECTIONS OR REFERENDUM; LEAVE FOR PUBLIC DUTIES**

Indigenous workers may require leave for voting in Indigenous elections. Indigenous governance structures vary and some require in-person voting with no option to mail-in or otherwise cast a ballot or vote. In other cases, Indigenous members may be involved in Indigenous governance and require leave for those duties.

- **From the collective agreement between Community Social Services Employers' Association (CSSEA) and Community Social Services Bargaining Association of Unions (CSSBA), April 1, 2019 – March 31, 2022.**

### *20.3 Full-Time Union or Public Duties*

*The Employer will grant, on written request, leave of absence without pay:*

*(a) for employees to seek election in a municipal, provincial, federal, First Nation or other Indigenous election, for a maximum period of 90 days;*

(b) for employees selected for a paid position with the Union or anybody to which the Union is affiliated for a period of up to one year and will be renewed upon request of the Union;

(c) for employees elected to a public office for a maximum period of five years;

(d) for an employee elected to a full-time position of the Union or anybody to which the Union is affiliated, the leave will be for the period of the term and will be renewed upon request of the Union;

(e) for an employee appointed or elected to a full-time position with a First Nation or other Indigenous organization, the leave will be for the period of the term and will be renewed upon request of the Union.

#### 20.5 Elections

Any employee eligible to vote in a federal, provincial, municipal, First Nation or other Indigenous election or a referendum will have four consecutive clear hours during the hours in which the polls are open in which to cast their ballot.

- **From the collective agreement between Mohawk Council of Akwesasne and the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 5458, April 1, 2021 – March 31, 2024:**

#### 20.09 Political Leave without Pay

Political Leave shall be granted in accordance with the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne Election Law, as amended from time to time. The employees who are elected to the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne shall retain their seniority but shall not accrue further seniority during the first thirty-six (36) months as an elected chief.

- **From the collective agreement between School District No. 92 (Nisga'a) and the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 2298, July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2022:**

#### 15.05 Other Leave

(a) An employee who provides proof that they are required or requested to attend the Nisga'a Lisims Special Assembly as a representative of their village or the Union shall be granted leave of absence without pay provided application is made to the Board or Designate in advance. A maximum of two (2) employees shall be granted such leave at the same time. This leave will be granted on a first requested, first approved basis.

### 10.3 | LEAVE FOR CULTURAL EVENTS

Indigenous communities have many varying cultural traditions and events that span the year. Collective agreements should include language to respect these different traditions by recognizing known, specific events, or be general enough that Indigenous members could negotiate leave for such events.

- **From the collective agreement between All Nations Healing Hospital and the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 3404, April 1, 2017 – March 31, 2022:**

*Accommodation of Spiritual or Cultural Observances*

*The parties agree to make every reasonable effort to accommodate an Employee in order for them to attend or participate in spiritual or cultural observances required by faith or culture.*

- **From the collective agreement between School District No. 92 (Nisga'a) and the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 2298, July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2022:**

*Other Leave*

*(b) Such leave shall also be granted for a maximum of two (2) days to attend events for Hoobiye, Indigenous Day, or to attend the Nisga'a Lisims Special Assembly as an observer. A maximum of two (2) employees in the district shall be granted such leave at the same time*

*(c) All other Wilp responsibilities will be considered on an individual basis.*

- **From the collective agreement between Indigenous Women's Healing Centre Inc. and the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 2348, June 1, 2019 – May 31 2021:**

*21.13 Ceremonial Leave*

*Employees wishing to take part in a traditional Indigenous ceremony(ies) such as a Sundance or healing ceremony, shall be allowed up to four (4) paid working days leave per calendar year, provided that such leave is authorized by the Employer in advance.*

## **10.4 | LEAVE FOR OBSERVANCES**

Not all important dates and observances are official holidays. This is an example of collective agreement language that allows any employee to observe an important event as part of their work duties or to arrange for a substitution so that they may attend the events at the workplace. This includes several important events that are Indigenous themed.

- **From the collective agreement between McMaster University and the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 3906, expiring August 31, 2022:**

*19.11 Observances*

*Employees may attend the on-campus celebrations and/or commemoration(s) of:*

*National Day of Mourning*

*Remembrance Day*

*International Women's Day*

*National Aboriginal Day*

Montreal Massacre

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women

International Workers' Day

*With the approval of the Employment Supervisor(s), an employee may arrange to exchange their duties, or for their substitution, with or by a qualified person, in order to attend the on-campus commemoration(s). In most instances the date of the celebrations and/or commemoration(s) are known to employees well in advance, therefore the employee must notify their Employment Supervisor as early as possible before the celebrations about their intent to observe the celebration. In the event that no celebration or commemoration is held on-campus, employees may observe a minute of silence on the days listed above. Requests will not be unreasonably denied.*

## 11 | PAID HOLIDAYS

There are several Indigenous themed holidays that are observed across the country. Some collective agreements also recognize the right of the Band Council to declare a paid holiday. The holidays go by slightly varying names but the dates are similar: National Indigenous Day – June 21, Louis Riel Day – February 21, National Day for Truth and Reconciliation – September 30.

- **From the collective agreement between the Board of Education of Île-à-la-Crosse School Division No. 112 and the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 4607, January 1, 2019 – December 31, 2022:**

### 9.1 b) Paid Holidays

*Paid holiday pay will be paid in accordance with The Saskatchewan Employment Act. The following shall be observed as holidays with pay and any additional day(s) identified by the Board:*

*New Year's Day*

*Thanksgiving Day*

*Family Day*

*Remembrance Day*

*Good Friday*

*Louis Riel Day (only if it falls on a business day)*

*Victoria Day*

*Christmas Day*

*Labour Day*

The Government of Canada established a new paid, public holiday for federally regulated workplaces called the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. This day is observed on September 30. Most CUPE locals are governed by provincial laws and therefore the federal holiday does not apply to them. In this case, CUPE locals should negotiate this day as a public holiday to acknowledge the harms of colonization and the residential school system in Canada. For more

language on this holiday, see [Bargaining Language for the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation](#).

- **From the collective agreement between Indigenous Women’s Healing Centre Inc. and the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 2348, June 1, 2019 – May 31 2021:**

18.01 *The Employer and the Union recognize the following as paid holidays:*

<i>New Year’s Day</i>	<i>Jour de Louis Riel Day</i>
<i>Good Friday</i>	<i>Easter Monday</i>
<i>Victoria Day</i>	<i>Aboriginal Day-June 21</i>
<i>Canada Day</i>	<i>Terry Fox Day</i>
<i>Labour Day</i>	<i>Truth and Reconciliation Day-Sept. 30</i>
<i>Thanksgiving Day</i>	<i>Remembrance Day</i>
<i>Christmas Day</i>	<i>Boxing Day</i>

*and any other day proclaimed as a holiday by the Federal or Provincial Governments.*

In some cases, locals have already achieved language in their collective agreements which recognizes possible future days declared by federal and provincial governments.

- **From the collective agreement between Community Social Services Employers’ Association (CSSEA) and Community Social Services Bargaining Association of Unions (CSSBA), April 1, 2019 – March 31, 2022.**

17.1 *Paid Holidays*

*The Employer recognizes the following as paid holidays:*

<i>New Year’s Day</i>	<i>British Columbia Day</i>
<i>Family Day</i>	<i>Labour Day</i>
<i>Good Friday</i>	<i>Thanksgiving Day</i>
<i>Easter Monday</i>	<i>Remembrance Day</i>
<i>Victoria Day</i>	<i>Christmas Day</i>
<i>Canada Day</i>	<i>Boxing Day</i>

*Any other holiday proclaimed by the federal or provincial governments will also be a paid holiday.*

*Employees shall be entitled to National Indigenous Peoples Day in lieu of Easter Monday and/or Boxing Day if their worksite is open.*

There are some collective agreements that have language which gives the power of declaring a holiday to the Band Council. The language acknowledges the sovereignty of a Band Council to declare holidays on their own lands.

- **From the collective agreement between Mohawk Council of Akwesasne and the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 5458, April 1, 2021 – March 31, 2024:**

24.01 *The following are days recognized as Statutory Paid Holidays under this Agreement and entitlement and payment shall be in accordance with the terms and conditions of the Canada Labour Code, as amended:*

<i>New Year Day</i>	<i>Good Friday</i>	<i>Victoria Day</i>
<i>Canada Day</i>	<i>Labour Day</i>	<i>Remembrance Day</i>
<i>Canadian Thanksgiving</i>	<i>Christmas Day</i>	<i>National Aboriginal Day</i>
<i>Boxing Day</i>		

24.02 *Employees working on the Statutory Holidays listed above shall be paid two and one-half (2.5) times the regular straight time pay, commencing from twelve (12) midnight within the twenty-four (24) hour period of the Statutory Paid Holiday.*

24.03 *A Full-Time employee whose day of rest falls on a Statutory Holiday will be compensated at the regular straight time rate of pay for the total number of hours in their normal shift scheduled.*

24.04 (a) *Holidays coinciding with a Saturday are observed on the preceding Friday. Those coinciding with a Sunday are observed on the following Monday.*

(b) *Where an Employer's rest day falls on the Monday or Friday to be observed as a Holiday, the employee shall be compensated at straight time.*

24.05 (a) *The following are days recognized as Council Designated Holidays under this Agreement:*

*Jake Fire Day   Civic Holiday   Family Day   Easter Monday*

(b) *An employee whose day of rest falls on a Council Designated Holiday, will be remunerated at the regular straight time rate, for the total number of hours worked in their normal shift.*

(c) *Employees who work on a Council Designated Holiday shall be paid one and one half (1 1/2) times their regular straight time hourly rate of pay for all hours worked on the Council Designated Holiday.*

Other collective agreements include language that allow any staff to celebrate National Indigenous Peoples Day as part of their dedication to reconciliation and in acknowledging the Indigenous territories. This is important because National Indigenous Peoples Day is not a provincially or federally recognized holiday, so it is up to unions to include this language in the collective agreement.

- **From the collective agreement between United Way of the Lower Mainland and the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 1760, May 1, 2018 – April 30, 2020:**

#### 21.05 Cultural Holidays

*In recognition of the organization's commitment to multiculturalism, and recognizing the cultural diversity amongst the staff, the Employer agrees that:*

*a) Staff who want to celebrate different cultural holidays than already outlined in this agreement, can request to work all or part of the period during Christmas and New Year.*

*In recognition of the Employer's commitment to its Statement of Reconciliation and in recognition of the traditional land of Indigenous peoples on which the Employer conducts its operations, this clause will apply to any staff who want to celebrate National Indigenous Peoples Day.*

*b) Staff making this request, shall work in their regular positions during this time period and will not be considered part of the reduced workforce as outlined in clause 21.01.*

*c) Compensation for working during this time shall be on a day for day basis.*

*d) Requests to work during this period must be made in writing to the Department Head, stating how many days will be worked and which cultural days will be taken off in lieu no later than March 31<sup>st</sup> of each year.*

*e) Requests shall not be unreasonably denied.*

## 12 | HOURS OF WORK AND PAYMENT OF WAGES

There are many Indigenous workers or workplaces located in rural or remote areas that require travel to the place of employment. These workers should not be penalized for not being able to get to the workplace because of hazardous travel conditions. Additionally, a travel benefit can be offered for travel to and from a workplace that is rural or remote. These provisions make work more reachable for Indigenous workers.

- **From the collective agreement between Board of Education of School District No. 50 (Haida Gwaii) and the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 2020, July 1, 2019 – June 30 2022:**

#### 15.12 Hazardous Road Conditions/Road Closures – On-Island

*An employee who is delayed in coming to work due to hazardous road conditions (including road closure) or has been advised not to report or who is sent home, shall not suffer loss of earnings for the day(s). In the event that a staff member is unable to report to their school that is open, that staff member will endeavour to report to the nearest school. Employees travelling on the ferry*

between Skidegate Landing and Alliford Bay are covered by this Article. When an employee reports to an alternate work site they shall be assigned duties within their regular classification.

#### 15.13 Hazardous Road Conditions/Road Closures – Off-Island

An employee who is off Island for approved career development or medical leave and is delayed returning to work due to hazardous road conditions (including road closure, flight and ferry delays and cancellations), shall not suffer loss of earnings for a maximum of five (5) days, inclusive of approved medical leave. The earnings for the additional days for the delay shall be deducted from the employee's accumulated sick leave for employees away for medical reasons.

#### 22.12 Off-Island Travel Allowance

The Employer shall pay an off-island travel allowance equivalent to four hundred dollars (\$400.00) per month to all regular employees during the months in which they receive wages. This amount will be deducted from gross earnings and credited to the employee as a travel benefit.

#### 22.13 Off-Island Travel Benefit

Effective January 1, 2002, the Employer shall pay an Off-Island Travel Benefit of twenty-five dollars (\$25.00) per month, pro-rated for part-time employees.

[The agreed to costing shall not exceed point seventy-eight per cent (.78%) of the salaries based on salaries at January 1, 2002].

## 13 | INDIGENOUS PENSION PLAN

Some CUPE locals in Quebec contribute to a defined benefit pension plan, known as the [Native Benefits Plan \(NBP\)](#), which involves 86 employers, including Band Councils, Tribal Councils and other community organizations. The plan has more than 5000 members and approximately \$500 million under management, which makes it the largest First Nations defined benefits pension plan in Canada. Provisions pertaining to participation in this plan appear in the collective agreement.

- **From the collective agreement between the Council of the Nation Anishnabe of Lac Simon and the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 5153, April 1, 2015 – December 31, 2016:**

#### ARTICLE 25 PENSION PLAN

The Council shall maintain in force for the entire duration of the collective agreement all currently applicable provisions concerning the pension plan (Native Benefits Plan (NBP). The plan cannot be amended without the agreement of both parties.

Employees must join the pension plan. The employer is required to disclose group insurance information to employees as soon as they become eligible for the plan. (translation)

- **From the collective agreement between the Huronne-Wendat Nation Council and the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 4613, April 1, 2020 – March 31, 2025:**

#### ARTICLE 26 PENSION PLAN

26.01 All employees eligible as per the rules of the Native Benefits Plan (NBP) shall benefit from the plan in accordance with applicable rules.

All eligible regular employees who have completed their probationary period as per article 4.01 (q) must join the plan.

The plan cannot be amended without the agreement of both parties, and the costs of the plan shall be adjusted in accordance with the agreements that have been reached.

26.02 The employer and employee contributions are covered in the NBP Regulations.

26.03 On request, the employer shall provide the union with a copy of the NBP Regulations along with any amendments or any relevant documents. (translation)

## **14 | INCLUDING ELDERS AT GRIEVANCES AND OTHER MEETINGS WITH THE EMPLOYER**

The grievance process and meetings with the employer can be challenging for our members. Indigenous members may experience culturally-based miscommunications and conflicts within that context. This is why it is important that Indigenous members have access to processes that reflect their values. Indigenous employees may prefer that an Indigenous Elder be present in the grievance process or in meetings related to matters regarding Indigenous employees. This is because Indigenous Elders are knowledge holders that are highly respected and often sought out for their advice in important matters.

In addition, many Indigenous communities have processes of conflict resolution that are based on their worldviews, and it is important to take this into consideration within grievance procedures and meetings. These clauses should be developed with guidance by Indigenous people to ensure that they are accurate and appropriate. For how to work with Indigenous Elders, please see [Walking the Talk: A practical guide to reconciliation for CUPE locals](#).

It is also important to note that Indigenous workers experience workplace racism and this is a serious health and safety issue. Racism should be considered a factor throughout the complaint process and grievance hearings, much like racism

against Black, and Indigenous people is considered in the justice system. These processes should always be informed with an anti-racism and trauma-informed lens.

- **From the collective agreement between Eatonia Oasis Living and the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 4174, April 1, 2020 – March 31, 2021:**

*Elders*

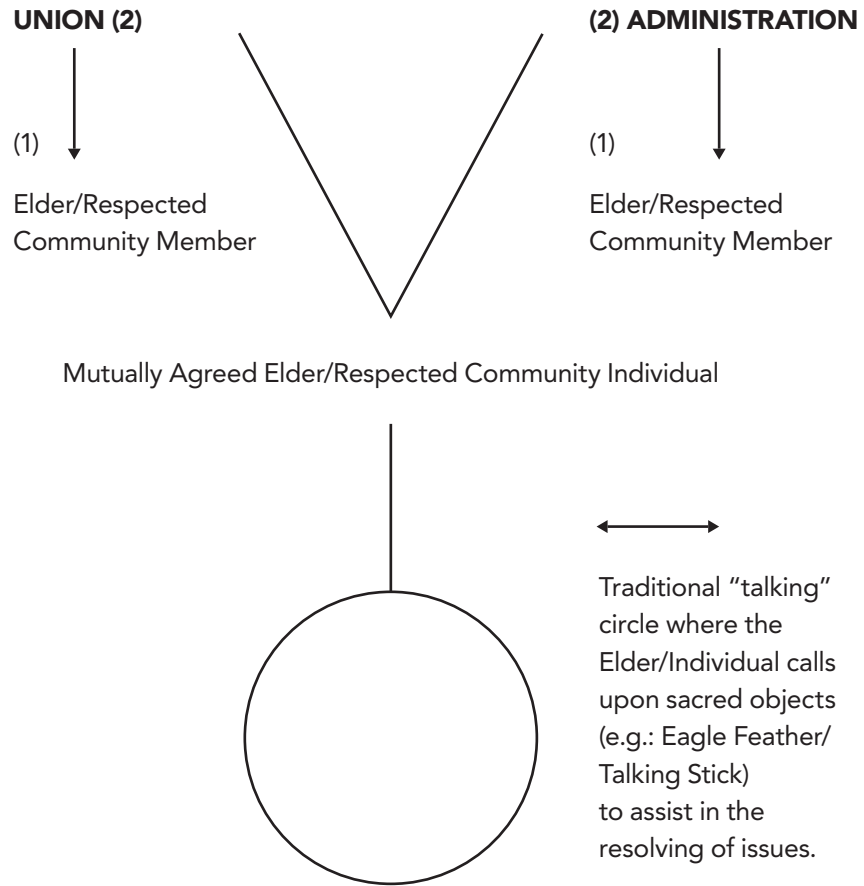
*At the request of the employee, an Elder will be present when dealing with issues affecting Aboriginal employees.*

- **From the collective agreement between Anduhyaun Inc. and the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 4232, September 16, 2016 – August 31, 2020:**

*7.03 Traditional Dispute Resolution*

*On a purely voluntary basis, individual grievors may choose to pursue grievances, following the Complaint Stage in Article 7.02, by utilizing the Traditional Dispute Resolution model attached as Schedule "B" to the Agreement. It is understood that if the grievance is not resolved through the Traditional Dispute Resolution process, it may be carried through the remainder of the normal Grievance Procedure and the time limits contained therein shall only apply upon the completion of the Traditional Dispute Resolution process/meeting. It is further understood that all grievance settlements achieved through the Traditional Dispute Resolution process will be without prejudice or precedent and shall not be relied upon in any proceeding as evidence of the proper interpretation of the Collective Agreement. A request to utilize the Traditional Dispute Model must be submitted to the Executive Director (or designate) within ten (10) business days. The Traditional Dispute Resolution process is available to all members of Local 4232.*

Schedule "B"  
Traditional Aboriginal Dispute Resolution

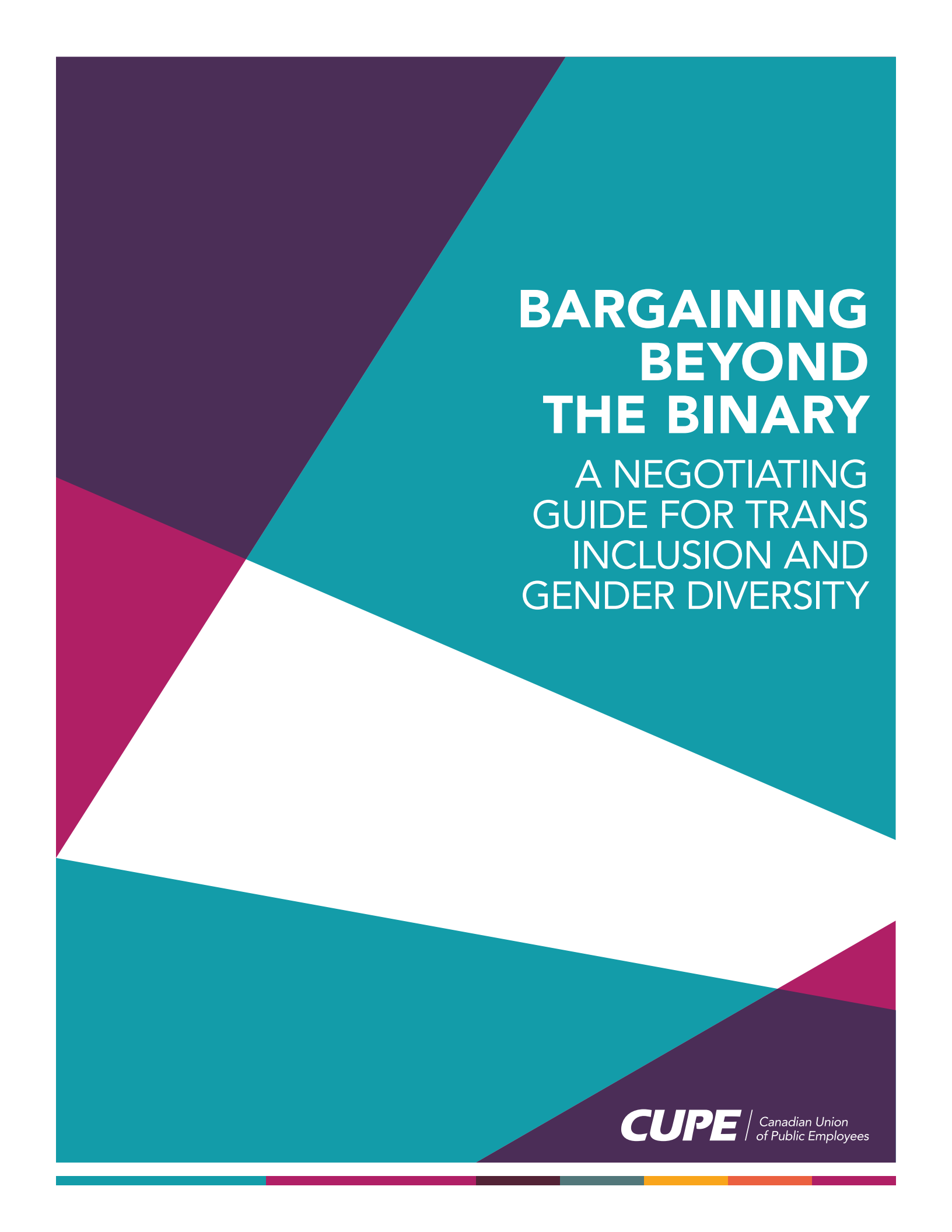








***CUPE***



# BARGAINING BEYOND THE BINARY

A NEGOTIATING  
GUIDE FOR TRANS  
INCLUSION AND  
GENDER DIVERSITY

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CUPE National Human Rights Branch  
July 2022





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# INTRODUCTION

Trans and gender diverse people are part of our union. We all have a responsibility to ensure our collective agreements protect every worker's rights, and that all workers have the support they need. To do this, issues affecting trans and gender diverse workers must be brought to the bargaining table.

This guide is for all CUPE bargaining teams. It can help cis workers (workers who aren't trans) new to gender diversity better understand issues affecting trans and gender diverse people at work. For bargaining teams with trans and gender diverse members or who are very familiar with gender diversity, it offers ideas for translating trans advocacy to collective agreement language. For everyone, the sample clauses from CUPE locals that have already negotiated trans inclusive language offer useful templates for bargaining teams to develop their own proposals.

Much of the progress CUPE locals have achieved on gender diversity and trans inclusion is the result of the tireless activism of Two-Spirit, trans, non-binary and gender diverse members. CUPE local executives and bargaining teams don't have to wait, however, for a Two-Spirit, trans or non-binary worker to come out or be hired to bargain these issues. Even locals that don't have any trans members (that they know of) should ensure protections are in place now, so necessary supports are already there when gender diverse workers come out or enter the workplace.

## This guide covers:

- Gender diversity and the workplace.
- How the union can negotiate better working conditions for Two-Spirit, trans, non-binary and other gender diverse members.
- Sample collective agreement language.
- Resources on transitioning at work and other gender diversity workplace issues.

Locals and bargaining committees who are looking to learn more about trans inclusion and gender diversity should take CUPE's workshop on safer spaces for Two-Spirit, trans and non-binary members. The workshop is available as a union-only session or can be presented jointly to union members and management.

Additional resources on gender diversity can be found at [cupe.ca/gender-diversity](https://cupe.ca/gender-diversity).



## TERMINOLOGY

People use many terms to refer to their gender identity and expression. Some common terms relating to gender diversity are defined below.

Throughout this guide we use “trans and gender diverse” to refer to workers who might be affected by transphobia, transmisogyny, and other forms of discrimination because their gender expression or identity doesn’t fit society’s biased assumptions and expectations about gender. This includes but is not limited to workers who are Two-Spirit, non-binary, trans and/or genderqueer.

### 2SLGBTQI+

An acronym referring to the Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex community. The + is an inclusive and intentional way of representing the various identities and experiences of the sexually and gender diverse community, including for example asexual people and non-binary people. While the acronym used to begin with LGBT, more recently many are putting the 2S at the start to acknowledge that Two-Spirit people were the first sexual and gender minority people in North America.

### Cisgender (cis)

A person whose gender identity aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth. For example, someone who was assigned female at birth (it’s a girl!) and identifies as a woman.

### Cisnormativity

The prevalent idea that people’s gender expressions should “match” the sex they were assigned at birth. It manifests through assuming that everyone fits neatly into the categories of man and woman and that people assigned male or female will look and behave in certain ways.

### Deadnaming

When someone, intentionally or not, refers to a trans person by the name they used before they came out or transitioned. You may also hear it described as referring to someone by their “birth name” or their “given name.”

### Gender diversity

The wide range of gender identities and gender expressions.

### Gender expression

The way we present our gender to others through our clothing, speech, mannerisms and other actions. A person’s gender expression may be feminine, masculine or androgynous, among many other possibilities. Not every Two-Spirit, trans, or non-binary person feels safe to express their true gender. Many people who are not trans might still have gender expressions that do not stereotypically correspond to their gender identity (for example, a butch woman).



## Gender identity

One's internal sense of their own gender. Examples of gender identities include, but are not limited to, man, woman, Two-Spirit, non-binary, gender fluid and genderqueer.

## Non-binary

A person whose gender identity does not fall within the binary of "man" or "woman."

## Trans or transgender

An umbrella term referring to a person whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. For example, someone who was assigned male at birth ("it's a boy!") who identifies as a woman, or someone who was assigned female at birth ("it's a girl!") and identifies as non-binary.

## Transition

Social and/or medical changes that some trans people pursue to affirm their gender identity. Some people change their name, pronouns, or appearance. Some opt for medically supportive treatments such as hormone therapy or gender affirmation surgeries. Each person has a different process; there is no "one way" to transition, and no universal goal or endpoint.

## Transphobia

The aversion to, fear, hatred, or intolerance of trans people. Like other prejudices, it is based on stereotypes and misconceptions and is expressed along a continuum of behaviour, from deadnaming and repeated misgendering to shunning, aggression, and murder.

## Two-Spirit

An umbrella term that originated in the prairies and that is used by some North American Indigenous people to refer to a sense of having both masculine and feminine spirits, or to people who perform traditional ceremonial roles of both men and women. Not all Indigenous people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, trans, non-binary or intersex identify as Two-Spirit, but only Indigenous people can be Two-Spirit. Some Indigenous people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, trans etc. might refer to themselves as "Indigiqueer" instead of, or in addition to, Two-Spirit.

For more on inclusive terminology, see the Canadian Labour Congress' *Workers in Transition Guide*, The 519's *Creating Authentic Spaces Toolkit*, and the Government of Canada Translation Bureau's *Gender and Sexual Diversity Glossary*.



## BARGAINING CONCERNS OF TRANS AND GENDER DIVERSE WORKERS

Trans and gender diverse workers are concerned about many of the same issues as cis workers, such as wages, benefits and health and safety. However, trans and gender diverse workers may face unique barriers to accessing health care, parental benefits and other rights bargained into collective agreements, and are more likely to experience exclusion, discrimination, harassment, and violence in the workplace. Trans workers are more likely than cis workers to be refused employment or promotions, stuck in precarious jobs, paid less, and forced out of a job. Because of this, there are particular benefits, leaves, and health and safety issues that are especially important to many trans and gender diverse workers.

Bargaining priorities that can help address the specific concerns of trans and gender diverse workers include:

- benefits coverage for gender affirming care;
- effective anti-harassment policies;
- access to safe washrooms and change rooms; and
- paid leave for accessing gender affirming care.

Employers often fail to provide a safe environment by:

- ignoring gender-based harassment and transphobia;
- violating confidentiality;
- not using workers' correct names or pronouns;
- refusing to include certain gender affirming medical procedures or devices in health benefits;
- maintaining gendered dress codes or refusing choice in uniforms; and
- not providing safe washrooms and change rooms.

Outside of the workplace, trans and gender diverse workers may face stigmatization, denial of services, unsafe services, isolation, harassment, violence and discrimination. Trans and gender diverse workers who are women, Indigenous, Black, and/or living with disabilities face additional layers of discrimination, harassment and violence.

Unions can play an important role in supporting members, challenging transphobia and ensuring employers provide work environments free of discrimination and harassment. Collective bargaining is one key way CUPE locals can accomplish this.

## THE LEGAL CONTEXT FOR GENDER DIVERSITY PROTECTIONS

In Canada, discrimination and harassment on the basis of gender identity and/or gender expression are against the law. Many collective agreements also include “no discrimination” clauses that explicitly include gender identity and gender expression.

The *Canadian Human Rights Act* and provincial human rights legislation also prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender identity or gender expression.

By law, employers must provide a work environment that is free from harassment and violence. Workers who are targeted for their gender identity and/or gender expression are covered by those laws, which include occupational health and safety, employment standards, workers compensation, labour relations and criminal law. See CUPE’s *Stop Harassment: A guide for CUPE locals* and our *Violence Prevention Kit* for more information.

Laws and rules on discrimination, harassment and violence differ by jurisdiction and change over time. Talk to your servicing representative for current information.





# ADDRESSING GENDER DIVERSITY IN BARGAINING

## HARASSMENT AND DISCRIMINATION

Many collective agreements include gender identity and gender expression in prohibited grounds of discrimination and harassment.

### Sample language:

*CUPE 1281-15 and Mayworks Festival of Working People and the Arts  
October 1, 2018 - September 1, 2021*

#### **Article 5 – No Harassment**

5.05

Gender/Transgender Harassment shall be defined as offensive comments and/or actions, and/or exclusion from that to which a person(s) would otherwise have a right or privilege, which demean and belittle an individual(s) and/or cause personal humiliation, on the basis of sexual orientation or gender. Gender/Transgender Harassment also includes discrimination, alienation, intimidation, and silencing or the differential treatment of a person as a result of their gender identity.

*CUPE 2626 and the University of Ottawa  
September 1, 2019 - August 31, 2022*

#### **Article 10 – No Discrimination**

10.1

- e) gender identity, gender expression, and gender presentation

10.5

With respect to the interpretation of Article 10.1 and certain words used in the article, the Parties agree as follows:

- a) “Sex/Gender/Gender Identity” includes but is not limited to the right to equal treatment without discrimination, intimidation, interference, restriction or coercion because an Employee (i) is pregnant or may become pregnant, (ii) is breastfeeding or (iii) is not cisgender (including but not limited to: transgender, non-binary, genderqueer, gender-fluid, agender, intersex, Two-Spirit, etc.) where cisgender refers to a person whose assigned sex at birth matches with their gender identity.

CUPE 3902, Unit 1 and the University of Toronto  
January 1, 2018 - December 31, 2020

#### Article 4.01 No Discrimination

(a) The Employer and the Union agree that there shall be no discrimination, interference, restriction, coercion, or harassment exercised or practised in any matter concerning the application of the provisions of this Agreement by reason of age, race, creed, colour, national origin, language of origin, ethnic origin, ancestry, citizenship, religious or political affiliation or belief, sex, gender, marital or parental status, number of dependants, **sexual orientation, identity or expression, gender identity and expression**, personal appearance, mode of dress, place of residence, academic school of thought, record of offences unless the employee's record of offences is a reasonable and bona fide qualification because of the nature of employment, disability (including AIDS/HIV status), **physical attributes** nor by reason of the employee's non-membership, membership or activity in the Union.

*(Emphasis added)*

(c) The Employer and the Union recognize that an individual has the right to determine their own gender identity. This includes the right to determine their own pronouns.





## GENDER INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

Many collective agreements refer to “gender neutral” or “gender inclusive” language. A smaller number state explicitly that “gender” refers to all genders, not only the binary of male/female and man/woman.

Starting in the 1970s, CUPE negotiated “gender neutral” language to address the discriminatory practice where all workers were referred to using masculine pronouns (he/him/his). Some agreements continue to refer to the gender binary (he/she), but truly gender inclusive language uses a gender inclusive pronoun (they) or term (for example, employee).

### Sample language:

*CUPE 2348-50 and United Way Winnipeg  
June 1, 2019 - May 31, 2022*

#### **Article 2.04**

Whenever the gender-neutral (they/them) appears in this agreement it shall also mean all genders.

*CUPE 2626 and the University of Ottawa  
September 1, 2019 - August 31, 2022*

#### **Article 1.1**

In this Agreement, the pronouns “they/them/theirs” are used to denote gender neutral persons both singular and plural.

Employer databases and correspondence should also be gender inclusive. Many employer systems only include two categories for workers to identify (male/female) and/or only two sets of honorifics in correspondence: Ms/Mrs or Mr.

CUPE 4600 negotiated with the employer to begin changing those systems in its most recent collective agreement:

*CUPE 4600 (Unit 2) and Carleton University  
September 1, 2019 - August 31, 2022*

#### **Memorandum of Agreement**

RE: Right to Determining Gender Pronouns

The University will make best efforts to update relevant systems to be able to reflect employees’ pronouns and pronoun changes within the term of this Agreement.

## INCLUSIVE DESCRIPTIONS OF PARENT, FAMILY AND OTHER GROUPS

References to gender elsewhere in your local's collective agreement should also remove gender binary language. For example, bereavement leave should refer to "spouse" and "partner" instead of "husband/wife," and "sibling" instead of "sister/brother." When referring to parental leave, parents should be referred to in gender inclusive ways. For example, use "birthing parent" or "pregnant employee" instead of "mother."

### Sample language:

*CUPE 3902, Unit 1 at the University of Toronto  
January 1, 2018 - December 31, 2020*

#### **20:07 Non-Birth Parent Leave**

Upon the birth or adoption of a child, a non-birth parent shall be entitled to up to one (1) week without loss of pay within six (6) weeks of the birth of the employee's child, or the coming of the child into the care, custody and control of a parent for the first time. Such requests shall be made as far in advance as possible. For clarity, this provision is available to any non-birth parent.

#### **20:08 Bereavement Leave**

The University will grant up to three (3) consecutive days leave from scheduled contact hours per session without loss of pay in the event of the death of an employee's spouse, partner, child, grandchild, parent, sibling, or grandparent, or for the death of a person whose relationship is not defined above, the impact of which is comparable to that of the immediate family (e.g. a close friend). For clarity, the foregoing is inclusive of step and in-law relations and relations regardless of gender.





## INCLUSIVE HEALTH BENEFITS

Not all trans and gender diverse people will seek medical interventions to better express their genders. For those who do, however, gender affirming procedures and devices are medically necessary and often life-saving. They can include surgeries, hormone replacement therapy, prosthetic devices, electrolysis (hair removal) and other care. Extended health benefits should cover drugs, devices and procedures not covered by provincial or territorial health plans. In exceptional circumstances where some items or procedures aren't available in an extended health plan, employers have provided "health spending accounts" to cover these costs. (Another option is negotiating a fund to help with the costs of transitioning. See sample language on this in the next section).

### Sample language:

*CUPE 5269 and Children's Aid Society of Algoma  
April 1, 2021 - March 31, 2024*

#### Appendix A:

##### HEALTH SPENDING ACCOUNT

You can use your Health Spending Account to cover expenses that are eligible medical and dental expenses under the Income Tax Act (Canada) and that are not paid (or not paid in full) by any other private or government plan. These include eligible expenses incurred outside your province of residence.

ELIGIBLE EXPENSES INCLUDE (BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO)  
THE ITEMS LISTED BELOW:

#### Devices, supplies and equipment:

- Artificial Eyes
- Artificial Limbs
- ...
- Breast prosthesis
- ...

- **Wigs**

Other:

- Ambulance fees for transportation
- Laboratory, radiological or other diagnostic procedures or services
- ...
- **Electrolysis or hair removal performed by a licensed technician**
- ...

*(Incomplete list. Emphasis added to highlight relevant items.)*

## GENDER AFFIRMING LEAVE

Because there are few clinics and physicians who perform gender affirming surgeries in Canada, many people who require surgeries have to travel for the procedures (especially if they live outside of Montreal, Toronto or Vancouver). Even those who don't need to travel often need significant recovery time, depending on the procedure.

Some workers therefore might need leave to access gender affirming surgeries. Others might need leave to receive psychological care or to take time before they are comfortable coming out at work.

### Sample language:

*CUPE 3902, Unit 1 at the University of Toronto  
January 1, 2018 - December 31, 2020*

#### **Article 20.11 Sick Leave**

Serious Illness, Surgery and Hospitalization

- (d) An employee who provides a certificate from a licensed physician confirming that the employee is unable to attend work and/or perform the employee's duties due to a serious illness, required surgery and/or hospitalization, and/or course of treatment may be granted up to four (4) months of paid leave at the employee's regular rate of pay during the period of the employee's appointment. For clarity, this includes leaves pertaining to gender reassignment.

**Note:** CUPE 3902 won "gender reassignment surgery leave" in 2012. In 2015, this language was changed to include gender reassignment leave as part of the general sick leave in Article 20.11. The local did not want to identify trans leave as something separate or different from other health issues. In addition, the leave was not limited solely to "surgery" but included "course of treatment," and the paid leave increased from two to four months. It was part of a series of changes to language in this collective agreement on gender identity and expression, as noted elsewhere in this guide.





*Local 3903 Unit 2 and York University  
September 1, 2017 - August 31, 2020*

17.22

Transgender Transition Leave

An employee who provides a certificate from a medical practitioner confirming that the employee requires a leave of absence in order to undergo the medical procedure(s) related to a physical change from one gender to another will suffer no reduction in pay for up to eight-thirty-fifths of the period of her Appointment Contract(s).

15.23

Trans Fund

Effective September 1, 2011 the \$10,000 allocated to this Fund will be increased to \$20,000. Effective September 1, 2014 \$30,000 will be allocated to this Fund. Allocations from the Fund will be made by the Union.

Effective September 1, 2018, \$40,000 will be allocated to this Fund annually. Allocations from the Fund will be made by the Union based upon pre-established and posted guidelines.

An annual report on the disbursement of monies shall be submitted in writing to the Labour/Management Committee.

*CUPE 1936-29 and QMUNITY  
January 1, 2020 - March 31, 2023*

**Article 20 – Special and Other Leave**

20.9

Trans-affirming Care

An employee who requires a leave of absence in order to access physical or psychological trans-affirming care (including medical or non-medical procedure(s)) shall be granted a leave with pay for up to fifteen (15) days per calendar year. Such leave shall be taken, where applicable, prior to accessing sick leave.



*CUPE 4948 and Toronto Public Library  
January 1, 2020 - December 31, 2024*

**Article 25.21 Trans-Affirming Care Leave**

- a. An employee may request a leave of absence under this article in order for the employee to access physical or psychological trans-affirming care (including medical or non-medical procedure(s)). Full-time employees shall receive up to seventy (70) hours of paid time at the employee's regular rate annually under this article, and Part-time employees and Page employees shall receive up to forty-nine (49) hours of paid time at the employee's regular rate annually under this article. The Board reserves the right to request medical or other documentation to support the request for leave under this article.
- b. This paid leave can be taken as part days, full days, or periods of more than one (1) day. If an employee takes a part day leave, it will not be counted as a full day.
- c. The Board shall endeavor to protect the privacy and confidentiality of employees accessing trans-affirming care leave, including prohibiting anyone from sharing information about an employee's identity, orientation, or expression without the express permission of the individual.
- d. Employees on such leave shall be reinstated to their former position upon return from leave, or an equivalent alternate position.
- e. During the period of trans-affirming care leave, the Board shall pay the employer share of OMERS contributions unless the employee gives written notice before the leave begins of their choice not to pay their share. If the employee elects, before the leave begins, not to pay the member share of contributions, then the Board is not required to pay.
- f. During the period of trans-affirming care leave, the employee shall suffer no loss of benefits and shall continue to accrue seniority, vacation, and sick credits.
- g. When the leave entitlements under Article 25.21(b) have been exhausted, an employee may use other entitlements in accordance with the collective agreement.



## GENDER INCLUSIVE FACILITIES

Often trans and gender diverse workers are subjected to isolation or discrimination when accessing gendered washrooms or change rooms. Sometimes they might be refused access to the washroom or change room that corresponds with their gender. The right to access safe facilities can be enshrined in the collective agreement.

### Sample language:

*CUPE 416 and the City of Toronto  
January 1, 2016 - December 31, 2019*

#### **Article 6 – No Discrimination or Harassment**

6.05

All work locations that are staffed shall contain washroom facilities available to employees. This does not preclude the use of gender neutral washrooms which are clearly signed and can be securely locked from the inside so as to afford the occupant privacy. Such locks shall also have the capacity to be unlocked from the outside for the sole purpose of access that would not infringe employee privacy or in the case of an emergency. Where the Union brings to management's attention specific concerns regarding washrooms or independent change rooms, the City shall take the appropriate measures to remedy the concern.

*CUPE 2626 and the University of Ottawa  
September 1, 2019 - August 31, 2022*

#### **Article 25 – Provisions for Employees with Disabilities**

25.4

The Employer has a multi-year accessibility plan under the AODA that includes wheelchair-accessible and gender neutral facilities (including but not limited to bathrooms and change rooms). The Employer will regularly update the online university map which details the location of these facilities and ensure that the map is accessible on their website.

## UNIFORMS AND GROOMING

Uniforms and rules about clothing, hair and other aspects of appearance often reinforce the gender binary. Rules that require employees to wear uniforms that correspond with a specific gender or the sex they were assigned at birth should be removed.

CUPE 4098, representing workers at Air Canada Rouge, recently used a human rights complaint to force the employer to change clothing and grooming rules that restricted and even injured members. As one example, the requirements included specific shoes for women flight attendants that injured their feet. In addition to footwear options, members won an end to sexist makeup rules. On the surface, the union was challenging sexism and not the assumptions and biases of cisnormativity, (the fact that uniform and cosmetics rules were built on the notion that women had to look a certain way). In effect though, removing gendered elements of the clothing and grooming policy was a win on gender expression as well as sex discrimination.

CUPE 4029, representing flight attendants at Calm Air, also recently had the uniform policy changed to be gender neutral. The uniform clause now reads:

*CUPE 4029 and Calm Air International LP  
May 1, 2018 - April 30, 2022*

### 5.06 UNIFORMS

#### (a) INITIAL UNIFORM ENTITLEMENT

(i) New Hire Flight Attendants will be provided with an initial uniform entitlement as follows:

ARTICLE	NUMBER
Shirts	5
Shell	1
Cardigan	1
Blazer	1
Dress or additional Blazer	1
Serving Vest	1
Belt	1
Pants	2 (1 skirt and 1 pant upon request)
Uniform Scarf or Tie	2
Winter Scarf	1
Jacket (Seasonal: Spring/Fall & Rain)	1
Satchel	1
Roller Bag	1
Tie Pin	Upon request
Winter Parka	1

Language emphasizing that the worker gets to choose which uniform elements are best for them is important.

**Sample language:**

*CUPE 1001 and the University of Windsor  
August 1, 2016 - July 21, 2022*

**Article 23 – Clothing**

23:01 (a)

4. All Service Staff (General Cafeteria): The Employer will supply three uniforms annually of the Employer's choice of colour and style to correspond with the decor of the outlet the Employee is working in. The Uniform will consist of three tops, three pants or skirts (employee's choice), three aprons and one hat.





## EMPLOYMENT EQUITY

Employment equity refers to proactive measures to increase the representation of workers from communities who have been historically underrepresented in the workplace. Trans workers face more employment discrimination than cis workers. They are likely underrepresented in most workplaces. Trans and gender diverse workers should be included in employment equity efforts.

### Sample language:

*CUPE 1281-18 and OPIRG (Ontario Public Interest Research Group)  
March 1, 2014 - February 28, 2018*

#### **Article 13 – Hiring, Promotions and Staff Changes**

##### 13.2.3

All hiring notices will include the following:

OPIRG welcomes the contributions that individuals from marginalized communities bring to our organization, and invites aboriginal people, people of colour, poor and working-class people and those on social assistance, women, gays, lesbians, bisexuals, queer-oriented people; transgender, transsexual, intersex and two-spirit people; single parents, members of ethnic minorities, immigrants, people from non-academic backgrounds and people with disabilities to apply. We encourage applicants to describe the contributions and experiences they would bring to the OPIRG organization in their cover letter. All applicants are asked for a brief statement on their views of power and oppression.

*CUPE 2484-24 and Brookhaven Child Care Centre  
January 1, 2016 - December 31, 2018*

#### **Letter of Understanding #8 Employment Equity**

The Employer and the Union agree to co-operate in developing, implementing and monitoring an Employment Equity Program covering employees of the Centre. All components of the program will be jointly developed between the Employer and the Union.

The intent of the program is to identify and implement plans to remove any barriers that may exist, and to develop a plan to correct any barriers that create disadvantages for persons from the groups set out below in accessing employment or any rights under the Collective Agreement. This will include the identification of unintentional systemic barriers.

The designated groups include: Aboriginal/Indigenous people, Racialized people, LGBTQ and Transgender persons, Persons with disabilities and Women.



*CUPE 3913 (Unit 2) and the University of Guelph  
September 1, 2016 - August 31, 2019*

### **Article 11 Postings and Appointments**

#### 11.04 Selection Process

- (c) A Selection Committee must be established for all work assignment competitions. The Selection Committee, when established, must be composed of, at minimum, three people with knowledge, experience, and expertise, of which at least one shall be a designated group member (i.e., member of an equity-seeking group, which may include women, racialized people, members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer communities, aboriginal people, or persons with disabilities).

In a recent trend, some post-secondary employers are expanding anti-discrimination employment measures to 2SLGBTQI+ workers. Thanks to activism by the Canadian Association of University Teachers, post-secondary institutions are now required to include 2SLGBTQI+ workers in their Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Action plans in order to receive Canada Research Chair funding.<sup>1</sup>

## **OTHER SECTIONS OF THE COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT**

Employer obligations around privacy and confidentiality are critical when it comes to protecting and strengthening the rights of gender diverse workers. Trans workers might be required to provide the employer with confidential identity information such as their deadname for payroll or insurance purposes, for example. They are sometimes also required to disclose medical information in order to access benefits or leave.

Employers' duty to accommodate may be relevant given that trans and gender diverse workers might require access to special leave, medical benefits or facilities. This guide has focused on provisions that explicitly address gender diversity, but many other aspects of the collective agreement apply as well.

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<sup>1</sup> The Canadian Association of University Teachers won a human rights challenge in federal court in 2019. Among other changes, 2SLGBTQI+ communities must be included in post-secondary Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plans. [https://www.chairs-chaire.gc.ca/program-programme/2019\\_open\\_letter-eng.aspx](https://www.chairs-chaire.gc.ca/program-programme/2019_open_letter-eng.aspx)

## WAYS TO SUPPORT TRANS AND GENDER DIVERSE WORKERS BEYOND BARGAINING

Ask CUPE's Union Education Branch to deliver the workshop on safer spaces for Two-Spirit, trans and non-binary workers with your local.

Add the CUPE Code of Conduct to your bylaws.

Create a 2SLGBTQI+ committee and make space for Two-Spirit, trans and non-binary leaders.

Challenge transphobia and take actions like the ones listed in CUPE's *Allies on Gender Diversity*.

Support local Two-Spirit, trans and non-binary activist groups. Join an action. Invite a speaker. Hire an artist. Sponsor an event.

Read these and other resources on trans workplace issues:

*Canadian Labour Congress (2020) Workers in Transition Guide.*  
[canadianlabour.ca/workers-in-transition-guide/](https://canadianlabour.ca/workers-in-transition-guide/)

*The 519 (2017) Creating Authentic Spaces Toolkit.*  
[the519.org/education-training/training-resources/our-resources/creating-authentic-spaces](https://the519.org/education-training/training-resources/our-resources/creating-authentic-spaces)

Don't wait for a Two-Spirit, trans or non-binary member to come forward. Take these steps to make your union and workplace safer now. Members of all genders will gain trust in the union and help build safer spaces.



## SOURCES

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# BARGAINING LANGUAGE FOR THE NATIONAL DAY FOR TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

## THE NATIONAL DAY FOR TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

In June 2021, the Government of Canada passed legislation to create a new federal statutory holiday, the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (September 30). This means September 30 is now a paid holiday for workers in federally regulated sectors.

## WHAT IS THE HOLIDAY ABOUT?

September 30 is commonly known as Orange Shirt Day. The Orange Shirt Day movement began in 2013 to honour the survivors of residential schools and those who never returned home.

Orange Shirt Day was inspired by Phyllis Webstad's experiences at St. Joseph Mission Residential School, outside of Williams Lake, British Columbia. As a child, Phyllis was given an orange shirt by her grandmother to wear on her first day at the school. The shirt was promptly confiscated and destroyed by her teachers when she arrived. Phyllis' story has come to symbolize the colonial goal of residential schools to assimilate Indigenous peoples. September 30 was selected as a day of remembrance because it is in the fall, around the time when Indigenous children were forced to attend the institutions.

In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) recommended that a statutory holiday be established to commemorate the history and legacy of the residential school system. The new National Day for Truth and Reconciliation on September 30 has been established as part of the reconciliation process.

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Bargaining the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation into your collective agreement contributes to the reconciliation process and helps fulfill the TRC's calls to action.

CUPE's Strategic Directions, adopted by the membership at our National Convention, commit our union to truth and reconciliation. This includes recognizing the legacy of the residential school system and the ongoing harm that Canada's assimilationist policies and laws have on Indigenous peoples.

September 30 is a time to commemorate and reflect on the residential school system and the anti-Indigenous racism that allowed these institutions to exist. It is also a time for members to educate themselves and others on the legacy of residential schools and how anti-Indigenous racism continues to harm Indigenous people.

## BARGAINING THE NEW HOLIDAY

Most CUPE locals are under provincial jurisdiction. This means that September 30 will be considered a normal working day for most CUPE members.

- Some locals have already bargained the observation of September 30 into their collective agreements. Make sure to check your collective agreement language on paid holidays to see if it is already included.

- Some collective agreements contain language that lists current provincially and federally declared holidays, or that recognizes potential future holidays by federal or provincial governments. This language should be enforced to observe the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.
- If your collective agreement does not include any language that can be used to argue for the observance of September 30, then September 30 should be proposed as a paid holiday in future bargaining.

### Sample Language from Collective Agreements

Sample language from collective agreements regarding the holiday is provided below. For more information, ask your servicing representative.

From the Collective Agreement between Indigenous Women's Healing Centre Inc. and The Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 2348, June 1, 2019 – May 31, 2021 (emphasis not in the original):

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**18.01** The Employer and the Union recognize the following as paid holidays:

New Year's Day / Louis Riel Day / Good Friday / Easter Monday / Victoria Day / Aboriginal Day – June 21 / Canada Day / Terry Fox Day / Labour Day / **Truth and Reconciliation Day – Sept. 30** / Thanksgiving Day / Remembrance Day / Christmas Day / Boxing Day

**and any other day proclaimed as a holiday by the Federal or Provincial Governments.**



From the collective agreement between The Board of Governors of College of the Rockies and the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 2773, July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2022 (emphasis not in the original):

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**11.1** A regular, term, or auxiliary employee shall be entitled to the following statutory/general holidays or such other days as the College may designate to be taken in lieu of these holidays and/or **any other day proclaimed by the Government of Canada, the Government of British Columbia, or the College**, with pay:

New Year's Day / Family Day / Good Friday / Easter Monday / Victoria Day / Canada Day / B.C. Day / Labour Day / Thanksgiving Day / Remembrance Day / Christmas Day / Boxing Day

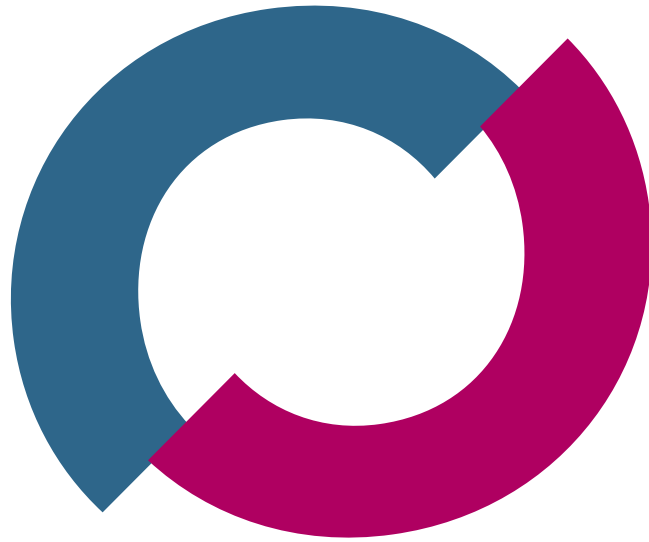
From the collective agreement between Regional Municipality of Durham and the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 1764, April 2018 - March 31, 2021 (emphasis not in the original):

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**20.01** Regular and probationary employees shall be entitled to the following paid holidays which shall also be granted to temporary employees:

New Year's Day / Family Day / Good Friday / Easter Monday / Victoria Day / Canada Day / Civic Holiday / Labour Day / Thanksgiving Day / Remembrance Day / Half day at Christmas Eve / Christmas Day / Boxing Day / Half day at New Year's Eve

**and any national or provincial holiday declared by the Federal Government or the Government of Ontario.**



# Domestic violence

and the workplace

A bargaining guide

CUPE Human Rights  
Updated 2023

# Emergency contacts if you or a friend need help

If you are concerned for your own or someone else's immediate safety, call 911.

If you or a friend need help, call a 24-hour domestic violence help line in your area.

Sheltersafe.ca provides a clickable map of shelters across Canada, including their phone numbers for around-the-clock support.

Shelters offer counselling and referral as well as a safe place to stay. They can help our members develop a safety plan for themselves and their children. Unions and employers can call on shelter workers for advice and training on domestic violence and its impacts at work. You do not need to stay at a shelter to access shelter services.

This document is for local union officers, bargaining committee members and other activists who want to prevent domestic violence at work and support members who face domestic violence.

It covers:

- The definition of domestic violence and how it's a workplace issue.
- How the union can negotiate protections regarding domestic violence related to the workplace.
- Examples of collective agreement language.
- A checklist for workplace policy and collective agreement language.

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# What is domestic violence?

Domestic violence is any form of violence between intimate partners. The violence can be physical, sexual, emotional, or psychological, including financial control, stalking and harassment. It can occur between intimate partners of any gender, who may or may not be married, common law, or living together. It can also continue to happen after a relationship has ended. It can be a single act of violence, or a number of acts that form a pattern of abuse.

Domestic violence affects people of all genders, but the vast majority of abusers are men and victims are women. Men abusing women partners tend to carry out more extreme, prolonged and systematic acts of violence. Women marginalized by poverty, racism, homophobia, transphobia and ableism face the greatest risk.

Domestic violence impacts the workplace. Many workers have faced domestic violence and/or are currently experiencing abuse. Unions have an important role to play in supporting members, challenging domestic violence and ensuring employers live up to their obligations. One way we can do this is by negotiating collective agreement language on domestic violence.

By law employers must provide a work environment that is free from harassment and violence, including domestic violence. Employers cannot guarantee that no harassment or violence will occur, but they must:

- Do everything they reasonably can to prevent harassment/violence.
- Protect workers, investigate, and follow up when they learn of incidents or risk of harm.

Occupational health and safety legislation in Alberta, British Columbia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Ontario, Quebec, and Yukon explicitly requires employers to take steps to prevent domestic violence from entering the workplace and address it when it does. Employers in federally regulated sectors also have a responsibility to address domestic violence under the *Canada Labour Code (Violence and Harassment)*.

Additionally, every province and territory in Canada except Alberta now offers paid leave for domestic, family and/or sexual violence. Alberta offers 10 unpaid days of leave. Federally regulated employers are required to offer five paid days and an additional five unpaid days.

Laws and rules on domestic violence, harassment and workplace violence differ by jurisdiction and change over time. Talk to your servicing representative for current information.

This document focuses on bargaining protections and interventions on domestic violence related to the workplace.

## How is domestic violence a workplace issue?

Domestic violence seriously affects the work lives and workplaces of those who experience it and those who perpetrate it. According to a 2014 survey jointly conducted by the Canadian Labour Congress and Western University's Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children:

- One in three workers in Canada has experienced domestic violence.
- Of those who have, 82% indicated that domestic violence negatively impacted their work and 8.5% lost a job because they were experiencing domestic violence.
- People in abusive relationships or with an ex-partner perpetrating violence against them often continue to experience abuse while at work through frequent phone calls, emails or text messages, and/or stalking at the workplace. Their partner or ex-partner might also contact their co-workers.
- This means co-workers, users/clients and others connected with either partner's workplaces are also at risk for injury or some other form of trauma.
- For people experiencing domestic violence, employment can provide income security, physical safety, self-esteem, social connectedness and mental respite, and it is a key pathway to leaving a violent relationship. It is critical that members' jobs are protected.

With more workers working from home, those in abusive relationships may face even greater risks of severe physical and psychological injury. Their partner can more easily monitor them and their communications, which makes it harder to seek help. They also might not get the same reprieve from abuse that going to a physical workplace could provide.

We need to challenge the view that domestic violence is a private matter. Many still believe domestic violence has nothing to do with the workplace. In fact, employers often inadvertently blame and even terminate the victim in response to the disruptions caused by their partner or ex-partner. Unions need to remind employers of the seriousness of domestic violence as a workplace issue and their legal obligations.

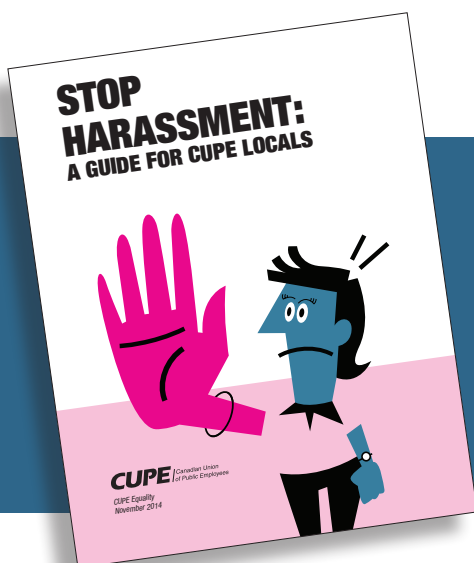
# How can domestic violence be addressed in the collective agreement?

Collective agreement language on domestic violence can vary from a general reference to specific protections.

Domestic violence at the workplace might also be covered by anti-discrimination, anti-harassment and anti-violence language in the collective agreement. Most collective agreements have an anti-discrimination clause. Many have language that prohibits harassment and violence related to the workplace. Domestic violence falls under that language if it occurs at the workplace or at functions and locations related to the workplace, even if it is not specifically listed. Naming domestic violence in those clauses will help raise awareness and make it easier to pursue a grievance.

Many collective agreements have language in other areas that relates to domestic violence, such as health and safety, and duty to accommodate.

This section describes ways to get specific provisions on domestic violence into your collective agreement, with examples from CUPE agreements.



The CUPE publication *Stop harassment: A guide for CUPE locals* provides a checklist for anti-harassment policies and collective agreement language. CUPE's *Violence Prevention Kit* also gives guidance on how to prevent, document and respond to incidences of workplace violence.

# 1

**Include domestic violence as an example of the types of violence covered by contract language on workplace violence.**

**CUPE 8-11 and Intercare Corporate Group  
Expiry June 30, 2024**

## **Article 8 – No Discrimination, Harassment or Violence**

### **8.02 Harassment & Violence**

The Employer and the Union recognize that an Employee should be able to work free from harassment and violence and will cooperate in the achievement of that objective.

Workplace harassment is defined as a single or repeated incident of objectionable or unwelcome conduct, comment, bullying, or action intended to intimidate, offend, degrade or humiliate a particular person or group.

Any discriminatory behaviour at or related to the workplace which denies an individual their dignity and respect or affects their job security by creating an intimidating, offensive, embarrassing, or humiliating work environment is considered to be personal harassment.

Workplace harassment is inappropriate, coercive, intimidating, embarrassing, or unwelcome behavior in the workplace by one person towards another, particularly if the behavior is adversely affecting, either directly or indirectly, the working conditions or work prospects of a staff member.

## **Workplace violence**

CUPE defines workplace violence as any incident in which an employee is threatened, assaulted or abused, causing physical or psychological harm. This includes threats, attempted or actual assault, application of force, verbal abuse or harassment.

Workplace is broadly defined. Violence and harassment can occur at functions and locations related to the workplace, such as conferences, training sessions, social gatherings, work travel, work email, a client's home or other work-related situations.

The perpetrator or target can be:

- A supervisor, manager, board member or other employer representative.
- A co-worker.
- A client, patient, student or parent.
- A contractor, community member, or other visitor or member of the public coming into the worksite.
- One person or a number of people.

For more information, see CUPE's *Preventing violence and harassment in the workplace guidelines*.

It can be committed verbally, in writing, including through email and over the internet, graphically, or physically. Examples of workplace harassment include, but are not limited to: gossiping, verbal, written or graphic abuse or threats; taunting or other forms of intimidation; unwelcome remarks or jokes about physical attributes, attire, age, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, family, religion, ethnic or national origin; practical jokes which cause undue embarrassment or humiliation; rumour mongering; unwelcome physical contact; physical assault.

Violence, **whether at a work site or work related**, is defined as the threatened, attempted, or actual conduct of a person that causes or is likely to cause physical or psychological injury or harm. It can include: a physical attack or aggression, threatening behaviour, verbal or written threats, **domestic violence** and/or sexual violence.

(Emphasis added)

## 2

### **Include paid domestic violence leave.**

A worker experiencing domestic violence often needs paid leave to access mental health support, attend court, move, or otherwise deal with the violence they are facing.

Every province and territory except Alberta provides between two and five days of paid leave for workers experiencing domestic violence. Federally regulated employers are also required to provide five days of paid domestic violence leave, and five additional unpaid days per calendar year. Many collective agreements either affirm the regulatory requirement or go over and above what is provided. For instance, Alberta provides 10 days of unpaid leave. Provincially regulated workers in Alberta should negotiate paid time. Here are two examples of this type of collective agreement language:

#### **CUPE 2768-02 and The Town of Centreville/Wareham/Trinity Expiry August 31, 2025**

##### **Article 22 – Leaves of Absence**

##### **22.08 Domestic Violence Leave**

The employer recognizes that employees sometimes face situations of violence or abuse in their personal lives that may affect their attendance or performance at work. For that reason, the employer agrees that an employee who is the victim in an abusive or violent situation will not be subject to discipline if the absence or performance issue can be linked to the abusive or violent situation directly affecting them or their immediate family living in their household. **An employee who is the victim of domestic violence or abuse will be**

**granted up to five (5) days of paid leave per year.** This leave will be in addition to existing leave entitlements and may be taken as consecutive or single days or as a fraction of a day, without prior approval. Employees are also entitled to up to twenty-six (26) additional weeks without pay which shall be taken in one (1) continuous period. All personal information concerning domestic violence will be kept confidential in line with relevant legislation. No information will be kept on an employee's personnel file without their express written permission.

(Emphasis added)

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**CUPE 5176 and Epic Opportunities Inc.  
Expiry March 31, 2022**

**Article 17 – Leaves of Absence**

**17.18 Domestic Violence Leave**

- (a) An employee who has been employed by the Employer for at least ninety (90) days, and who is the victim of domestic violence as referred to in the Employment Standards Code is entitled to both the following periods of domestic violence leave in each fifty-two (52) week period:
  - (i) leave of up to ten (10) days, which the employee may choose to take intermittently or in one continuous period;
  - (ii) leave of up to seventeen (17) weeks to be taken in one (1) continuous period.
- (b) Domestic violence leave may be taken for one (1) or more of the following purposes:
  - (i) to seek medical attention for the employee or the employee's child in respect of a physical or psychological injury or disability caused by the domestic violence;
  - (ii) to obtain services from a victim services organization;
  - (iii) to obtain psychological or other professional counselling;
  - (iv) to relocate temporarily or permanently;
  - (v) to seek legal or law enforcement assistance, including preparing for or participating in any civil or criminal legal proceeding related to or resulting from the domestic violence;
  - (vi) any other purpose prescribed in the Employment Standards Code or Regulations.
- (c) The first five (5) days of leave taken in a calendar year shall be paid. The remainder of any such leave (leave in excess of five [5] days in a calendar year) shall be unpaid.

# 3

**Negotiate stand-alone language that recognizes domestic violence as an important workplace concern and requires follow-up such as training, referrals and accommodation.**

## **CUPE 79-00 and The City of Toronto Expiry December 31, 2011**

### **Letter of Intent Domestic Violence**

Local 79 and the City acknowledge that domestic violence is a significant social problem that affects the health and well-being of employees.

Local 79 and the City agree to establish and implement within 90 days of ratification a jointly developed program to accommodate employees who are victims of domestic violence as follows:

- i. The parties agree to the joint development of a work plan to deal with issues related to communication, education and training of Stewards and Supervisory personnel as identified in the Summary of Agreed to Items dated July 9, 2004.
- ii. The parties agree to the joint development of a pamphlet and other communication materials related to resources and supports regarding Domestic violence to be distributed to employees.
- iii. The City agrees to provide the Union with copies of all materials to be posted on Union bulletin boards and/or distributed to employees.
- iv. The City agrees to investigate the establishment of web links and/or a website related to domestic violence on the City's Intranet and to report its findings to the joint committee within ninety (90) days of ratification.
- v. The City agrees that staff who are victims of domestic violence may utilize the City's Intranet and/or Internet sites to obtain and access information related to this issue.
- vi. The parties agree to joint Labour/Management training and to incorporate into existing training programs for supervisors and management staff information related to domestic violence to increase awareness, how it may impact the workplace and the resources available to deal with this issue.
- vii. The Union will provide training to stewards regarding resources and information related to domestic violence.

- viii. The City agrees that requests for sick leave, vacation, lieu time and any other paid leaves of absence submitted by employees in order for them to deal with issues related to domestic violence shall not be unreasonably denied.
- ix. The City agrees that requests for unpaid leaves of absence submitted by employees in order to deal with issues related to domestic violence shall not be unreasonably denied.
- x. The City agrees that consideration will be given when issues related to work performance could be directly attributed to issues of domestic violence. Any remedial action to be taken by Management may be held in abeyance for an agreed to time frame. The Union agrees that it will not raise issues related to timeliness when the City takes this action.

## 4

**Get occupational health and safety law on domestic violence written into the collective agreement.**

### **CUPE 799-01 and The City of Quinte West Expiry December 31, 2025**

#### **Article 22 – Safety**

22.07 Domestic Violence – If the Employer becomes aware, or ought reasonably to be aware, that domestic violence that would likely expose a worker to physical injury may occur in the workplace, the Employer shall take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances for the protection of the worker (OHS Act S. 32.0.4)

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### **CUPE 79-06 and Toronto Community Housing Corporation Expiry December 31, 2019**

#### **Letter of Intent – DOMESTIC VIOLENCE / WORKPLACE VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT**

- a) Workplace Harassment and Violence: TCHC agrees to meet its legal obligations under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* with respect to violence and harassment in the workplace as established in TCHC’s Workplace Violence and Workplace Harassment Policy and Guidelines for Implementing Workplace Violence and Harassment Policy, Guidelines for Addressing Domestic Violence in TCHC & Subsidiaries Workplaces outlined in the policy section contained herein.

TCHC will provide employees with information and instruction that is appropriate based on the contents of established policy and program guidelines.

# 5

## Negotiate unpaid leave and protection from penalties related to work attendance or performance for workers experiencing domestic violence.

### **CUPE Air Transat Component and Air Transat Expiry October 31, 2021**

#### **13.09 Domestic violence**

The Company agrees to recognize that employees sometimes face situations of violence or abuse in their personal life that may affect their attendance or performance at work. For that reason, the Company and the Union agree once there is verification confirmed by a written note by a recognized professional (i.e. doctor, lawyer, registered counsellor), an employee who is in an abusive or violent situation will not be subject to discipline if the absence or performance can be linked to the abusive or violent situation. Absences which are not covered by sick leave or disability insurance will be granted as absent with permission without pay not to exceed 30 calendar days. Requests submitted under the terms of this Article will be treated as confidential by the Company and are subject to the terms of Article 16.04. Furthermore, the employee must inform the Company of their absence in accordance with the terms of Article 16.01.

**The union should not agree to a requirement that workers provide a written note or other proof of domestic violence. If the employer insists on proof, at minimum include “intake worker from a women’s shelter or other crisis service” in the list of “recognized professionals.”**

### **CUPE 2484-15 and Ferncliff Day Care and After School Group Expiry March 31, 2025**

#### **22.13 Domestic Violence**

The Employer agrees to recognize that employees sometimes face situations of violence or abuse in their personal lives that may affect their attendance or performance at work. For that reason, the Employer agrees that an employee who is in an abusive or violent situation will not be subject to discipline if the absence or performance issue can be linked to the abusive or violent situation. Absences, which are not covered by sick leave or disability insurance, will be granted as absent with permission without pay not to exceed two (2) months.

## What have other unions bargained on domestic violence?

Unifor negotiated a Women's Advocate program and now has over 400 women's advocates in workplaces across the country. The employer pays for training and office space for specialized union representatives who help women experiencing harassment or violence at work or in their personal lives. The advocates offer non-judgmental and confidential support, explain workplace and community options and help members navigate those systems. Advocates are trained to recognize signs of abuse, make referrals and work with the employer on a safety plan. Women facing violence are five times more likely to speak to someone they know, so peer advocates are key.

Unions in Australia and New Zealand have negotiated paid domestic violence leave (ranging from two days to unlimited leave), protection from adverse action and flexible work arrangements in collective agreements. UNISON, CUPE's sister union in the United Kingdom, has also negotiated special paid leave in a number of contracts.

In 2019, the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada negotiated 10 paid days of domestic violence leave, going beyond existing federal legislation.

## Privacy and confidentiality

Employers should disclose information only on a need-to-know basis to protect confidentiality while ensuring worker safety. Workers are often reluctant to disclose because of the stigma associated with domestic violence and the fear of gossip, not being believed, further violence from their partner, job loss and other negative outcomes. Perpetrators are often skilled at hiding and rationalizing their abusive behaviour. Inquiries must be made carefully, balancing safety and privacy.

Everyone must disclose information when there is a clear threat to safety. The union should ensure that employers provide mechanisms for workers to report incidents and risks of domestic violence. The union and employer should not disclose more personal information than is reasonably necessary to protect workers from injury. Information should be shared:

- in emergency situations,
- for threat assessment,
- for safety planning, and
- for the effective implementation of protective orders.

In these cases, privacy and confidentiality should be maintained as much as possible. This means sharing only necessary information, and only with those who need to know. All personal information concerning domestic violence should be kept confidential and no information should be kept on the employee's personnel file without their written permission.

## What else can the union do, outside of bargaining?

CUPE's resources on harassment and violence can help members learn about steps union representatives can take when a member comes to the union with concerns or the union learns of a domestic violence incident or hazard in another way.

Resources specific to domestic violence can be found on the Western University *Make It Our Business* website.

In addition to dealing with specific incidents and hazards, the union should train its officers and stewards to recognize the signs of domestic violence and challenge inappropriate behaviour. Invite a local shelter or crisis line worker to provide training. The Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children at Western University offers training for employers and workers/unions.

CUPE offers an education module on workplace violence that covers domestic violence. Domestic violence can also be addressed in CUPE's workshops on harassment and health and safety.

Establish an internal (union) anti-harassment policy, code of conduct and equality statement to promote a harassment-free union environment. Refer to CUPE's Code of Conduct and Equality Statement.

Distribute resources about domestic violence electronically if workers are working from home. Ensure all workers have options to communicate with their steward confidentially away from their home when it is safe to do so. If a worker has disclosed that they are facing abuse, you might want to establish a safety system or code word for them to indicate when they are safe to speak freely.

Write articles for your website or newsletter about domestic violence and the workplace, members' rights, and ways to support co-workers.

Team up with local community groups fighting domestic violence. For example, invite a speaker to a union event, sponsor a community event, or organize a joint action.

The union's actions on domestic violence send an important message. Members can be reluctant to come forward with concerns. Members who trust the union to challenge domestic violence and advocate for victims are more likely to come forward.

## If the person experiencing and the person perpetrating violence are both members

The union and the employer have particular responsibilities when both people in a relationship or former relationship work in the same workplace.

Most people who are abusive are capable of changing their behaviour with support. Firing a worker who is perpetrating abuse may actually make the abuse worse for their partner. However, in many situations, especially if the relationship has ended, the employer will likely need to:

- Ensure that the parties do not come into contact in the workplace by taking steps like scheduling them on different shifts or changing worksites.
- Prevent the perpetrator from using their position or work resources to get information on the victim, including their location.

This response may include a change of duties for one or both employees, or withdrawing the perpetrator's access to certain offices or equipment.

Both unions and employers should support behaviour change for workers who use abusive behaviour. You can call your local women's shelter to find out if there are services available in your community for people who use abusive behaviour. Services for perpetrators voluntarily seeking support exist in many communities in Canada. There are some regions where services are only available to people who have been arrested.

The union may need to take certain steps. As part of employer investigations where two members are involved, for example, the union should:

- Assign different union representatives for the complainant and respondent.
- Establish a "firewall" between them, ensuring that the two union representatives do not communicate about the complaint.



# Checklist for domestic violence at work contract language or policy

## Your collective agreement language and employer policy on domestic violence should at minimum:

- Define domestic violence. Domestic violence is any form of violence between intimate partners. The violence can be physical, sexual, emotional, or psychological abuse, including financial control, stalking and harassment. It can occur between intimate partners of any gender, who may or may not be married, common law, or living together. It can also continue to happen after a relationship has ended. It can be a single act of violence, or a number of acts that form a pattern of abuse.
- State the employer's responsibility to provide a workplace free of harassment and violence, including domestic violence. Refer to relevant health and safety, human rights and other legal obligations.
- State how the employer will prevent and address domestic violence related to the workplace. For example, the employer will:
  - Provide a work environment free of any form of harassment and violence.
  - Eliminate the hazards and control the risk factors for domestic violence related to the workplace.
  - Identify and train contact persons, including a management representative and a union representative.
  - Treat all complaints seriously and handle communication in a sensitive and confidential manner.
  - Deal with concerns immediately, whether or not a formal complaint has been made.
  - Provide a fair, timely and effective process for investigating and resolving incidents and concerns.
  - Encourage the reporting of unsafe situations.

- Conduct health and safety risk assessments and implement safety plans as required, working with specialists such as shelter or crisis line providers.
  - Provide workers who are targets of domestic violence with schedule and workload flexibility, a leave of absence, an advance of pay and other accommodations.
  - Provide affected workers with independent, confidential, paid counselling and referral to appropriate services.
  - Protect employees who disclose domestic violence from retaliation such as unfair discipline, involuntary leave, suspension or termination.
  - Commit to not disciplining or otherwise penalizing an employee whose absences or performance are related to domestic violence.
  - Challenge abusive behavior of perpetrators and offer them referral to treatment and other resources.
  - Inform the union, for example send the union all investigation reports.
  - Train supervisors and workers to recognize warning signs and risk factors, and to be able to respond safely and effectively, on an ongoing basis.
  - Inform supervisors and workers of the policy statement and/or contract language and steps taken.
- Require an annual review of the policy and its implementation.

**Beyond the basic protections and interventions listed above, the union can negotiate paid leave and employer-paid, union-appointed and trained anti-violence advocates (such as Unifor's Women's Advocates).**

**Ask your servicing representative for clarification and further advice.**

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***CUPE***



## Bargaining disability rights



The accommodation of workers with disabilities is a duty shared by the employer, the union, and the individual seeking the accommodation. It's an important right that helps keep workers in the workforce, even if they have a disability.



Your local union has a key role to play in supporting disability rights, including the right to be accommodated at work. Your union can take a number of steps to ensure that all members understand their workplace rights and employers' obligations relating to a disability.



### Preparing for bargaining

Consider: do the individuals on the bargaining committee reflect the makeup of the local membership? Is there someone on the bargaining committee with a disability that will be aware of, and able to bring forward disability-related concerns?

If no one on your committee has a disability, seek outside input or better yet, ask a member with a disability to join the committee.

Regarding contract language, consider:

- (a) Existing disability-related rights contained in human rights legislation;
- (b) Existing collective agreement benefits relative to ill health or disability;
- (c) Potential disability-related bargaining proposals to improve collective agreement protections.

### Workers with disabilities are protected under human rights legislation

Every jurisdiction in Canada has human rights legislation protecting workers from disability-related discrimination and providing them with the right to be accommodated.

Check out CUPE's factsheet  
*What is the duty to accommodate?*  
[cupe.ca/disability-rights](https://cupe.ca/disability-rights)

Even though the right to accommodation exists independent of any specific language in a collective agreement, it is important to have this right set out in a contract because it reminds employers of their duties under the law.

The contract is also where most union members look to understand their workplace rights, and including this right in the contract gives members access to grievance and arbitration procedures, which can be a quicker way of settling disputes.

Examples of rights that you already have, but that should be spelled out in the collective agreement include:

- (a) A comprehensive anti-discrimination clause stating that the employer intends to comply with their legal obligations under applicable human rights legislation;
- (b) Affirmation that a worker with a disability has the right to be free from disability-related discrimination at work, including the right to have his or her disability accommodated;
- (c) Affirmation that the union also has a legal obligation to accommodate and, if there is no viable alternative, may agree to waive or suspend a collective agreement provision in order to ensure that a member is accommodated;
- (d) Affirmation that the individual accommodation-seeker also has a legal obligation to bring his or her need for accommodation to the employer's attention, and to provide the employer with information regarding limitations imposed by the disability;
- (e) Affirmation that the duty to accommodate applies to all workers within the bargaining unit regardless of employee status or seniority.

## **Basic collective agreement benefits**

CUPE locals have bargained a range of basic rights and benefits related to disability for decades. They include:

- (a) Provisions for extended health benefits including drugs, medical aides, vision and dental care, hospital coverage, professional services and nursing home care;
- (b) Short-term sick leave provisions and long-term disability programs;
- (c) Seniority protection for members absent from work on sick leave, long-term disability, or for any disability-related reason;
- (d) Top ups on workers' compensation benefits.

These kinds of provisions benefit all CUPE members.

## **Further disability-related contract language**

In the event that a collective agreement already contains strong language in the areas highlighted above, there are other principles that could be negotiated to

ensure the protection of disability-related rights.

Examples include:

- (a) A clear procedure for all accommodation requests, with the union and the accommodation-seeking worker involved in all discussions and arrangements;
- (b) Duty to accommodate training for employers and members;
- (c) A statement affirming that the employers' duty to accommodate is ongoing over the course of a worker's work life;
- (d) A statement outlining the specific obligations on all three parties involved in the duty to accommodate and a statement of some of the principles relevant to that duty;
- (e) An expedited grievance process that would allow "failure to accommodate" grievances to proceed quickly, in order to reduce the negative impact on a worker who is away from work while the employer attempts to find an appropriate accommodation;

- (f) A statement affirming that there is a very broad scope of arrangements and accommodations that an employer might be expected to facilitate, with examples.

While employers and members are generally familiar with some accommodations, like returning workers to work following a disability-related leave in a graduated way, or rearranging certain tasks, they are often not aware of the broad range of possible accommodations.

## Representing our members fairly

Bargaining language to enhance disability rights is a great way to make gains at the table that benefit all members, particularly when monetary gains may not be a viable option.

Disabilities can happen to anyone at any time. This is an equality-seeking group that you might become a member of tomorrow!

CUPE offers training on the duty to accommodate to help members understand their rights and responsibilities, and to support other members seeking accommodations. Find out more about training at [cupe.ca/union-education](http://cupe.ca/union-education).

## Showing our mettle



For more information  
[cupe.ca/disability-rights](http://cupe.ca/disability-rights)

# CUPE: HIV and AIDS Bargaining checklist

The HIV and AIDS bargaining checklist is a resource tool for local unions, bargaining committees, members and other activists to support those infected and affected by HIV and AIDS.

Unions have an important role to play in advancing the rights of people who are dealing with the health, economic and social impacts of HIV in the workplace. All workers must be safeguarded against discrimination, and treated fairly. We can protect workers' income security and employment, and require employers to face their responsibilities.

HIV and AIDS are considered chronic and episodic disabilities, and may affect a person's ability to work for periods of time. All jurisdictions in Canada prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability. While human

rights and labour codes apply to employers on a number of grounds, including disability, unions provide a critical source of protection through collective agreements.

The CUPE national policy on HIV and AIDS can also be a good conversation starter in your workplace when looking to discuss the issues, core values and positions that will frame collective agreement language and workplace policies.

See *CUPE's national policy booklet on HIV and AIDS*.

## *Anti-discrimination, anti-harassment, anti-violence*

A clear and comprehensive anti-discrimination clause will spell out that employers cannot discriminate with respect to any terms and conditions of employment on the grounds of disability, including HIV status.

Acts of discrimination can be challenged through the grievance and arbitration processes, even if the collective agreement does not mention it. Human rights legislation is implied in all collective agreements. All workplace policies and practices must conform to human rights, labour standards, health and safety, and other laws governing the workplace, both federally and provincially.

Workers may need access to information, education, and counselling to help create a supportive work environment. Specific collective agreement clauses can help members access such programs.

For more information see *CUPE's stop harassment guide*.

## *Confidentiality, privacy and testing*

Workers, their families and dependants must enjoy the confidentiality and protection of their privacy. Information about a worker's disabilities, including HIV status, is irrelevant to the workplace in most circumstances. Most jobs do not pose a risk of HIV transmission. Except in limited circumstances, there is no legal obligation to disclose one's status, and generally, it is unlawful for employers to request this information.

In health care settings there may be some exceptions to the general rule about disclosure. There may be a small risk of HIV transmission in certain job tasks such as performing certain medical procedures. Any requirement to disclose can only be justified if the specific job duties pose a real risk of HIV exposure to someone else. There may be special requirements about HIV disclosure set out by professional regulatory bodies in each province, and by specific provincial legislation.

People with HIV and AIDS have a right to employment without discrimination, as do all workers with disabilities. Employers cannot discriminate based on HIV status upon hire, remuneration, promotion, transfer, layoff, recall, and any other terms and conditions of employment. They have a legal obligation to adapt work and workplaces unless it would cause undue hardship.

Personal health information should not be collected, used, disclosed or retained unless there is reasonable circumstance to do so. If such circumstance arises, the employer may be entitled to limited health information; they must respect and maintain privacy and confidentiality at all times.

Employers are not legally allowed to test for HIV or ask about a worker's status except in limited circumstances, and they should not make assumptions. Unions have a responsibility to help protect members' privacy and confidentiality.

### *Worker health and safety*

Employers are responsible for maintaining a safe and harassment-free workplace. Unions have a duty to protect against harassment, and this duty extends to all aspects of health and safety.

Collective agreement language will help strengthen the union's position in ensuring that normal disciplinary procedures will come into effect should discrimination, harassment, or mistreatment occur.

Workers must be protected from blood and bodily fluids. Good health and safety practices and procedures are necessary in all work environments as appropriate for the work performed.

Where there is risk of exposure to blood and body fluids employers should institute appropriate infection control. These practices and procedures must be accompanied by effective education and recurrent training on risk prevention, as well as proper use of protocols and personal protective equipment.

*CUPE's Health and Safety fact sheet on HIV and AIDS provides further details on occupational health and safety measures.*

### *Duty to accommodate*

HIV is a chronic, recurring and episodic disability, quite often with long periods of health interrupted by periods of illness and disability. It is important to ensure the recognition of "episodic disability" in our collective agreements, and to extend our health benefits to cover these circumstances. Many illnesses are considered episodic and such a clause will benefit many workers including those who are living with HIV, cancer, lupus, multiple sclerosis, diabetes, mental and mood disabilities, and others.

Accommodation becomes essential for persons living with HIV and AIDS to continue working as long as possible. With new advances in medication and treatments, HIV positive workers continue long and productive careers. They may at times require support to protect meaningful employment.

Employers and unions share a duty to accommodate workers with disabilities. The employer must fully review the working terms and conditions for any modification that would keep the worker employed, without causing undue hardship.

Unions should negotiate collective agreement provisions that remind the employer of their obligations, while ensuring that bargaining language has no discriminatory effect. Unions will also support members through the accommodation process, and file grievances under the collective agreement if the employer fails to provide reasonable accommodation.

*For more information, see CUPE's **duty to accommodate fact sheets**.*

## *Medical and health benefits*

Medication and therapies can be costly. Unions negotiate extended health benefits that cover the partial or full cost of prescription medication, health care services and products that are not covered publicly.

Additional provisions will need to be considered to address specific HIV therapies, including coverage for anti-retroviral treatment, and other care.

Members are further supported financially if the costs are paid directly without the need for workers to seek reimbursement. There should be no exclusions or annual maximums.

All benefits should be reviewed so that they do not discriminate against people with HIV and AIDS, or any other chronic illnesses and disabilities. Employers and insurance companies should not deny access to benefits or coverage based on HIV status.

In some cases, insurance companies provide health benefits that contain “pre-existing conditions” clauses. Members may need to pay additional charges for coverage, or require wait periods before making a health claim. In such cases, top-ups to the plans will need to be considered.

We should also negotiate language to cover all doctor’s notes and medical documents requested by the employer.

## *Pensions*

Workplace pension plans need to include disability pensions as well as retiree health care benefits.

For surviving partners and children in case of death, bargaining pension payout language will benefit the families of our members.

Early retirement benefits and bridging can provide more viable financial choices for members who are

faced with declining health, or who need to focus on maintaining good health and quality of life as they age.

Retiree health benefits are most often found in the collective agreement, as few union members are under combined pension/benefit trusts.

## *Leave provisions*

Negotiating short-term sick leave provisions and long-term disability (LTD) programs can support basic needs for persons with HIV and AIDS, as well as for other workers with chronic and episodic disabilities. Seniority also needs to be protected for members on sick leave or LTD.

Negotiating benefit coverage that has the employer continuing to pay their share of the premiums while an employee is on sick leave and LTD is very important.

Bereavement and compassionate leaves must be expanded to meet the unique leave requirements associated with HIV and AIDS. Improved leave benefits are important for those whose support network is a family of choice rather than a biological family. Occasions may arise when the main caregiver does not reside with the person with the medical needs. We need to negotiate contract language that enables leave in these situations, and can benefit everyone in the bargaining unit.

Unions have a responsibility to develop workplace policies and strong contract language to support members with disabilities, including HIV and AIDS. We can go a step further by facilitating opportunities for worker education and awareness to help eradicate stigma and discrimination, and create healthy and safe work environments.

Ask your servicing representative for more information and advice.

# Resources

## CUPE Resources – cupe.ca

- **CUPE national policy on HIV and AIDS**  
[cupe.ca/hiv-aids-policy](http://cupe.ca/hiv-aids-policy)
- **Bargaining Disability Rights**  
[cupe.ca/bargaining-disability-rights](http://cupe.ca/bargaining-disability-rights)
- **What is the Duty to Accommodate?**  
[cupe.ca/duty-to-accommodate](http://cupe.ca/duty-to-accommodate)
- **The Duty to Accommodate: How Far does an employer have to go?**  
[cupe.ca/full-scope-duty-to-accommodate](http://cupe.ca/full-scope-duty-to-accommodate)
- **Health and Safety fact sheet on HIV and AIDS**  
[cupe.ca/hiv-aids-fact-sheet](http://cupe.ca/hiv-aids-fact-sheet)
- **Stop harassment: A guide for CUPE locals**  
[cupe.ca/stop-harassment](http://cupe.ca/stop-harassment)

## Canadian AIDS Legal Network

[aidslaw.ca](http://aidslaw.ca)

Activist network that addresses legal and human rights issues related to HIV. Advocating at both the policy and community levels, they defend the rights of people affected by HIV, from women, newcomers and gay men, to prisoners, people who use drugs, sex workers, and men who have sex with men.

*Know Your Rights* is a series of eight brochures (available in seven languages) addressing the privacy rights and disclosure obligations of people living with HIV in a variety of day-to-day contexts, including the workplace.

## Canadian Working Group on HIV and Rehabilitation (CWGHR)

[hivandrehab.ca](http://hivandrehab.ca)

National organization that responds to the rehabilitation needs of people living with HIV and AIDS through research, education and cross-sector partnerships, working to improve the lives of people with HIV.

## Labour Research Service (LRS)

[lrs.org.za/index.php/10-resources/resources/69-hiv-a-aids-agreement](http://lrs.org.za/index.php/10-resources/resources/69-hiv-a-aids-agreement)

A South African non-profit organization working to develop strategies for labour to play a role in the effective implementation, monitoring, evaluation and improvement of the South African Government's National HIV and AIDS Strategic Plan.

The HIV & AIDS Model Agreement is a resource to build trade union capacity and awareness on HIV and AIDS workplace policies and collective agreements.



# CUPE ANTI-RACISM STRATEGY 2021-2027

To be presented for adoption at the 2021 National Convention

**CUPE**

# CUPE ANTI-RACISM STRATEGY

CUPE has a strong history of challenging racism. Over two decades ago, delegates to CUPE's National Convention adopted our 1999 *CUPE Policy Statement on Workplace Racism: Challenging Racism in the Workplace*. Since that crucial milestone, our union has challenged racism through a wide range of initiatives. We have developed bargaining strategies to advance workplace equity; created anti-racism workshops and educational materials; lobbied governments to take action on racism and human rights; supported community-led actions and initiatives; worked with anti-racist global justice activists; developed equity committees and designated equity positions on Local executives; and created two Diversity Vice-President seats on our National Executive Board, representing racialized and Indigenous members.

We must build on this work and do more. The devastating effects of colonization are ongoing. Racism, xenophobia, and Islamophobia and anti-Semitic hate crimes are a harmful reality in Canada and across the world. Canada's history continues to be shaped by all forms of racism, including anti-Black Racism, anti-Indigenous racism, anti-Asian racism and other forms of racism.

Black, Indigenous and racialized members continue to experience discrimination in and outside the union and those who are women, persons with disabilities or LGBTQ2+ members are likely to face more discrimination. Anti-racism work needs a strong intersectional lens.

CUPE's 2014 *Membership Survey* showed that racialized members are over-represented in precarious jobs and less likely to be involved in the union.<sup>1</sup> It indicated that racialized and Indigenous workers are under-represented among our membership compared to their representation in the Canadian population. CUPE's 2016-2017 *National Leadership Project* suggested that Black, Indigenous and racialized members are under-represented in Local elected positions and face challenges in becoming more involved in the union.<sup>2</sup>

As trade unionists, we know that we cannot achieve economic justice without achieving racial justice. In 2019, delegates to CUPE's National Convention voted unanimously to create a CUPE-wide Anti-Racism Strategy.

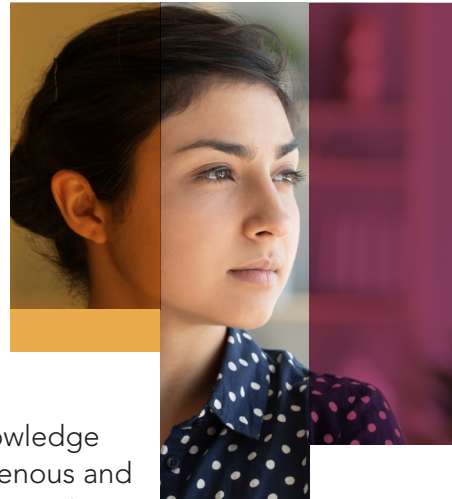
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<sup>1</sup> <https://cupe.ca/cupe-membership-survey-results-equality>

<sup>2</sup> <https://cupe.ca/building-strong-locals-national-leadership-survey-project>

The resolution called upon CUPE National to:

1. Create and implement an anti-racism strategy, including anti-Black racism, for the workplace and union that builds on CUPE's 1999 policy statement on racism in the workplace; and
2. Present this strategy at our 2021 CUPE National Convention for delegates to adopt.



This Anti-Racism Strategy is rooted in the knowledge and experience of our members. Black, Indigenous and racialized members across the country participated in online consultations to make their recommendations. Our National Indigenous Council and National Rainbow Committee held a joint meeting for the same purpose.

During these consultations, CUPE members shared their lived experiences of racism. They discussed the barriers they face in and outside the union. They described how these challenges have been heightened by the growth of white supremacist movements in Canada and across the world.

Members also highlighted opportunities for change. As Canada diversifies, our labour movement is diversifying too. In order to build union power, we must organize in a way that connects our histories and struggles. This Strategy outlines key goals for CUPE to follow in our struggle to dismantle systemic racism and build an equitable and inclusive labour movement that fights for the rights of all working people. These actions include making changes to our internal policies and structures, advancing an anti-racism approach to organizing and bargaining, and taking political action and working in coalition with anti-racist movements in Canada and globally.

**Systemic racism** includes patterns of behaviour, policies or practices that shape institutions and organizations, and which create or reinforce disadvantage for Black, Indigenous and racialized people. Racism can be intentional, or it can be unintentional due to unconscious bias. Whether intentional or not, racism has a devastating impact on those experiencing it. Human rights law does not consider intent when determining wrongdoing and the need for remedy.

Our new Anti-Racism Strategy is made up of 10 priority goals. These goals provide a comprehensive six-year road map for challenging and dismantling systemic racism in our members' workplaces, our union and our communities. In addition to the recent mobilization of members in support of this Strategy, these goals also build on CUPE's previous anti-racist work, advanced by Black, Indigenous and racialized CUPE members who have contributed their activism over the decades of our union's history.

# 1

## Ensure our Constitution and Local bylaws acknowledge and address systemic racism.

CUPE's Constitution and Local bylaws lay out the rules and procedures that govern how our union works.

There are many ways we can use the Constitution and Local bylaws to centre equity and inclusion. For example, in 2019, our Constitution was amended to increase equity-seeking delegates at National Convention and to include Indigenous land acknowledgements as part of the standard agenda of Local membership meetings.

In order to tackle systemic racism, we must build on this work. We should amend the Equality Statement to explicitly oppose racism, colonization and other forms of systemic oppression. We should update our *Guide to Local Union Bylaws* to encourage the creation of human rights and anti-racism committees and other measures to increase representation.

Black, Indigenous and racialized members also need safe ways to report experiences of racism in the union.



## 2

## Increase the representation of Black, Indigenous and racialized members in the union.

Lack of representation in union leadership is a barrier to participation for many Black, Indigenous and racialized members. When people do not see themselves reflected in union leadership positions, it becomes difficult to see the union's relevance to their lives.

Lack of representation can lead to decisions that ignore the needs of Black, Indigenous and racialized members. It also deprives the union of their vital perspectives, leadership skills and activism. This absence weakens the union and undermines the fundamental union principle of solidarity.



Many Local initiatives to increase representation already exist. These initiatives include the creation of designated equity positions on Local executives, as well as practices to increase participation at Local union meetings. CUPE should highlight these initiatives and encourage other Locals to adopt similar approaches.

To address the barrier of representation, CUPE should also provide leadership training for Black, Indigenous and racialized members to develop their capacity to take on leadership positions. Mentorship programs meant for recruiting staff should specifically include outreach to Black, Indigenous and racialized members. In addition, the union should create more regional and national organizing spaces specifically for Black, Indigenous and racialized members to discuss their needs and consider solutions in a safe space without judgement or bias. Examples of such organizing spaces could include Local anti-racism committees, as well as online regional and national meetings.

By building a strong network of anti-racism activists across the country with effective communications systems, Black, Indigenous and racialized members are empowered to overcome isolation, build solidarity and strengthen our union. We should monitor progress in advancing representation through National surveys of union executives.

# 3

## Develop and engage in anti-racism education.

Collective action against systemic racism requires an understanding of our shared history and the ongoing impacts of racism, colonization and white supremacy in our lives today. Anti-racism education uncovers why inequities exist, exploring characteristics of white supremacy culture and its damaging impacts, and how oppression operates in our society. A commitment to anti-racism starts with the leadership of our union at all levels, including the National Executive Board. Regular anti-racism training at the highest level of CUPE should take place as this will set the standard for the rest of the union. Some CUPE Locals have already begun to integrate anti-racism training in their bylaws, and other Locals should be encouraged to do so as well.



CUPE already has a strong history of providing anti-racism workshops for rank-and-file members and Local executives. As we move forward, we must monitor how often these workshops are delivered and how many members take them. We must ensure that Black, Indigenous and racialized members are involved in the development and delivery of CUPE's anti-racism education and that Canada's difficult history is told such as the history and impact of Black enslavement in Canada, the residential school system and the Sixties Scoop.

Anti-racism education should also be included in other workshops not specifically focused on human rights and anti-racism. For example, anti-racism education should be included in Local executive training and in CUPE's Internship Program, which develops new servicing staff. When possible, we should also collaborate with employers to provide anti-racism education in our workplaces.

Anti-racism education is especially important given the services we provide as public sector workers to diverse communities. In its final report, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada called for Indigenous awareness training for public service workers, including those CUPE represents. CUPE should provide this training to members as part of our union's commitment to truth and reconciliation.

CUPE can also contribute to the education of children and youth on anti-racism principles and our colonial history. We should provide resources for members to talk about anti-racism at home and integrate anti-racist content into youth-focused union spaces, such as the Youth Council at National Convention.

## 4

### **Learn from the experiences of Black, Indigenous and racialized members and celebrate their successes.**

CUPE advocates for change by communicating our members' challenges and successes. However, Black, Indigenous and racialized members' stories have been historically under-reported. We need to acknowledge and profile the lived experiences of Black, Indigenous and racialized members and celebrate their successes. Members' stories should be shared on CUPE's social media, at CUPE events and in CUPE publications like Counterpoint. Regularly highlighting Black, Indigenous and racialized members and their achievements is a way to empower members and ensure that their stories are centred and valued as part of the union movement.



## 5

### **Integrate an anti-racism focus into organizing strategies.**

Canada's workforce is becoming increasingly diverse. Expanding the diversity of our membership is critical if the union is to build organizing power.

CUPE's 2014 *Membership Survey* showed that Black, Indigenous and racialized workers are under-represented among our membership compared to their representation in the Canadian population. Organizing the unorganized is part of CUPE's mandate. Our new members should reflect the diversity of Canada.

Organizing efforts must be attuned to the needs of Black, Indigenous and racialized workers and involve strategies for direct outreach. As part of this work, CUPE should train Black, Indigenous and racialized members to serve as member organizers.

CUPE should also focus on including precariously employed workers in the scope clauses of our collective agreements. Precarious workers are disproportionately Black, Indigenous and racialized. Expanding scope clauses will provide job protection, better wages and benefits for all.

Finally, union-provided orientation training sessions for new Locals and members should be regularly held and bargained into collective agreements. These sessions should educate new members about their rights as workers and explain how the union operates, while emphasizing CUPE's commitment to human rights and anti-racism.

## 6

### **Bargain to eliminate systemic racism and workplace inequities.**

Struggles at the bargaining table are inseparable from our work to dismantle systemic racism and other forms of discrimination faced by our members. Bargaining with an anti-racism/anti-discrimination focus will significantly strengthen the labour movement by ensuring that we fight for the rights of all workers.

Black, Indigenous and racialized members must be included in the bargaining process to ensure that their lived experiences inform bargaining priorities. Designated equity seats on bargaining committees should be created to ensure that all members' voices are heard. Bargaining surveys should also include questions about equity and discrimination.

As part of an anti-racist bargaining agenda, Locals should review collective agreements and negotiate language on a wide range of issues such as wage discrimination, health and safety, and leaves for cultural and religious reasons.



'No discrimination' clauses and anti-harassment language should clearly prohibit discrimination and harassment on the basis of prohibited human rights grounds, including racial discrimination. The language should also outline a fair, timely and effective process for investigating and resolving incidents and complaints.

Bargaining must also prioritize the elimination of precarious work. Black, Indigenous and racialized workers are over-represented in precarious work in Canada. As such, precarity is an important way in which systemic racism manifests in our workplaces. Precarity weakens all workers and our union. We can fight precarity by bargaining access to benefits and pension entitlements for precarious workers, or by bargaining language that obligates the employer to convert part-time positions to full-time, permanent positions.

**Precarity** includes temporary, permanent part-time, casual, on-call or contract employment. Members who work precariously also lack decent pay, benefits, pensions or leave provisions, including sick leave. Precarious workers lack job security and, as a result, are often afraid to challenge discrimination or health and safety violations.

We must also prioritize employment equity in bargaining. Employment equity aims to build a workforce that is more representative of our communities through fair hiring and promotion processes. It also works to eliminate systemic discrimination in employer policies that pose barriers to good jobs for Black, Indigenous and racialized workers, as well as other equity-seeking workers. Examples of employment equity include collective bargaining language that establishes more equitable hiring and promotion clauses, targeted training to provide opportunities for promotions and transfers, provisions for designated positions and the establishment of joint employment equity committees.



Resources and tools such as checklists for bargaining and sample bargaining language will help Locals to advance an anti-racist bargaining agenda, as will workshops and training for Locals, servicing representatives and participants in CUPE's *Internship Program*. An effective system to track Local collective agreement language that advances equity will also be key for measuring our success.

# 7

## Administer and enforce the collective agreement with an anti-racist lens.

Our existing collective agreements contain clauses we can use to fight racism. We must be vigilant about enforcing these rights.

When reporting workplace racism, Black, Indigenous and racialized members are often told that they are overreacting or misinterpreting racist behaviour and discriminatory practices. Fear of backlash and lack of union support may prevent members from coming forward with their experiences.

Local executives, shop stewards and staff should receive training to understand the prevalence and detrimental impact of workplace racism. Workplace racism is a serious health and safety concern and it has a major psychological and physical impact on members.

Local leaders need to know how to support Black, Indigenous and racialized members who are experiencing it. Locals should promptly file grievances related to racial discrimination and harassment, and bring them through the grievance procedure in a timely way from start to finish. Violence and harassment targeting Black, Indigenous and racialized members should also be reported to joint health and safety committees. CUPE will ensure health and safety resources highlight health and safety concerns for these members.

A central system for CUPE to track grievances related to discrimination and racism would also help to determine trends in CUPE workplaces, as well as solutions.



# 8

## Collect data on demographics, precarity and union involvement.

Data collection is essential to understand the full picture of CUPE’s membership, including the intersection between demographics, work precarity and union involvement.

Data on our membership should be collected at regular intervals. When data is collected, it should be done via accessible means, using appropriate technology, to ensure that the voices of the most marginalized members are captured.

Race-based data should be broken down by racial group, where possible.

Membership data can reveal the issues and challenges that need to be tackled by the union regarding anti-racism, including barriers to participation for Black, Indigenous and racialized members. Data can be used to provide an anti-racist lens in policy creation and the union’s decision-making processes.

Locals should be supported in surveying their membership, and in collaborating with employers to collect demographic data about their workplaces and the need for employment equity measures to increase representation in the workforce.



# 9

## Take political action to challenge and eliminate systemic racism.

As the largest union in Canada representing public sector workers, CUPE must be vigilant in ensuring safety in public services. Violence and harassment against Black, Indigenous and racialized people will not be tolerated by CUPE members. As public sector workers, we must lobby governments for change when the services we are expected to deliver are unsafe, culturally insensitive or inadequate

for Black, Indigenous and racialized communities. Our campaigns for quality public services and against privatization and austerity will be strengthened when they are grounded in the communities we serve.

CUPE has political power, and we work hard to elect progressive governments and to lobby for change between elections. CUPE members deserve accountability from all levels of government, and governments that fail to address systemic racism in our workplaces and communities must be challenged. In allyship with the NDP, we should push for change by encouraging Black, Indigenous and racialized members to run for elected office. We must continue to advocate for legislation that eliminates precarious work, advances employment equity, challenges racist policing and justice systems, and implements fully funded anti-racism strategies.

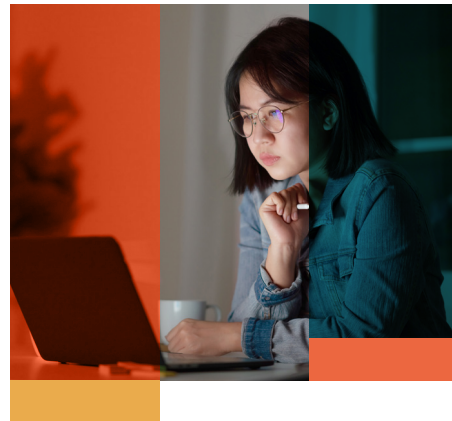
**10**


## **Work in coalition with community groups and in solidarity with anti-racist global justice activists.**

As public sector workers and CUPE members, we are deeply connected to our communities. CUPE was founded through grassroots mobilization, and we continue to support ground-up, community-based organizing today.

Advancing social justice is a core mandate of our union. We have supported Black Lives Matter and activists fighting against Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, anti-immigrant sentiment and other forms of hate. As part of our commitment to Truth and Reconciliation, we have supported Indigenous struggles around land and water, justice for missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, treaty rights and the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

We must continue to work in coalition alongside community groups in the fight for justice. Our strength as a union – our power to mobilize and organize – gives us this responsibility. Working in coalition, in turn, strengthens our position at the bargaining table and our anti-privatization and anti-austerity campaigns.





We also need to expand our fight for global justice. The global economic system relies on racism to exploit and ultimately divide workers. This undermines our power. Building and strengthening a globally organized labour movement is critical to challenge this system, and to exert our collective right to live in a just world.

CUPE has expressed solidarity and stood alongside Black, Indigenous and racialized communities in the Global South that are resisting land theft by local governments and international corporations, including Canadian mining companies. We have spoken out against police brutality and white supremacist violence. We have challenged Canada's racist immigration policies, which severely restrict access to essential programs, services and permanent status for mostly racialized migrant workers. We have also opposed Canadian foreign policy that undermines democracy, reinforces colonial power and creates the economic and social conditions that force people to migrate in search of work and safety.

The continuation and expansion of this work is critical. We must approach it with a clear understanding of Canada's role in the world, and an awareness of the privilege that so many of us hold as Canadian union members working and living in a rich nation. Worker-to-worker solidarity exchanges, a cornerstone of our work, will allow us to share our perspectives, and our global partners can share theirs with us.

## **IMPLEMENTATION AND TIMELINE**

CUPE will develop workplans to implement the Anti-Racism Strategy in consultation with the National Indigenous Council and the National Rainbow Committee. The work will be implemented over a six-year period. This time frame will allow the union to fully address the content of the Strategy and to implement the multiple actions it describes. Workplans will be provided to the National Executive Board for approval. Specific actions for each goal of the Strategy will be included, as well as ways to measure success in achieving these goals and prioritized timing for actions over the six-year implementation period. Implementation will also include ways to consult with Black, Indigenous and racialized members in the regions on the development and implementation of these actions.



## **ACCOUNTABILITY AND REPORTING**

As the Anti-Racism Strategy is implemented, ongoing accountability to Black, Indigenous and racialized members will be built into workplans. Reports will be provided regularly to the National Executive Board on the implementation of the Anti-Racism Strategy. Progress reports will also be provided to the 2023 and 2025 National Conventions. A final report and possible recommendations to renew the Strategy will be presented at our 2027 National Convention.



# Discrimination:

## A CHECKLIST AND SAMPLE COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT LANGUAGE

### This document provides a checklist and examples of collective agreement language on discrimination.

Discrimination is an action or a decision that treats a person or a group negatively for reasons such as their gender, race or disability. These reasons are known as grounds of discrimination.

Depending on the jurisdiction of your workplace (provincial, territorial or federal), your list of “prohibited grounds” of discrimination can include:

age, sex, race, gender, colour, creed, religion, ethnicity, pregnancy, ancestry, political belief, marital status, family status, language, citizenship, civil status, nationality, place of origin, physical disability, mental disability, criminal conviction, Aboriginal origin, social condition, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, source of income, linguistic background or other grounds.

#### Your collective agreement should have a non-discrimination clause that:

- Covers all grounds of discrimination under human rights legislation in your jurisdiction.
- Covers additional grounds such as social condition and gender identity and expression that are not yet listed in all Canadian human rights laws.

- Protects workers from discrimination by anyone in the workplace - management, co-workers, the public, contractors, and service users.

#### Your collective agreement should also cover:

- Harassment. See the CUPE document *Stop harassment: A guide for CUPE locals* for tips on anti-harassment language.
- Counseling or services of an Employee Assistance Program for members who have experienced discrimination.
- Anti-oppression education for members and management.
- Measures to address systemic discrimination such as employment equity, pay equity and accommodation related to disability, family status, religion or other grounds.

The employer must ensure that workplace rules, policies and practices are not discriminatory. By law, employers must take proactive steps to make sure that standards and requirements do not discriminate against an individual or group of individuals. The impact, not the intent, is what matters.

The union must (a) not negotiate discriminatory contract language, and (b) actively cooperate with any reasonable accommodation being put forward.

Most CUPE collective agreements contain an anti-discrimination clause. Here's a few examples.

**CUPE Local 3903 and York University**  
Expiry August 31, 2017

Article 4 - Discrimination and Harassment

4.01 Discrimination

The employer and the union agree that there shall be no discrimination, interference, restriction, harassment or coercion, including no mandatory blood or urine tests, including but not limited to as these relate to Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), AIDS related illness, AIDS-Related-Complex, or positive immune deficiency test, and including no genetic screening for specific medical disabilities or pregnancy, exercised or practiced with respect to any member of the bargaining unit in any matter concerning the application of the provisions of this agreement by reason of race, creed, colour, age, sex, marital status, parental status, number of dependents, nationality, citizenship (subject to the provisions of the Ontario Human Rights code concerning citizenship), ancestry, place of origin, native language (subject to Article 12.02.1), disability or disabilities (subject to Article 12.02.1), Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), or AIDS related illness, or AIDS-Related-Complex, or positive immune deficiency test (virus HIV) (subject to Article 12.02.1), political or religious affiliations or orientations, academic affiliations or orientations (subject to the exercise of academic freedom as set out in Article 14.01), record of offences (except where such a record is a reasonable and bona fide

ground for discrimination because of the nature of the employment), sexual orientation, transsexual transition status, gender expression, and gender identity, nor by reason of her membership or non-membership or lawful activity or lack of activity in the union, or the exercise of any of the rights under this agreement.


The employer undertakes that no York University student who is or has been employed in Unit 2 shall be penalized in her student status for the exercise of any of her rights under this collective agreement or by reason of her membership or non-membership or lawful activity or lack of activity in the union.

**CUPE Local 8920 and Nova Scotia Provincial Health Authority**

Expiry October 31, 2014

Article 4.1 No Discrimination/No Harassment

4.1.1 The Employer agrees that there shall be no discrimination, interference, restriction, harassment or coercion exercised or practiced with respect to any Employee or applicant for employment by reason including but not limited to age; race; creed; colour; place of origin; ethnic origin; citizenship; ancestry; political or religious affiliation, beliefs or activities; sex; gender expression or gender identity; transsexual/transgendered identification; sexual preference, orientation or identification; marital status; family status; parental status; number of dependents; class; place of residence; physical appearance; record of offences except where it relates to bona fide employment qualifications; Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), AIDS-related illnesses, positive



Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) test and any other illness or disability, mental, physical or other disability, so long as it does not significantly impair the performance of the duties of the position; union membership or activity; nor by reason of the exercise of any of the rights contained in this Agreement.

For more information on human rights topics such as disability rights, pay equity and other issues related to discrimination, see [cupe.ca/issues-research](http://cupe.ca/issues-research).

# STOP HARASSMENT: A GUIDE FOR CUPE LOCALS



**CUPE** / Canadian Union  
of Public Employees

CUPE Equality  
November 2014



This guide is for local union stewards, officers and other activists. It covers:

- The definition of harassment.
- The effects of harassment.
- An overview of workers' rights and employers' responsibilities.
- How the union can challenge harassment and support members.
- A checklist for anti-harassment policies and collective agreement language.



The pamphlet *Speak out! Stop harassment* is for members who have experienced or witnessed harassment, or who want to organize on the issue.

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Harassment and other forms of violence undermine our solidarity as workers. A united union membership that challenges harassment is stronger and able to make gains elsewhere too. CUPE has been successful in advocating for healthy, safe and respectful workplaces. This guide provides information and ideas to help locals continue that progress.

# A

## WHAT IS WORKPLACE HARASSMENT?

Harassment is offensive behaviour that a reasonable person would consider unwelcome.

If the target of harassment considers the behaviour offensive<sup>1</sup> and unwelcome, and a reasonable person would anticipate that response, the behaviour is harassment.

Different laws, collective agreements and other legal texts define harassment differently, but according to overarching legal standards:

- The behaviour can be direct or indirect, obvious or subtle, active or passive.
- It can take written, verbal, physical, electronic or any other form of expression.
- Harassment can be physical, psychological, or a combination of the two.
- The effect on the target of harassment, not the intent of the harasser, defines harassment. “I didn’t mean to offend” or “it was meant as a joke” is not a legitimate defense.
- The person who is the target of harassment is not required to tell the harasser to stop.
- Harassment can be one incident or repeated incidents. It is often several incidents over a period of time. However, it can be a single incident that has a severe impact on the target.

**Harassment is illegal** under a number of laws and prohibited by policies and collective agreements. Depending on where you work and the type of harassment, it might be illegal or prohibited under:

- The collective agreement
- Employer policies
- Human rights laws
- Occupational health and safety laws
- Employment standards laws
- Labour relations laws
- Workers’ compensation laws
- Tort law
- Sector-specific regulation (e.g. education sector laws that prohibit bullying)
- Criminal law if the harassment involves physical or sexual threat, or assault

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<sup>1</sup> There are many other terms used to describe harassing behaviour, including humiliating, insulting, hostile, aggressive, intimidating, coercive, abusive or threatening.

Workplace harassment is either human rights harassment or personal harassment.

**1. Human rights harassment** is related to discrimination, which is illegal under human rights legislation.

**2. Personal harassment** is not related to protected human rights characteristics but still illegal under health and safety and other laws.

## Human rights harassment

In all jurisdictions, human rights legislation prohibits discrimination-related harassment.

Depending on the jurisdiction of your workplace (provincial, territorial or federal), your list of “prohibited grounds” for discrimination can include: age, sex, race, gender, colour, creed, religion, ethnicity, pregnancy, ancestry, political belief, marital status, family status, language, citizenship, civil status, nationality, place of origin, physical disability, mental disability, criminal conviction, Aboriginal origin, social condition, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, source of income, linguistic background or other grounds.

Consult the law in your jurisdiction for the specific prohibited grounds.

Workers and unions often advocate for new grounds and broader interpretation of existing grounds. For example, discrimination related to gender identity or gender expression is argued under “gender” protection if gender identity or expression are not listed as protected grounds.

The target of harassment might not even have the protected characteristics. For example, a worker who is straight might be the target of “jokes” about being gay. He could claim harassment related to sexual orientation, even though he is not gay.

It is also not necessary for comments to be targeted at an individual. For example, a woman exposed to derogatory comments about women could claim harassment if the behaviour created a hostile work environment for her, even though the comments were not about her or directed at her.

## Personal harassment

Personal harassment is any harassment that does not fall under human rights prohibited grounds.

Harassment is a serious occupational hazard. It directly threatens workers' physical and psychological safety, and it makes workers vulnerable to other work hazards. Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and BC specifically address harassment under health and safety law. In other provinces, workers can use their right to refuse unsafe work or other health and safety rights to prevent or challenge harassment.

Quebec addresses psychological harassment in its employment standards law.

In some jurisdictions, workers are entitled to compensation for physical or psychological injuries related to harassment, and some workers' compensation regimes provide benefits.

A number of provinces have recently addressed bullying in regulation for the education sector. Members who work in the education or post-secondary sector might be able to use these rules to challenge harassment.

**Laws and rules on harassment are evolving.** Consult your servicing representative for current information in your jurisdiction.

The term "workplace" in workplace harassment is broadly defined. Harassment can occur at functions and locations related to the workplace, such as conferences, training sessions, social gatherings, work travel, work email, a client's home or other work-related situations.

### The harasser or target can be:

- A supervisor, manager, board member or other employer representative.
- A co-worker.
- A client, patient, student or parent (a group we will call user/client in this document).
- A contractor, community member or other visitor or member of the public coming into the worksite.
- One person or a number of people. (In this guide, we say "harasser" and "target", for ease of reading, but incidents can involve groups.)

## Harassing behaviours could include:

- Spreading malicious rumours, gossip or innuendo.
- Persistently criticizing, demeaning or ridiculing a person.
- Undermining or deliberately impeding a person's work.
- Excluding or isolating someone.
- Verbal threats or abuse.
- Physical threats or assault.
- Calling someone derogatory names.
- Teasing or joking about a person.
- Hazing or pranks.
- Displaying offensive posters, cartoons, images or other visuals.
- Making aggressive or threatening gestures.
- Unwelcome invitations or requests.
- Vandalizing or hiding personal belongings or work equipment.
- Unwelcome physical contact.
- Publicly ridiculing or disciplining.
- Blocking applications for leaves, training or promotion.

A wide range of behaviour falls under harassment, from persistent teasing to assaults. It all counts. Union locals should support members concerned about harassment, whatever the form and degree of severity.

## Harassment is not:

- Consensual workplace banter and interactions.
- Reasonable management action carried out in a fair way, like day-to-day actions by a supervisor or manager related to performance, absenteeism, assignments, discipline and even dismissal – as long as they respect the collective agreement, policies and legislation, are reasonable and are not abusive or discriminatory.
- Every workplace disagreement, though if a conflict is poorly handled or left unresolved, it can lead to harassment. Unlike harassment, healthy conflict can be a constructive rather than a destructive process.

Harassment is a **form of violence**. See CUPE's violence prevention kit at [cupe.ca/health-and-safety](http://cupe.ca/health-and-safety) for information and tools on other forms of violence.

The term **bullying** is defined in different ways; it can be either the same as harassment or a form of harassment. Bullying is not specifically mentioned in health and safety or human rights legislation. (BC refers to bullying in policy related to health and safety law, as a synonym for harassment.) In other laws and rules, bullying is sometimes defined more narrowly than harassment. For example, the definition of bullying might require intent, repetition or threat, or equate bullying with only personal harassment or psychological harassment.

Terms used to describe harassment include:

- Bullying
- Mobbing
- Abuse
- Workplace aggression
- Worker-to-worker violence
- Victimization
- Hazing
- Social undermining

We use the term harassment in this guide because it is clearer, stronger and used more often in laws and policies. In a harassment case, consider all legal avenues, whatever the terminology.

## **B** WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF HARASSMENT?

Workers as targets can:

- Be blamed, disbelieved and isolated
- Develop health problems, such as anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress
- Get injured
- Need sick leave or other absences from work
- Lose out on training, promotion or transfer opportunities
- Lose income or even their job

Workers as witnesses can:

- Suffer many of the same consequences
- Be afraid to support or help the target, fearing they may also be harassed
- Join in, participating in the harassing behaviour

Workers as a group can:

- Become divided by harassment, undermining worker solidarity and union strength

Employers face:

- High turnover, absenteeism, use of sick leave, and long-term disability costs
- Increased risk of errors and accidents
- Decreased morale, productivity and motivation
- Recruitment problems and training costs
- Expensive investigations, arbitration, court costs, and potential financial and legal liability

Users/clients can:

- Suffer worse quality of care or service when there is high turnover, absenteeism or a poisoned environment
- Be harassed themselves

Workers who are marginalized by sexism, misogyny, homophobia, transphobia, racism, colonialism, ableism and other forms of oppression face particular challenges. For example, research suggests that racialized workers, compared to their co-workers, are more likely to be attacked on personal characteristics rather than work performance. Women are less likely than men to have their reports of harassment recognized as work-related and even less likely to be compensated for related workplace illness.

Workers belonging to more than one equity-seeking group can experience multiple forms of harassment, making the effects more complex and usually worse. For example, a racialized woman can face sexual and racial harassment at the same time – with worse outcomes as a result.

# C

## WHAT CAN THE LOCAL UNION DO?

### **Make sure employers carry out their responsibilities**

By law employers must provide a work environment that is free from harassment. Employers control the organization and are therefore the only ones who can ensure a healthy and safe work environment. A general statement in a workplace anti-harassment policy or collective agreement may state that the union supports the employer's attempts to create a harassment-free work environment.

Employers cannot guarantee that no harassment will occur, but they must:

- Do everything they can to prevent harassment, and not ignore the signs.
- Protect workers, investigate, and follow up when they become aware of harassment.

Preventative measures might include establishing workplace arrangements that minimize the hazards that lead to harassment. For example, in an environment where clients are often verbally aggressive, an employer might establish a process to screen calls and quickly direct angry customers to a manager.

### **Negotiate and enforce collective agreement language and policy**

Many collective agreements have language that prohibits harassment, and many workplaces have an anti-harassment policy statement. See *page 15* for a summary of what that language and policy should include.

Depending on your jurisdiction, your employer might be required by law to develop and implement an anti-harassment policy.

Many collective agreements have language in other areas that relate to harassment, such as discrimination, violence, health and safety, workload and duty to accommodate.

Harassment can be grieved even when the collective agreement doesn't mention it. Further, a collective agreement cannot diminish rights that an employee has under law. For example, the employer and union cannot agree to a definition of harassment that is weaker than what is in legislation. This applies to both human rights and personal harassment.

An arbitrator can also apply the law even if the collective agreement is silent on the issue of harassment. For example, an arbitrator can apply rules against discrimination or unsafe work in a harassment case, even if there is nothing that specifically applies in the collective agreement.

Members can use the grievance procedure to get the employer to comply with the law. A union that does not support members facing harassment is potentially liable under human rights law and duty of fair representation.

If you are filing a grievance relying on the law instead of specific collective agreement language, seek advice on how to word the grievance in your jurisdiction.

## **Demand better working conditions**

Often an incident of harassment is the tip of the iceberg, signaling an unhealthy workplace climate and wider power-relationship problems. The union doesn't have to wait for harassment to occur to take action. We can improve workplace conditions through bargaining, mobilization, lobbying, and other collective actions.

Understaffing, job insecurity and other characteristics of the work environment contribute to harassment and are a form of structural violence. Structural violence describes how institutions and social practices cause physical and psychological harm. Structural oppression – discrimination that is built into our culture, rules, and institutions like the workplace – is also a form of structural violence and contributes to harassment. Restructuring, cuts and privatization make these conditions worse. For more on these aspects of harassment, see the CUPE document *Workplace Harassment and Mental Injuries: Examining Root Causes*.

Specific, concrete and enforceable legal rights that address root causes of harassment are the most effective way to combat structural violence and oppression. For example, legislated minimum staffing levels, no-contracting-out language in collective agreements, and employment equity programs can reduce harassment through healthier working conditions.

## **Promote a harassment-free environment within the union**

Establish an internal (union) anti-harassment policy, code of conduct and equality statement to provide a harassment-free union environment. Include anti-discrimination and anti-harassment language in the local bylaws. It may be helpful to refer to CUPE's national Code of Conduct (see Appendix B in CUPE's Guide to Preparing Local Union Bylaws) and Equality Statement.

Train union leaders and stewards to recognize and challenge harassment. CUPE offers workshops on violence, harassment, human rights, and health and safety. Find out more from your servicing representative.

If you see inappropriate behaviour deal with it head on, especially in the union environment, like a local meeting. Show members the union doesn't accept harassment.

Appoint someone on the executive to deal with harassment issues.

Write articles for your website or newsletter about harassment, members' rights, and ways to stop or prevent harassment.

Survey members about their experiences with harassment and discrimination.

Build alliances with local community groups fighting discrimination and violence. For example, invite a speaker to a union event, sponsor a community event, or support a joint action.

The union's actions on harassment send an important message. Members can be reluctant to come forward with concerns about harassment. Members who trust the union to challenge harassment and advocate for a harassment-free workplace are more likely to come forward.

## **Support members affected by harassment**

In addition to the collective actions described above, the local union offers support to individual members affected by harassment. This section describes members' rights and concrete steps union representatives can take.

## Members' rights

The union has a legal duty to represent all members of the bargaining unit affected by the harassment.

The complainant (target) has the right to:

- Work in a healthy and safe work environment.
- Have a complaint heard and receive a fair, unbiased investigation of the facts.
- Have a union representative with them at any time during the complaint process.
- Confidentiality.
- Be free from retaliation for filing a complaint.

The respondent (alleged harasser) has the right to:

- Work in a healthy and safe work environment.
- Know the full nature of the allegations in order to make a full response.
- Have their response heard and receive a fair, unbiased investigation of the facts.
- Confidentiality.
- Fair discipline, should discipline occur.
- Union representation as provided by the collective agreement during any investigation and discipline procedure.

Other members have the right to:

- Work in a healthy and safe work environment.
- Receive support if they have witnessed and been harmed by harassment.
- Be free from retaliation for participating in an investigation.

## First steps

When a member comes to the union with a harassment issue, or the union learns of alleged harassment another way, talk with the target as soon as possible about their experience, needs and options.

The person who takes the complaint may or may not be the person who carries out the investigation. Union stewards, officials or other member representatives handling harassment should have harassment expertise and be trusted by the member.

Listen without judgment and offer the member support. Talking about harassment can be difficult for the target. Acknowledge this difficulty and show that you take the complaint seriously.

Clarify the facts and encourage the member to collect evidence. The member should keep a record of all incidents: the time, date, location, what was said or done, and any witnesses. Evidence might include emails, handwritten notes, photographs or physical evidence like vandalized personal belongings.

Take notes in case there is a grievance or other followup. Find out what happened, where, when and who was involved.

Ask your servicing representative for advice on handling investigations.

Harassment is a sensitive issue. Treat all parts of the harassment investigation carefully and with strict confidentiality.

Provide information on the options for going forward.

## Informal resolution

In some cases of co-worker harassment, a member might want to resolve the problem without going to the employer. If the complainant agrees, talk to the respondent about the concerns and arrange a meeting between the members to resolve the problem.

If the complainant wants support confronting the alleged harasser, accompany them. This situation might require two stewards – one to represent the complainant and one the respondent.

Some members opt for a group circle, mediation or other alternative dispute resolution processes.

Sometimes a respected neutral person can act as informal facilitator. They might be a member of the local, or someone external.

In many cases, a firm demand to stop the harassment will work. The harassment will not go away if it's ignored.

Try to resolve co-worker harassment informally only if the target chooses this route; it might not be a safe option. People who have been harassed do not have to confront the alleged harasser. They can directly file a grievance or other complaint. Always leave open the opportunity to proceed formally.

Involve management in an informal resolution if appropriate. Support the member in raising the issue with their manager (or someone higher up if their manager is the alleged harasser) or the human resources department, if the target chooses this option. The member might feel unable to raise the matter directly and want you to handle this communication.

## Formal complaint

Circumstances vary in harassment situations. If informal resolution is not possible or advisable, support the member in filing a complaint with the employer or, if necessary, file a grievance, use an alternative dispute resolution process, or pursue other legal avenues. Grievance time limits always apply.

The order and labeling of the processes are not set in stone; sometimes a formal complaint is the first step, followed by informal resolution, and alternative dispute resolution can be either formal or informal.

Depending on the situation, use no-discrimination, anti-harassment, violence, health and safety<sup>2</sup> or other language in your collective agreement to file a complaint or a grievance. You can also refer to relevant human rights, health and safety or other legislation.

The union should not be a partner in an employer investigation of a harassment complaint. Co-facilitating a process that leads to the discipline of a member could lead to a conflict of interest.

For investigation of co-worker harassment complaints, assign different union representatives for the complainant and respondent. Establish a “firewall” between them; the two representatives should not communicate about the complaint.

Make sure the steps in the grievance procedure or other complaint resolution process are followed as quickly as possible.

Maintain confidentiality as much as possible. The union should try to prevent gossip and protect the members’ privacy. However, the target must self-identify and name the alleged harasser in a complaint, and if the complaint goes to formal adjudication, what they say to the employer cannot be confidential.

Protect the target from isolation, demotion, forced transfer, increased workload or other negative repercussions from co-workers or the employer.

If the complainant and respondent need to be kept apart at any step in the process, talk with your servicing representative about negotiating those arrangements with the employer. Try to ensure the impact of any changes does not punish the complainant, for example changing their shift or assignment against their wishes.

Negotiate a protocol with the employer for union representation of witnesses, and ensure witnesses are on paid time. Many members are nervous about being interviewed during an investigation and want union representation.

Keep a record of any recommendations made against the employer by an arbitrator, human rights tribunal or other third party, and ensure the employer follows through. If there is another case involving similar facts and the employer failed to comply with previous recommendations, the employer’s liability will increase.

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<sup>2</sup> Pursue a health and safety complaint through the health and safety committee or staff representative.

## Other actions

Whatever the process (informal resolution or a formal complaint), the union has other responsibilities.

Be pro-active. Watch for signs of harassment, patterns and root causes. For example, high absenteeism and stress levels, turnover of particular groups in a department or sudden changes in a member's behaviour might indicate a problem. Take action to reduce and eliminate the hazards and factors that contribute to harassment. See CUPE's violence prevention kit for more information on dealing with harassment as a health and safety issue.

People who experience or witness harassment might fear embarrassment, retaliation or isolation if they draw attention to the problem. The union should inquire carefully and do what it can to protect members from negative consequences. Find union members or counsellors who can support the target and witnesses, as needed. Explore Employee Assistance Plan options.

Help the target secure sick leave (or another type of leave) or file a workers' compensation claim, as needed. Lost time due to stress may be compensable.

Help the target get a temporary work reassignment if necessary.

Ensure that harassment complaints are handled in a culturally safe way, respecting the cultural values and practices of members involved.

## When to involve the police

Some harassment has a criminal element (for example physical or sexual assault or death threats). If it occurs in the workplace, approach the employer and suggest they get legal advice about involving the police. The union may need to go up the chain of command if the manager who is approached doesn't act.

If the police are involved and demand that the union turn over its records, tell them to get a warrant and get specific legal advice immediately.

There are special considerations when members face criminal charges, but normally the union still has a duty to investigate and file a grievance where appropriate. Consult your servicing representative about getting specific legal advice.

# CHECKLIST FOR ANTI-HARASSMENT CONTRACT LANGUAGE OR POLICY

Strong anti-harassment language and policy helps the employer prevent and address harassment. It also helps workers understand what harassment is, how it can happen, what the law says, appropriate responses, and how to eliminate or at least minimize it in the workplace.

Your anti-harassment collective agreement clause and employer policy should:

- State the employer's responsibility to provide a harassment-free workplace.
- Define harassment, for example as offensive behaviour that a reasonable person should have known would be unwelcome. Refer to human rights, health and safety and other laws, for example listing the prohibited grounds of discrimination. See Section A of this guide for more information on what should be covered by the definition of harassment, for example:
  - Behaviour can be direct or indirect, obvious or subtle and in any form of expression
  - Repeated incidents or one serious incident
  - Psychological or physical
  - Human rights or personal
  - Workplace is broadly defined
  - Effects not intent matter
  - Harasser can be a supervisor, co-worker, user/client or other person in the workplace
  - Examples of harassment, noting that the list is not exhaustive

- ❑ State how the employer will prevent and correct harassment (see Section C of this guide), for example the employer will:
  - Prevent harassment
  - Provide a harassment-free work environment
  - Treat all complaints seriously and deal with harassment situations immediately upon becoming aware of them, whether or not a formal complaint has been made
  - Provide a fair, timely and effective process for investigating and resolving incidents and complaints
  - Treat complaints in a sensitive and confidential manner
  - Encourage the reporting of behaviour which breaches the policy
  - Ensure protection from retaliation
  - Provide workers who are targets and witnesses with counseling, accommodation or other support
  - Inform the union, for example send the union all investigation reports
  - Train supervisors and workers when they are hired and on an ongoing basis
  - Inform workers of the policy statement and steps taken to prevent harassment
  - Commit to eliminate the hazards and control the risk factors for harassment, including work environment factors
  
- ❑ Include language that says that nothing in the collective agreement affects the right of an employee subjected to harassment to seek any available legal remedy.
  
- ❑ Require an annual review of the policy and its implementation.

Ask your servicing representative for sample contract and policy language or other advice.





Temporary foreign  
workers in our union:

# A SOLIDARITY AND ACTION GUIDE

**CUPE**





Photo: Migrant Workers Alliance for Change

Illustration by Mariana Escobedo - [migrantworkers.org](http://migrantworkers.org)



# INTRODUCTION

CUPE locals across the country represent members working in Canada under various immigration statuses, including temporary foreign workers (TFWs), international students, refugees and others.

This document is about TFWs, often referred to as migrant workers, who come to Canada under the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP).

The TFWP is a federal program that brings workers to Canada from abroad to meet short-term, regional and sectoral labour needs. These workers are tied to their employers through closed work permits and usually have to leave Canada when their temporary employment ends.

TFWs in unionized jobs are covered by existing collective agreements. However, their unique immigration and work situations demand our special attention and support.

TFWs in Canada are part of over 200 million workers globally who have left their homes and families in search of decent work in other countries. Often, they have been forced to migrate due to poverty, unemployment, the climate crisis and the legacy of colonialism and capitalism.

The export of this labour is systematized, racist and exploitative. Workers in poorer countries must often find jobs abroad. This allows workers to earn money and send it back to their families in their home countries who depend on this income. Meanwhile, wealthier nations, like Canada, have set up temporary foreign worker programs for the benefit of employers, who are able to maintain low wages for workers whose rights cannot easily be protected.



Historically, Canada's TFWP and similar programs have used racist and exclusionary policies to exploit Black and racialized workers without offering them permanent status. Programs like the West Indian Domestic Scheme and the Live-in Caregiver Program, for example, exploited women from the Caribbean and the Philippines for decades. Opportunities for these workers to obtain permanent residency have been inconsistent. Similarly, the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program, which started in 1966, brings workers in seasonally but doesn't allow them to stay permanently, based on the racist belief that these workers won't fit into Canadian society.<sup>1</sup>

A significant migrant rights movement, led by migrant workers, has emerged in Canada in response to the injustice and abuse of these programs. Migrant workers have long been advocating for their rights, raising awareness of their difficult living and working conditions and the racism and discrimination they face. CUPE members have strongly supported their efforts and this document is guided and inspired by the leadership, political action and courage of migrant workers.

**Temporary foreign workers in our union: A solidarity and action guide** is designed to help CUPE bargaining teams and local executives support members who are TFWs at the bargaining table and in the workplace. It seeks to contribute to the broader fight for justice for migrant workers, and, by extension, all workers. This fight must take place in workplaces, in the government and on the streets. As trade unionists, we must continue building an anti-racist union and stand in solidarity with migrant workers.

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<sup>1</sup> Mooten, N. (2021). *Racism, discrimination and migrant workers in Canada: Evidence from the literature*. Policy Research, Research and Evaluation Branch, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.

# IMPORTANT TERMINOLOGY



## **ILLEGAL**

This is a term that is often used to describe migrants who are living in Canada without government permission. It is sometimes used synonymously with “undocumented.” The term “illegal” creates divisions within the working class, dehumanizing migrants by equating them with illegality. The “No one is illegal” movement advances solidarity with migrants and rejects the criminalization of migration.

## **IMMIGRATION STATUS**

Immigration status describes the permissions under which someone is allowed to visit or stay in Canada. For example, someone could be a citizen, a permanent resident or a tourist. Some people may not have an immigration status because they are undocumented.

## **LABOUR MARKET IMPACT ASSESSMENT (LMIA)**

A Labour Market Impact Assessment (LMIA) is a document from Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) that gives an employer permission to hire a temporary foreign worker.

A positive LMIA, sometimes called a confirmation letter, will show that there is a need for a foreign worker to fill a job. It will also show that no Canadian worker or permanent resident is available to do the job. A positive LMIA is provided to the employer by ESDC and is a requirement for the worker to apply for a work permit. It essentially functions as a contract between the Canadian government, the employer and the worker.

This is a document the union will want to access to determine whether the specific terms of work for a TFW align with the provisions of the collective agreement. Otherwise, the union can consider recourse such as a grievance.

There are some industries and occupations that are deemed “LMIA-exempt,” which means that the government believes that there are either circumstances in a specific occupation or an acute enough labour shortage in that industry that the employers can hire TFWs without first obtaining an LMIA. The list frequently changes, and in general, an LMIA is required for the TFWP.

## **NATIONAL OCCUPATION CLASSIFICATION (NOC)**

The National Occupation Classification (NOC) is a list of job classifications maintained by the Government of Canada. The NOC is an important part of the immigration process for migrant workers seeking work in Canada. The government uses the NOC to identify which occupations have a labour shortage and what the median wage rate will be.

## **OPEN WORK PERMITS AND CLOSED WORK PERMITS**

Work permits authorize migrants to work in Canada. Work permits can either be closed or open.

Closed work permits allow someone to work for a specific employer only. Closed work permits are a defining feature of the TFWP.

Open work permits allow a worker to seek employment from different employers. Some may include sector or location restrictions. International students who receive a post-graduate work permit often hold an open work permit.

Work permits are different from a visa or a temporary resident permit.

## **PERMANENT RESIDENT**

A permanent resident is someone who has satisfied the requirements set out in law to stay in Canada indefinitely, without being a citizen of Canada.

People can obtain permanent residence in several ways, including by immigrating to Canada, by receiving refugee protection or by successfully applying for it on humanitarian and compassionate grounds. Certain residency criteria must be met to maintain permanent resident status. Permanent residency can be lost or revoked.

## **PRECARIOUS WORKER**

A precarious worker is someone who does not have stable employment or whose job conditions make them more likely to face financial instability, mistreatment and exploitation.

A precarious worker who has a precarious immigration status is doubly vulnerable. Precarious immigration status is characterized by the possibility of deportation from Canada if a permit to remain in the country is revoked or expires without renewal.

## **REGULARIZATION**

Regularization means giving permanent residence status to those whose immigration status is precarious, such as those who have a temporary closed work permit or who are undocumented.

There have been several programs since the 1960s providing broad or targeted regularization for migrants and refugees.

CUPE has adopted convention resolutions and policies supporting full and permanent immigration status for all migrants and refugees currently in Canada.

## **SPONSORSHIP**

Sponsorship is a Canadian immigration policy that allows Canadians and permanent residents to officially support someone to come to Canada under certain circumstances, with specified responsibilities. Recipients of sponsorship may include refugees, certain family members and workers. It often speeds up the immigration process.

## **STATUS FOR ALL**

Status for All is a campaign led by migrant workers and their organizations and allies. It calls for all foreign workers to be given permanent residence status upon arrival in Canada.

Workers who come to Canada often arrive as temporary workers under closed work permits, meaning they are tied to one employer and one workplace. This makes them vulnerable to exploitation by their employers.

Having permanent residence upon arrival would allow workers the freedom of mobility afforded to other workers and would remove the fear of deportation for reasons beyond their control, such as job loss or an abusive employer.

## **THIRD-PARTY REPRESENTATIVES OR RECRUITERS**

Employers commonly use “recruiters” or immigration consulting agencies to handle their LMIA applications. These agencies also help find foreign workers who are qualified and interested in working in Canada.

The business of recruiting foreign workers is profitable and often unethical. Migrant workers are frequently financially exploited by recruiters and given false promises of jobs, work permits and permanent residency status.

Some jurisdictions have implemented rules for recruiters, typically involving licensing requirements and a code of conduct. As of 2024, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia have established, or plan to establish, licensing systems for recruiters.

## UNDOCUMENTED

Undocumented is a general term used to refer to someone who is in Canada without authorization to reside and/or work. A person can become undocumented because they entered the country without reporting to border authorities or because they did not leave the country after the expiration of their permission to stay. This can happen for a variety of reasons, including financial insecurity or the risk of persecution in their country of origin.

Undocumented people are at risk of being deported and subjected to employer abuse and exploitation. They often face hate and negative treatment from the public. Someone who may not have permission to stay in Canada (if they do not have the right kind of immigration status) may still be able to work in Canada if they hold a valid work permit.



# CHALLENGES FACED BY TEMPORARY FOREIGN WORKERS



If a TFW starts a job in a unionized workplace, and their job classification falls within the scope of the collective agreement, then they have the same rights under the collective agreement as any other person employed in the bargaining unit and are likewise entitled to union representation. But the circumstances under which TFWs work are different in important ways.

The TFWP is based on the premise that there is a labour shortage in certain sectors and in certain regions across the country. When an employer can't find a Canadian or permanent resident to fill a position, they can hire a foreign worker temporarily. These foreign workers come to Canada on a closed work permit, which means they can only work for that particular employer and at that specific workplace. Typically, they have to leave Canada when their temporary job ends.

The maximum amount of time a temporary worker can work in Canada may depend on the contract they sign with their employer and the conditions set in the Labour Market Impact Assessment (LMIA) if the employer was required to get one.

There are a few different streams of the TFWP. These include the low-wage stream, the high-wage stream, the agricultural stream, the Global Talent Stream and the caregiver program. CUPE members who are TFWs are most likely to be in Canada under the low-wage stream and the caregiver program.

Depending on the stream, the employer may have certain obligations. These can include providing housing, transportation to and from the worker's home country and private health insurance coverage.

On paper, the worker is free to quit their job. In practice, however, quitting may risk not only their income but also their housing, health care and even their permission to remain in the country.

TFWs are not allowed to find another job unless they find another employer with permission from the government to hire TFWs. This process can take months. Quitting is often not an option, and many are therefore forced to stay in jobs that are exploitative. Migrant workers in Canada often refer to this situation as modern-day slavery. This charge has been echoed by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery who described Canada's closed work permit system as "a breeding ground for contemporary forms of slavery."<sup>2</sup>

## **ROLE OF THE UNION**

Like other contract or temporary workers, migrant workers are often reluctant to join union activities, file grievances or take job action because they fear losing their jobs. But unlike other precarious workers, migrant workers face the additional risk of losing their immigration status and being deported. This risk creates an enormous financial and emotional burden.

Migrant workers also have legitimate reasons to be worried about filing complaints against employers with various levels of government. This is because the TFWP has been established to meet the needs of employers rather than workers.

These conditions may sow division in the union if migrant workers' concerns are misconstrued as anti-union. These tensions can also become fertile ground for racism and discrimination.

<sup>2</sup> Obokata, T. (2023). *End of mission statement of the special rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences*. United Nations. <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/slavery/sr/statements/eom-statement-canada-sr-slavery-2023-09-06.pdf>

Employers can take advantage of these divisions, making it more difficult for workers to achieve better working conditions and gains at the bargaining table. Union solidarity is the most effective tool to fight back.

Locals need to closely monitor the treatment of migrant workers in the workplace and make sure employers follow their requirements under the TFWP. Failing to address employers' violations or to educate members about the TFWP may lead to union members feeling resentful of migrant workers.

Sometimes workers can misdirect their legitimate frustrations about poor working conditions, high living costs and other issues toward migrant workers, wrongly blaming them instead of focusing on the actions or inactions of employers. Migrant workers are frequently accused of "taking our jobs" and can face hostility for speaking languages other than English or French.

The union should also be aware that the safety measures for migrant workers set up by federal, territorial and provincial governments are often insufficient or even harmful. For example, reporting issues through the federal government's tip line may lead to an investigation of the employer. In small workplaces, this could accidentally reveal the identity of the worker who suffered harm, exposing them to retaliation. The union must therefore carefully consider all the complaint and grievance processes available to migrant workers before moving forward.



# LOOKING TO DO MORE?

Here are some steps your local can take to support temporary foreign workers. Not all actions may be right for your local's specific situation.

Migrant workers know best what their needs are. Whenever possible, migrant workers should be involved in and lead this work.



# ACTION 1:

## SHOW UNION SOLIDARITY

The union should **identify and address structural barriers** in the local that prevent migrant workers from fully participating in the union. For instance, the union can address language barriers by providing information in multiple languages.

The union can offer collective agreement **orientation sessions** specifically for newly hired TFWs. This would not only provide TFWs with essential information, but also create a welcoming and trustworthy environment for members who might be new to the union or the country, and who are experiencing the vulnerability of their immigration status.

The union could **create committees** for migrant worker participation. This would encourage lived-experience leadership in local unions so that the union's efforts on behalf of migrant workers are led by migrant workers. Trust-building may be required before migrant workers participate on committees or in other union structures. Contact your CUPE national representative for help.

Locals can also **organize events** to increase migrant worker involvement. Events could include inviting migrant worker organizations to host "lunch and learns," celebrating significant cultural days or holding a community barbecue. Remember to consider the cultural and religious backgrounds of migrant workers when selecting food and drinks for events.



# ACTION 2:

## BUILD COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

The union can **build connections with local migrant justice advocacy groups**. These groups often have experience with connecting migrant workers to resources such as psychological support and legal aid.

Migrant justice advocacy groups may also be able to **connect workers** to other members of their community. This can help workers who are suffering from isolation feel a sense of belonging.

CUPE has debated and adopted policy at our national conventions in support of the **Status for All campaign** aimed at building a migrant-led movement to win full and permanent immigration status for all migrants, including undocumented people.

To keep up to date on this campaign, visit [migrantrights.ca](http://migrantrights.ca). Our work together inside the union and in the community is a contribution to this movement.



Photo: Migrante Canada

# **ACTION 3:**

## **REQUEST DOCUMENTS**

Requesting a wide range of documents and information about employers' plans to hire TFWs is a good strategy for the union to gather the necessary information to protect everyone's rights.

Employers often use third-party immigration consultants for TFW applications and might not automatically share all relevant information without a specific request. But this information can be very helpful for unions.

The TFWP application requires employers to prove no Canadian citizens or permanent residents are available to fill the position. They also need to prove that they have advertised the job for a specific time and publicized that it is in a unionized workplace.

The evidence employers provide may show that their job advertisements were minimal or misleading, did not state that the workplace is unionized or failed to include the union in the process.

If the union wasn't informed of these job postings, the local may be able to contest the claimed labour shortage by demonstrating that bargaining unit members were interested and available to do the work. This could take the form of a grievance or a complaint to the Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) tip line. Either the worker or the union can make complaints to the tip line, but care is required to ensure the immigration status of temporary foreign workers is protected in the process. CUPE does not recommend using the tip line without consulting a CUPE national representative or migrant rights advocate.

Contesting a labour shortage could put the union in a difficult position of having to protect the seniority rights of existing members while also ensuring that they do not jeopardize the employment of TFWs whose immigration status – and livelihoods –

could be at risk if they lose their jobs. Such a situation is ripe for xenophobia and racism, and an employer can exploit division in the local. The union must take steps to simultaneously protect both groups. There is no easy solution to this tension. Each situation is unique and may require a specific approach.

Here is a list of possible **document disclosure requests** regarding the employer's intentions and/or actual plans to hire and/or house foreign workers:

1. Copies of all applications made to any level of government in relation to the hiring of foreign workers. This includes, but is not limited to, all Labour Market Impact Assessments received and/or applied for.
2. All promotional material and an explanation of all steps taken to advertise and promote locally the positions for which foreign workers will be hired.
3. The number of foreign workers the employer plans to hire.
4. A list of all job classifications for which the employer plans to hire foreign workers.
5. Expected start and end dates for hired foreign workers, as per relevant program requirements/restrictions.
6. A copy of any contracts, agreements or other such documents between the employer and any recruitment agencies that are providing services to the employer to help hire and recruit foreign workers for positions in or outside the bargaining unit.
7. A copy of any contracts, agreements or other such documents between the employer and any foreign worker in the bargaining unit. No agreements should be signed that undermine the union's role as the official bargaining agent.
8. The employer's plans to provide housing support.
9. The employer's plans for the settlement and integration of the foreign workers that arrive, including details of the employer's plans to provide information to foreign workers about their rights.
10. The employer's plans to support foreign workers to acquire permanent residence status in anticipation of the expiration of the temporary work permit.

# **ACTION 4:**

## **NO TWO-TIER AGREEMENTS**

### **CUPE's national bargaining policy opposes two-tier agreements in our workplaces.**

These agreements create different conditions for workers doing the same work, often excluding new employees from protections that workers with more seniority enjoy. Two-tier agreements weaken union solidarity and limit our ability to make meaningful gains in bargaining.

Employers may seek two-tier agreements by proposing a separate letter of understanding (LOU) to lock in lower wages or different conditions for newly hired migrant workers. CUPE considers this discriminatory and locals should never agree to lower terms based on immigration status.

Employers may also point to federal TFWP rules to justify lower provisions for migrant workers. But these rules only set out minimum labour standards and should not be used to undermine provisions already stated in the collective agreement.

In addition to the collective agreement, employers may have a duty to provide specific support to workers they hire under the TFWP, such as housing support, transportation and health care coverage. These basic provisions are not perks; they are obligations that the employer must meet depending on the kind of program through which the workers arrive.

Despite this, employers sometimes attempt to negotiate LOUs to lower these standards. For example, an employer might try to avoid providing housing and transportation by offering migrant workers a wage enhancement in lieu of these benefits. This is not allowed. The employer's duty to provide the entitlements laid out under the TFWP is non-negotiable because these entitlements are set out in the laws and regulations governing the program. However, it is possible to bargain language that makes improvements to these basic entitlements, like better health care coverage.

The union should also be aware that signing an LOU could violate human rights legislation if the agreement is deemed to be discriminatory.

Finally, locals should ensure that the existence of distinct employer support for TFWs, like housing, health care and transportation, is understood by the membership. The provision of these benefits is the employer meeting minimum legal standards set up by the federal government, not preferential treatment. Educating members about the TFWP will be helpful. Contact CUPE's Human Rights Branch for assistance.



Photo: Solidarity Across Borders

# **ACTION 5:**

## **FILE GRIEVANCES AND COMPLAINTS**

If the employer violates the collective agreement or their obligations under the TFWP, the union can **file a grievance or a complaint**.

Employers using the TFWP must follow specific standards. Regulation of these standards is shared by federal and provincial or territorial authorities.

The federal government handles violations of immigration rules, while provincial and territorial governments deal with violations of provincial and territorial labour laws.

Sometimes, municipalities may investigate public health issues or the state of migrant worker housing.

Some jurisdictions have special protections for foreign workers, typically found in specific legislation or in the relevant Employment Standards Act.

These rules vary, from specifying rights for foreign workers to establishing a licensing system for recruiters. Each jurisdiction is different.

In certain situations, it might be beneficial to file a complaint at the federal level, file a grievance against the employer that could reach a provincial or territorial tribunal or board, and also lodge a complaint under a provincial or territorial temporary foreign worker protection act, if available.

For example, if the union suspects the employer has threatened a TFW with deportation for being involved in the union, the union could consider a grievance as well as a complaint with ESDC. In jurisdictions where unionized members have access to the Human Rights Commission, the member may be able to file a human rights complaint concurrently. In jurisdictions with specific protections for TFWs, there may be another complaint process available.

The union must aim to ensure that collective agreements are respected while also protecting any affected TFWs in the workplace.

If an employer signs a contract with a TFW without mentioning the workplace is unionized, and if they intend to employ the worker without respecting the collective agreement, the union can file a complaint with the ESDC. The union could also file grievances for the employer's violations of the collective agreement, like contracting out bargaining unit work, failing to follow posting procedures or violating the scope clause.

While ESDC guidelines recommend that employers consult with the union when hiring a TFW into a unionized position, this is not required. However, the guidelines state that the hiring of TFWs cannot "affect current or foreseeable labour disputes at the workplace." If there is evidence that hiring a TFW could affect the "course, outcome or settlement of any labour dispute," the employer's application for an LMIA could be refused.<sup>3</sup> For example, an employer cannot use TFWs during a strike or a lockout even if they are in a jurisdiction that does not prohibit the use of replacement workers.

ESDC runs a confidential tip line for complaints against employers, including abuse faced by TFWs or LMIA requirement violations. However, migrant workers have criticized this tip line as it sometimes results in more abuse. This is because the government notifies employers about complaints, making it easy to guess who made the complaint in small workplaces. As such, the union should use the tip line cautiously and generally should rely on processes set out in the collective agreement to protect worker rights.

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<sup>3</sup> Employment and Social Development Canada. *Program requirements for low-wage positions*. Retrieved March 18, 2024, from <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/foreign-workers/median-wage/low/requirements.html>

# ACTION 6:

## OPEN WORK PERMITS FOR VULNERABLE WORKERS

If a worker is experiencing abuse or at risk of experiencing abuse, they can be eligible to get an open work permit to leave the employer. The federal government has a process through which a worker can apply for a temporary open work permit. The process requires the worker to submit evidence to back a claim of abuse or risk of abuse. The union should be aware of this option for members who may be experiencing or at risk of abuse.



Photo: Migrant Canada

# ACTION 7:

## TEMPORARY RESIDENT PERMITS FOR VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING

It is common for migrant workers to be victims of labour trafficking. Labour trafficking is a criminal code offense. It happens when someone is recruited, moved or held to force them into doing work. Migrant workers with closed work permits are at high risk of labour trafficking.

Trafficked workers frequently lack immigration status. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada can issue a special permit called the Temporary Resident Permit for Victims of Trafficking which will grant the holder temporary status for a minimum of 180 days as well as an open work permit. The union should be aware of this option for members who may be victims of labour trafficking.



Photo: Migrant Workers Alliance for Change

# ACTION 8:

## ASK FOR HELP

Immigration law is complex. CUPE representatives, local executive members and the union in general are not expected to be experts in immigration law. **Reach out to your CUPE national representative, human rights representative or legal representative** to determine options for support when proceeding with a case involving migrant worker exploitation or abuse.



Photo: Migrant Workers Alliance for Change



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