



OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF CUPW 730 / MAY 2022

# INSIDE OUT

INJURY

no hazard pay  
contract extension

illness

stress

depression

CONFLICT

overwork

harrassment

**Heroes  
Work Here.**





**INSIDEOUT** is the monthly publication of the Edmonton Local of CUPW.

This newsletter aspires to educate and inform members and affiliates about our union's activities, opportunities, and challenges, as well as to raise awareness regarding all things labour.

Opinions expressed are those of the author and not necessarily the official views of the Local.

The Communications Committee (responsible for this publication) is always interested in submissions of original articles, photographs, or illustrations. Prospective material must always concern CUPW or the labour movement, but submissions of general interest to the membership will also be considered.

We will also publish Letters to the Editor should you feel an issue requires further discussion. All submissions are subject to editing for brevity, clarity, etc.

To make a submission, or to get involved, contact the Communications Committee at [communications730@gmail.com](mailto:communications730@gmail.com).

Communications Committee members:

- Natasha Fryzuk
- Kyle Turner
- Wendy Crispin
- Jeremy Rusten
- Raina Dakus

**EMPOWER ORGANIZE RESIST**

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## LOCAL EXECUTIVE FULL-TIME OFFICERS



**PRESIDENT**  
Roland Schmidt  
[union@cupwedm.net](mailto:union@cupwedm.net)



**SECRETARY-TREASURER**  
Karry Biri  
[Treasurer@cupwedm.net](mailto:Treasurer@cupwedm.net)



**GRIEVANCE**  
Elizabeth Smallwood  
[Grievance@cupwedm.net](mailto:Grievance@cupwedm.net)



**HEALTH & SAFETY**  
Rashpal Sehmy  
[Health.Safety@cupwedm.net](mailto:Health.Safety@cupwedm.net)

## LOCAL EXECUTIVE TABLE OFFICERS



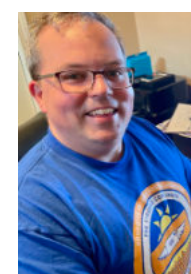
**COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER**  
Natasha Fryzuk  
[communication730@gmail.com](mailto:communication730@gmail.com)



**1ST VICE-PRESIDENT ORGANIZING**  
Devon Rundvall  
[organize730@gmail.com](mailto:organize730@gmail.com)



**2ND VICE-PRESIDENT EMPP**  
Chris Pilgrim  
[empp730@gmail.com](mailto:empp730@gmail.com)



**3RD VICE-PRESIDENT COLLECTIONS**  
Peter Hall  
[depots730@gmail.com](mailto:depots730@gmail.com)



**4TH VICE-PRESIDENT RSMC**  
Osamah Abdullah  
[rsmc730@gmail.com](mailto:rsmc730@gmail.com)



**5TH VICE-PRESIDENT AUXILIARY**  
Kathleen Mpulubusi  
[gmrw730@gmail.com](mailto:gmrw730@gmail.com)

### ADDRESS

18121 107 Avenue NW  
Edmonton, AB  
T5S 1K4

### HOURS

Monday to Friday  
7 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
Closed weekends

### CONTACT

Office: (780) 423-9000  
1 (877) 423-CUPW  
Fax: (780) 423-2883

# PRESIDENT'S REPORT MAY 1, 2022

## DUE PROCESS: WE ONLY GET WHAT WE ARE WILLING TO GIVE

(Update: This report was given while I was still Local President prior to a motion being debated about reducing our Local dues by \$36/year, which would have cost the Local at least \$60,000/year. This motion would be the third attempt in three years to reduce our dues under the questionable pretense of "supporting financially struggling members". For record, each of these motions were defeated. The first one (Sept 2019) was obliterated 107 to 9. The latest attempt was presented to 71 members at the May 2022 GMM and needed a 2/3 majority of 47 votes to pass but only managed 29.)

**H**appy International Day of the working class! Although not celebrated to the same extent in North America as the rest of the world, it is important for us to reflect on why unions are important and how the labour movement can make the world a better, more just, place. It's an exciting time for labour as public sentiment is losing patience with the rich getting historically richer than ever before, all in the context of a global pandemic. Exemplifying this class tension, one of the biggest companies in the world, Amazon, owned by the world's richest person, is now facing [successful unionization drives](#). What the labour orthodoxy couldn't do in 28 years with tens of millions of dollars, deploying an army of staffers, was accomplished by dozens of rank-and-file volunteer organizers in their own facility with only \$150,000. Change is possible, but only by breaking free of methods unable to adapt to the

attacks from the ruling class over the past 40 years.

Time has been cruel to all workers, especially those that are non-unionized. Using market-equivalent delivery/logistics positions as an example, you could get hired tomorrow just outside Edmonton as an Amazon

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***"In Alberta, we are especially familiar with politicians peddling right wing populist rhetoric trying to trick workers into dismantling our public services in exchange for short-term rebates."***

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warehouse worker or delivery driver for between \$17-19/hour (\$39, 520/year). Conversely, the wage of a CUPW letter carrier or plant worker tops out around \$29/hour (\$60,320/year). Neither wage keeps pace with inflation or the absurdities of an unregulated housing market (Edmonton housing prices have skyrocketed 353% since 1981), but the union advantage is clear: we make much more in wages and benefits than our non-unionized comrades. Digging deeper into the numbers it is clear just how necessary it becomes for all workers to win collective representation so we can

create more leverage to balance the rest of society.

There are two main reasons our unorganized comrades, like those working for Amazon in Alberta, are suffering more than CUPW members. The first relates to leverage that workers can wield: between 1981 and 2021, the rate of unionization in the USA dropped from 20% to 10.3%. In contrast, Canada sank 37% to 30%. Less unionization means workers are less able to force wealthy companies like Amazon to redistribute their wealth to those that are responsible for the creation of that wealth. The second main reason is that companies have become more sophisticated in their anti-union campaigns. For example, Amazon spent \$4.3million in 2021 to scare workers about the cost of union dues.

### **Individual VS. Collective Power**

In Alberta, we are especially familiar with politicians peddling right wing populist rhetoric trying to trick workers into dismantling our public services in exchange for short-term rebates. It's like Ralph Klein cutting back our public healthcare and literally blowing up hospitals to give each Albertan a \$200 cheque. Sadly, we Albertans fell for it, time and again, which is one of the contributing factors why we've long lived in the most anti-worker province in Canada. This exploitative rhetoric is identical to criticisms leveled against paying dues.

A struggle for unions has been their willingness to confront the confusion expressed by their members about dues and be honest about what is exactly at stake by not paying them. Infamously, instead of just paying their workers more, Delta Airlines bankrolled an anti-union campaign claiming that instead of unionizing and paying \$700/year in dues, their workers could buy a new video games system and be better off. At face value this seems tempting and tries to stir up people's fears and individual desires; but past the surface this argument is absolutely absurd for how short-sighted it is.

Going back to the CUPW/Amazon example you can see the direct consequences of what not paying dues means. At Amazon a worker will make at least \$6,739 less of starting wage than CUPW, with a much lower wage ceiling. On top of that, an Amazon worker will collect approximately \$10,000 less in benefits due to no pension and considerably less extended health, short term disability, and dental coverage, as well as less escalating leave provisions. Alternatively, after deducting \$1200/year in CUPW dues, our collective leverage is able to win our members roughly \$15,500 more in wage and benefits value. This is before even taking into account all the extra invaluable things a union will do like elect full time officers to administer a union, keep members informed, enforce oversight on route restructures to mitigate job loss, protect members in disciplinary hearings and, most importantly, run educational programs to train members how to empower their own workfloors. And on and on and on.

### **Guaranteed Returns**

Every dollar you spend in dues as a CUPW member nets you close to \$13 in value you would not get as a comparable non-union worker. If you could be legally guaranteed that, no matter what, for an investment of \$1200 a year you would receive at least an additional \$15,500 a year in value, you would take that opportunity every

time and even ask how you could contribute more. Dues are the symbolic lifeblood of the workers' struggle to create a better world and we only get what we put in. For example, if our local decided to pay a total \$125 in dues a month, or \$144 a year more than what we already pay, we could elect three new officers for the letter carriers, EMPP and RSMCs to exclusively oversee representation, grievance hearing, consultations, activist recruitment and steward mentorship on a full time basis for each classification. Any union or local that did something like this would drastically increase its strength by

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***"A struggle for unions has been their willingness to confront the confusion expressed by their members about dues and be honest about what is exactly at stake by not paying them."***

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creating more opportunities to share knowledge and recruit more activists. No wonder companies will spend millions of dollars to keep unions from getting a foothold in their operations. In the end, our power is not limited as much by the boss as it is by our own ambition and willingness to invest in our own organization.

At today's GMM, our membership will have an important debate on the direction of our Local. Do we give our members an extra \$36 dollars a year or do we spend around \$60,000 to create more services to grow our Local and support our members? In these matters, the membership is always right because they always get what they ask for. If our members do not support an attempt by their leadership to better support and service them they will say

so while also accepting what they are giving up. We can't have it both ways. The debate today encapsulates the overarching struggle of individual interests vs collective power. We'll see what the members have an appetite for.

### **Resolution**

Since January, Rashpal and I, along with Karry and Elizabeth for one case, have been dedicating a lot of time arranging for mediation opportunities for members previously involved in the union that, for whatever reason, have strayed or developed hard feelings toward the Local sometime over the past 15 years. Although many of these tensions originated well before our leadership group was elected into the office, we feel it is important to try to repair those bridges so we can focus our fight on the boss and not each other. Out of the 20 people we had originally identified for mediation, we've had positive breakthroughs with 5, a mostly constructive arrangement with 1, and are trying to schedule sessions for 4 more. As slow as this process is, we are doing our best to the extent that the other parties are willing. Considering the big picture, a few months to make these meetings happen is a very small amount of time compared to the 15 or so years some of these animosities have been festering.

Finally, on a personal note that may have implications for our Local, I wanted to clarify what happens if I am to be elected as the CUPW National 3rd Vice-President of Organizing at the special conference on May 6. As I stated in a past email dispatch, I officially committed to running for the position on April 14. I feel just as reluctant running for this position as when I first ran for Local President, but I'm ultimately doing it because our entire union needs to get serious about properly organizing our workfloors, and no one else with actual experience coordinating job actions or training workforce organizer is stepping up.

*(continued on next page)*

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

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If I win, I have to relocate to Ottawa by June as well as immediately resign as Local President to be sworn in as National 3rd VP. Then, Devon (as Local 1st VP) will assume Local President duties until the Election Committee holds an election for the vacancy. I'll remain a member of the local and continue attending GMMs as long as they are run virtually. If I lose, nothing

changes. Either way, the local will continue to run smoothly.

I really don't want to leave Edmonton, but we need to get more locals on board with an organizing-first strategy if we're going to turn this ship around. If elected, I could absolutely do that with a National platform. Regardless if I leave or not, I remain committed to making myself available to help with the ongoing mediation attempts. If this is to be my last GMM as your

President, I thank all of you that supported me in trying to grow our Local into an actual fighting organization and look forward to expanding our work to other locals so CUPW can develop the strength necessary to start winning again. No struggle, no victory. Solidarity.



## THANK YOU, EDMONTON

Comrades & friends,

I'm pleased to share that on May 6th, I was decisively elected to the position of CUPW's National Vice President of Organizing! As stated previously, Brother Devon Rundvall (as Local 1st VP) will assume Local President duties until the Election Committee holds an election for the vacancy. I can't think of anyone better to step into the office. Devon understands what is needed to keep our workfloors empowered and has already gone about doing (socially distanced) parking lot meetings to promote upcoming educational. If he decides to accept nomination for the vacant Presidency, he would have my unconditional support as a candidate. It is vitally important that we use this next year to strengthen the spirit of solidarity in our union as well as recruit and train our members to be ready for the next round of negotiations. The outcome will not change unless we collectively put in the work to determine otherwise.

For my full statement on what my election win means for CUPW, please check out the latest dispatch at [cupw730.ca](http://cupw730.ca).

By June 1st I will have to relocate to Ottawa. Although I plan to attend GMMs as a member while they are still running virtually, I'll dearly miss being in this Local and all the relationships I've built with so many of you, and the inspiring work we've done together, over the years. I'm very excited at the prospect of helping to grow our union but I wish I didn't have to leave my home to do it. Farewell for now, Edmonton, and thank you.

In solidarity,

**ROLAND SCHMIDT** (he/him/il)



3<sup>rd</sup> VICE-PRESIDENT / 3<sup>ème</sup> VICE-PRÉSIDENTE  
Canadian Union of Postal Workers  
Syndicat des travailleurs et travailleuses des postes

## 1<sup>ST</sup> VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT APRIL 2, 2022

### OUR FIGHT IS WITH THE EMPLOYER

*If we wish to see changes for the better in the workplace, we need to remember that our fight is with our employer – not with each other.*

Over the last month, I have spent a significant amount of time fulfilling my responsibility as First Vice President in covering the Presidential office while Roland has been away. The role of president can be a challenge at the best of times, and I think we can all agree these are not the best of times.

From that chair, one gets an interesting overview of how the local is operating. Sometimes you see the patterns and strategies that Canada Post is employing in try to keep our members compliant and submissive. Other times you can see political games being played within the Union. Individuals vying for status or influence. And when things are running well, you see the solidarity amongst our members, working together to improve our lives.

Unfortunately, I also noticed a disturbing trend of member on member conflict. Because we are all human and have to work with other humans, there will always be friction and conflicts. But it's a disturbing to see how much conflict is happening between our members. I'm not talking about a specific negative interaction, so if you think it's about you, it's not – well not just you anyways.

It has been an incredibly stressful time for all of us, whether we feel it or not.

Household budgets are stretched and the pathetic wage increase is not covering the increase in anything. We are all still feeling the isolation and other effects that COVID has triggered in our society. As far as I know this has been the first pandemic any of us has had to get through. Now we have World War Three being threatened upon us, all over the news and social media. Not to mention the incredible injustices of an ongoing class war we have now been a part of for generations. I believe all this stress has been the reason for the increase in conflicts among our coworkers. As the pressure builds it has to be released somewhere.

It's important to remember this as we interact with our Brothers, Sisters, and Cousins at work. You have no idea what they are going through at home, or even what they are dealing with internally. When the pressure increases to process the mail, or to finish your route faster, we can start to blame our coworkers. I invite you to stop and check yourself. Is this really because of John or Sally? Is it really worth getting so worked up about?

Maybe it's this ridiculous system that we all feel stuck in. Maybe it's the system that Canada Post has developed to create conflict among its workers. Their system was built this way, if not by design then at least by neglect. Despite what they may say on their banners, they don't actually seem to care about a safe work environment.

I can assure you that there is a much better way to use that energy and angst being directed at each other. It

was that frustration that finally convinced me to get more involved in our local. I told myself, "If someone isn't going to make the changes then I guess I'll have to step up."

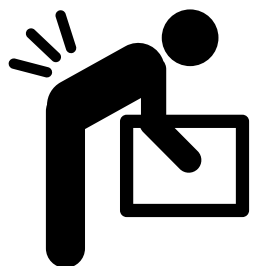
But to get back to the pattern of member-on-member conflict. If you feel that you are in an unsafe situation talk to a Shop Steward, a LJOH member, and/or a supervisor. You may have to escalate it to the point of refusing unsafe work. And remember it is Canada Posts responsibility to create and maintain a safe work environment, and they have historically done a poor job of this. Hence at least some part the reason for the introduction of Bill C-65.

But if you find yourself in one of those situations where there seems to be a conflict brewing between you and a coworker, nip it in the bud early. Be the adult in the room and address the problem before it gets to the point of harassment or bullying. Approach the situation with the mindset that you don't know what the other person is going through or even what their take on the situation is.

Finally remember that our fight is with Canada Post and an unjust system of subjugation. As long as we are fighting amongst ourselves, we will never see a tangible improvement in our work lives.



**DEVON RUNDVALL**  
(HE/HIM)  
1<sup>ST</sup> VP ORGANIZING  
CUPW 730



## HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT:

## UNDERSTANDING ACCOMMODATIONS



*Rashpal Sehmy, CUPW 730 Health and Safety Officer*

**I**t is always important to understand our role as Shop/Social Stewards and activists in providing a safe work environment for those that have had their duties modified or the need for an accommodation in the workplace. Sometimes these are the result of a workplace injury, violence in the workplace, or an illness.

Canada Post and CUPW are obligated by the Collective Agreement, the Canada Labour Code, and the Canadian Human Rights Commission to ensure employees/our members are able to do their job as required during a return to work program or an accommodation. This can be found in the Urban Collective Agreement under Article 54 and the RSMC Collective Agreement in Appendix G.

Sometimes we do have members who are being accommodated who CPC does not offer opportunities for overtime. It is important to know that

employees with accommodations are able to work overtime if the work fits within their restrictions. This is when the role of the Shop Steward comes in to ensure we help our members file the proper grievances on this violation of the Collective Agreement or any thing else pertaining to an improper accommodation which may be taking place. Sometimes these situations can be resolved by having the effected member call our office for further guidance.

If CPC, however, is not following the rotation of duties and this results in backfilling, please ensure the proper grievances are sent into the office with backup, such as rotation of duty schedules showing the changes, etc. Please reach out to Elizabeth Smallwood at 780-423-9000 EXT 3 on guidance if needed on this as well or at [Grievance@cupwedm.net](mailto:Grievance@cupwedm.net)

If you require more help in this matter, please reach out to our office.



## ROUTE MEASUREMENT REPORT: GONE, GONE, THE DAMAGE DONE.

**T**he Depot 2 volume count is in the books. We were a little rusty after 2 years, but the Union observers - Jen Reimer, Kathleen Mpulubusi, Peter Hall and Jeremy Rusten, shook off the rust quickly. There were the usual ups and downs of missed markings and carriers leaving without being weighed (and subsequently called back), but overall it went quite smoothly. The CPC Route Measurement Officers were very quick to fix most concerns brought forward.

However, CPC was quick to throw a few curve balls our way. Without consulting the Union, either regionally or nationally, CPC decided that vacancies that are submitted during the 1st week of the volume count will only count under certain conditions.

1. There must be a change of address with the vacancy.
2. The vacancy has to be visually verified.
3. It must be recorded in the Edit Book.

We immediately raised a strong objection to this as most vacancies don't have changes of address and how do you visually confirm? Peek through the windows of an empty house?

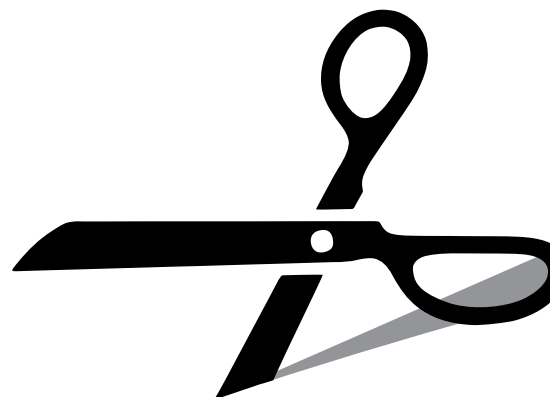
Vacancies are crucial to determining the % Coverage of a Route. The lower the % Coverage, the longer the route. By putting conditions on recording a vacancy, this ensures a lower % Coverage. After discussion, it was agreed that the vacancies put in by the carrier's in the 1st week of the volume count will stand without the new conditions. But, for the next volume counts (Mayfield and Rosedale) vacancies must be recorded BEFORE the volume count begins. They will be accepted without these new conditions.

The overriding concern was the overall low volume of mail and the 4 plant shutdowns due to COVID-19. Preliminary calculations show that packets and parcels are down approximately 30% from the 2019

volume count. We will know better before the start of the build what the true damage will be in terms of route loss. We will be fighting vigorously to protect the number of routes and ensure that routes are built fairly and safely for all.

Thank you to the Depot 2 Carriers who helped out the Union observers by verifying packets and parcels. Thank you to Michelle Woods and Chris Pilgrim from the EMPP who kept track of the mail being dispatched to Depot 2. This shows true solidarity. We have to look out for each other and their assistance was invaluable in keeping CPC honest and accountable.

The next Volume Count is Mayfield Depot from June 13-24. Stay tuned!



# RSMCs FEELING GAS PAINS FROM BLOATED FUEL COSTS

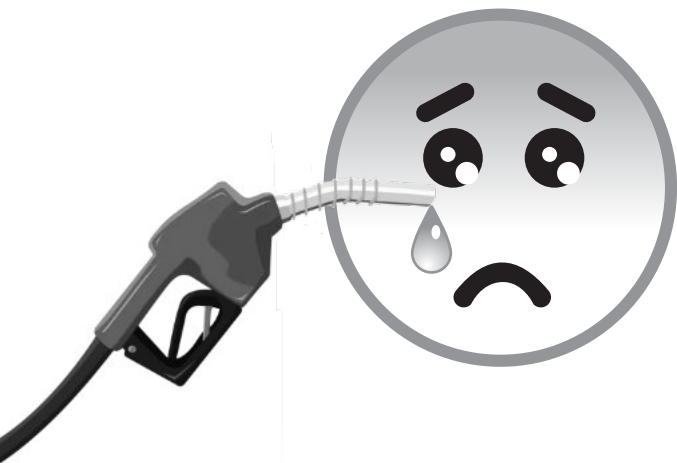
From CUPW eDigest - 2022-05-20

**W**e've all felt the pinch of gas price increases – but some of our members are also feeling it as a cost of doing their jobs. Rural and Suburban Mail Carriers who use their own vehicle are compensated for the vehicle and mileage, but recent price hikes at the pumps are cutting into their earnings. Canada Post fuel surcharges defray the cost of fuel for a lot of CPC's operations – but not for RSMCs. The upcoming COLA payment helps with the cost of living, but RSMCs need help with the cost of working too.

Their mileage compensation is fixed at the cap for non-taxable mileage compensation. If they make more than that cap, then all their vehicle compensation all becomes taxable. So the only way to get more in RSMCs' pockets to pay for gas is for the federal government to increase that cap. The cap was set in December 2021 based on 2021 inflation numbers, but we're in a whole new situation now – especially at the pumps.

This petition [<https://petitions.ourcommons.ca/en/Petition/Sign/e-4007>] initiated by RSMCs, is a way we can all support the call for the federal government to act.

Further steps will follow to try to put the responsibility for fuel costs back on the employer where it belongs, for economic and environmental reasons, but first we are trying to secure some immediate financial relief for our members. 🇺🇸



# WORKER SOLIDARITY LABOUR VICTORY AND STRUGGLE, AT HOME AND ABROAD

**SEIU Local 2** - Unionized workers in the Town of South Bruce Peninsula, ON, were locked out on April 3rd, 2022. Twenty two employees who plow snow and operate landfills and arenas in the town have been without a new contract since March 2021 and have been in a legal strike position since March 15th of this year. The lockout ended after 4 days and negotiations brought up wage increases from the proposed 2% to 3%, falling short of the union's proposed 4.5%.

**Workers United Local 178** - On March 24th, 2022, members of Workers United Local 178 who work at Watson Gloves in Burnaby, BC, walked off the job to demand better working conditions, a more fair contract, and wages that keep up with the rising cost of living.

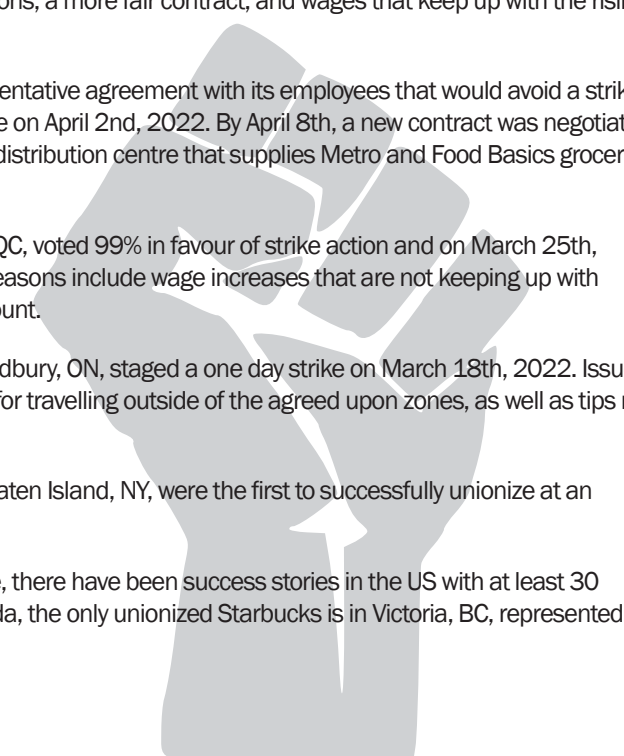
**Unifor Local 414** - After initial reports that Metro had reached a tentative agreement with its employees that would avoid a strike, members of Local 414 rejected the agreement and went on strike on April 2nd, 2022. By April 8th, a new contract was negotiated. Unifor represents more than 900 employees at Metro, a grocery distribution centre that supplies Metro and Food Basics grocery stores across southern Ontario.

**Teamsters Local 1999** - Workers at Molson-Coors in Longueuil, QC, voted 99% in favour of strike action and on March 25th, 2022, 420 members of Teamsters Local 1999 went on strike. Reasons include wage increases that are not keeping up with inflation and a layoff system that does not take seniority into account.

**SkipTheDishes** - 300 non-unionized SkipTheDishes drivers in Sudbury, ON, staged a one day strike on March 18th, 2022. Issues include SkipTheDishes not fairly compensating drivers for gas or for travelling outside of the agreed upon zones, as well as tips not being fairly distributed.

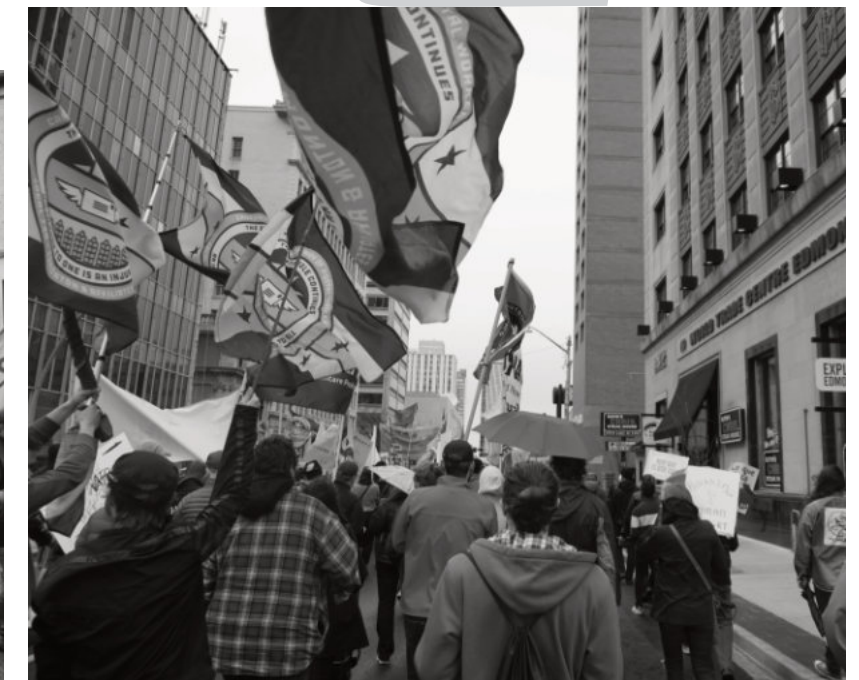
**Amazon Labor Union** - On April 1st, 2022, Amazon workers in Staten Island, NY, were the first to successfully unionize at an Amazon facility.

**Starbucks** - While the Starbucks in Calgary lost its bid to unionize, there have been success stories in the US with at least 30 Starbucks locations joining Workers United as of writing. In Canada, the only unionized Starbucks is in Victoria, BC, represented by the United Steel Workers.



# OUR FLAG FLIES PROUD IN SUPPORT OF WORKERS' RIGHTS

After a frustrating period of hiatus, our representatives were out in force to many events in May to stand in solidarity for workers' rights and dignity, including (left) the Workers' Day of Mourning at Grant Notley Park on April 28, the Rally for Public Health Care at the Alberta Legislature (below), and the May Day March on May 1st on Jasper Avenue (right, far right) 🇺🇸



No  
Scab  
Mail  
Here

# NO SCAB MAIL HERE: THE 1987 POSTAL STRIKES

By Doug Nesbitt, Rankandfile.ca  
Originally published Oct 6, 2017

## In 1987, Canada Post management

began to unroll a major privatization drive of post offices and elimination of door-to-door delivery. The plan aimed to privatize 3,500 rural post offices and close another 1,700 over a decade. This would allow the company to slash 4,200 union jobs. Canada Post also announced that no new residential areas would have door-to-door delivery. New “community mailboxes” would be installed, reducing the quality of service and cutting jobs.

While the press, politicians and business community backed Canada Post’s plans, postal workers found substantial support among sections of the public opposed to the destruction of their local post offices, cuts to services, and job losses.

To achieve its goals, Canada Post needed to discipline and defeat its workforce which stood in the way of its plan. It was a tall order. Postal workers were among the most militant in the country having waged a series of major strikes since the famous 1965 wildcat which threw out the company union in favour of a militant democratic unionism.

In 1987, letter carriers and inside workers were in different unions with separate contracts. Although the Letter Carriers Union of Canada would later merge with the Canadian Union of Postal Workers in 1989, separate bargaining meant two disputes were brewing.

## The LCUC strike

In June 1987, the LCUC launched rotating strikes against attempted rollbacks of job security and working conditions, and the imposition of community mailboxes and privatization of post offices. For the first time, letter carriers faced an effort by management to bring in strikebreaking scabs. Private security was also hired by management to spy on, harass and intimidate workers.



A Montreal letter carrier on strike. June 1987. Photo: Tony Bock, Toronto Star

A month before the strike, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney said he would not cross a picket line. But during the strike, he did just that, using his family as pawns by claiming he was crossing the picket line at 20 Bay Street in Toronto because of a previously scheduled visit to a childcare centre. Like so many other LCUC picket lines, pushing and shoving between police and pickets erupted and one worker shouted “You’re a goddam phoney!”

The level of violence caused by the scabbing operation led to a public

backlash against Canada Post management, forcing the government to weigh in and push for a negotiated settlement. The strike ended after 19 days, with letter carriers largely fending off the employer’s attack. As letter carriers held their ground, Canada Post management also began introducing the “community mailbox” in new subdivisions.

## The CUPW strike

In early October, CUPW began rotating strikes which shut down the sorting plants and depots. The central issue was job security and defeating management’s plan to eliminate 4,200 union jobs in favour of low-wage contracted out work to private retail chains. Postal workers argued that Canada Post was abandoning its public service mandate enshrined in the Canada Post Corporation Act of 1981. The anger was such that in some areas like Montreal, workers struck “early” in defiance of the union leadership.

The rotating strikes were intended to minimize the violence experienced in the LCUC strike but once again Canada Post launched a major scabbing operation, leading to another wave of picket line violence which the letter carriers had experienced in June. Police forces across the country used immense violence against pickets by acting as management’s personal army in supporting scabbing operations.

But with the scabbing largely failing, the Mulroney Tories stepped in with back-to-work legislation, Bill C-86. It

was the government’s third piece of strikebreaking back-to-work legislation in less than a year.

Whereas the 1978 back-to-work legislation against postal workers by Trudeau’s Liberals led to CUPW president JC Parrott being jailed for refusing to order postal workers back to work, the Mulroney legislation established precedent-setting fines for individual workers and the union; fines so enormous they would destroy lives and financially ruin the union. Bill C-86 also went so far as to ban anyone convicted of violating the legislation from employment at Canada Post for five years, and also bar any convicted union members from running for union office. Bill C-86 was an incredibly authoritarian anti-democratic law.

Despite the legislation, the strike succeeded in saving numerous rural post offices, but not all. Canada Post ultimately got its way with contracting out non-union low-wage post offices to private industry. The origins of non-union Canada Post outlets in Shoppers Drug Mart, Rexall and other business began with this strike.

## The Management Agenda

Before Canada Post became a financially independent crown corporation in 1981, Canada Post management had already gained a brutal reputation as bullies on the shopfloor while carrying out numerous strategies to keep wages down, speed up the job, and bring in new technology to cut jobs and undermine union strength. The old saying “management gets the union it deserves” holds true at Canada Post. It’s why postal workers waged numerous legal and illegal militant strikes through the 1960s through to the 1990s.

With the federal government becoming tired of covering its deficits amidst constant labour strife, Canada Post was converted into a crown corporation. CUPW and LCUC had also



“You’re a goddam phoney!” shouts a striking letter carrier at Mulroney who used his family to cross a picket line in Toronto after saying he would not. Photo: Bernard Weil, Toronto Star

campaigns for Canada Post to become a crown corporation to bring postal workers under more favourable labour legislation and to bargain directly with management instead of through the federal government. The Canada Post Corporation Act delivered a robust public service mandate, but this also included self-sustaining financial independence. This meant the postal service was effectively competing with private couriers.

Canada Post, as a crown corporation, was born with these two competing mandates as management tried to turn a profit while competing with private industry, and the public and the workforce aligning with its public service mandate. Political appointments and business pressure on Canada Post from the outside also reinforced management’s embrace of the profit motive with all its dire consequences for its public service mandate and the workforce.

## Public service or privatization

The 1987 strike was not just a continuation of management’s long-standing desire to hold down wages and working conditions and undermine union strength, but also a profit-driven abandonment of public services. Closing thousands of rural post offices, privatizing postal outlets through contracting out services to private retailers, and putting an end to home mail delivery were all part of this project.

Thirty years later management’s final solution has evolved into wholesale privatization. Canada Post management are deeply committed to this. Britain’s Royal Mail was totally privatized in 2013 under the direction of a former Canada Post CEO Moya Greene. The current Canada Post CEO Deepak Chopra, sits on the board of a right-wing think tank, the Conference Board of Canada, which openly advocates for Canada Post privatization.

Meanwhile, the public is subjected to a relentless propaganda campaign waged by management, politicians and the media against “overpaid postal workers”, the “greedy union”, and a host of lies about “wasting taxpayer money”, and an imminent death due to the internet when in fact internet shopping is driving a record-setting explosion in parcel deliveries.

The struggle for democratic control of the public postal service continues today. The 1987 strikes show the lengths to which management and their political allies are willing to go, just as the postal workers showed the lengths we need to go in order to resist and win. 🇨🇦



CUPW member Leonard Metcalfe is among the 40 pickets attacked by Hamilton-Wentworth Regional Police to help escort scabs through the picket lines. This was repeated by police across the country. Photo: Cal Millar, Toronto Star



# BUILDING RANK-AND-FILE POWER AT CANADA POST

By Orion Keresztesi

This is an abridged version of the interview with Roland Schmidt published by *Spring: A Magazine of Socialist Ideas in Action* on April 22, 2022. You can find the full version here: <https://springmag.ca/building-rank-and-file-power-at-canada-post>

## What was the culture in your local when you first became a CUPW member?

It was not a vibrant organization. They had a lot of difficulty getting people out to General Membership Meetings. The local, like the rest of the union, was completely mired in what I call proceduralism.

Proceduralism is essentially an emphasis on grievances and arbitrations or court appeals. Anytime workers get upset about something they're told: "obey now, grieve later." That is a demoralizing message. It individualizes the struggle. You, as a worker, are frustrated and you are told

your only option is a grievance. You're told to just suck-it-up and see where the grievance goes, and the grievance is going to take between 9 and 16 months to resolve itself. That makes it easy for people to lose faith in the process and the union. Because the union is limited to being this apparatus that says "here is what you can grieve, and here is what you can't grieve."

I had read about Jean-Claude Parrot. I had studied what CUPW had fought for, and I thought, yeah this is the place; if there is any union in Canada that is going to offer this militancy and a chance to change the political current — because the left has been losing for so long — it's CUPW. But when I got there, those people weren't there. They weren't on the workforce, they weren't in the local leadership groups. That was an eye opener for me: to be someone who had these big ideas about working class empowerment and then go into a place where I realized that people don't give a shit about these ideas unless someone makes a compelling case that inspires them.

## How did you and your colleagues begin changing the culture of proceduralism and building a culture of collective actions and rank-and-file power?

It was slowly building up those Ones and Twos [colleagues who already share your view]. When you have a good enough pocket of people, then you can actually start properly building. For us, once we had that pocket we became active on the organizing committee.

The organizing committee went from two people in a basement to 20 people in the living room, to 30 people at a restaurant. We would talk about what campaigns or what job actions we wanted to work on. Because Canada Post is an awful employer — and every boss is inevitably going to provide an opportunity for struggle — what ended up popping up was this forced overtime crisis.

What started as a provision for the company to use in an emergency

turned into a regular staffing solution. Initially, people didn't mind working a little bit of overtime, like once a week. But, when it turns into "you have to do it three times a week," it breaks morale. It breaks people's bodies.

And then you have that anger, where people start developing that class consciousness. They start understanding the boss as an adversarial force. And in those moments, if you have a group ready to agitate around the issue — to educate people on how they could come together to successfully confront the problem and to inoculate them to the risks — then you have an organizing opportunity.

## When the forced overtime crisis hit, how did your group know that this was an issue that was, in the language of *Labor Notes*, widely felt, deeply felt, and winnable? How did you know it was an issue where you had the potential to get a win, and build the confidence of your group and the other members you would pull into the organizing work?

There were different instigating moments popping up in the various letter carrier depots in Edmonton. My facility was about 50 carriers, and was a depot that was traditionally very anti-union. They saw the union as this nuisance — another layer of management that was just creating rules that got in their way. I had a very hard time as a steward there because people were immediately suspicious of me and mostly ignored me until they needed something. But with this force back issue they couldn't just focus on their own job and get through it and go home. This was something that everyone was dragged into together.

We had this gentleman in our depot who is seven foot tall and very, very

large. He was known as having a very excitable personality. Normally he was a joker but he also had a very short temper. Management came to him and said "you're up for overtime today" and he's just like, "this is the second time this week." It was a Wednesday. They're like, "you have to do it" and he just lost it. He said "are you telling me I can't see my family today?" And he just started looping, getting louder and louder. The rest of the depot got dead quiet.

One of the managers came running over to me and was asking me "Roland, you got to get him under control." I went over, and waved off management and talked to the member. I asked him "what's going on? How can I help?" He calmed down, and together we went to the manager's office. We said "look, this is unreasonable. He's doing all this overtime, you guys can't keep pushing this on people." They responded, "It's out of our hands." So we asked "Okay, can you tell your superiors that this is unsustainable? Can you ask about staffing?" They just repeated "It's out of our hands". I asked "Is there anything we can do to help you move this along?" Again "No, this is out of our hands."

So I said "hold on a second." I stepped out of the office and I called out "Hey Everyone! Workfloor meeting in front of the Manager's Office." Everyone came over, and right there we asked ourselves, "can we all agree that we're going to demand that our supervisors get a hold of their managers immediately to see when they can hire new staff to alleviate force back?" Everyone said "Hell yeah." So we turned back to our supervisors and were like "Here's something you can work with." We said "this guy's not doing force back," and we walked away.

From there it built. We started coordinating with other activists in

other stations who were having similar experiences of people basically having melt-downs. The key thing was that we had people in place to channel that energy into something constructive. If you don't have those groups in place what ends up happening is people have blowouts and they end up getting suspended individually and no one knows what to do. It demoralizes everybody.

As we started giving voice to all these people that were frustrated, that's where that class-consciousness and that solidarity started to emerge. I had been at the post office five years and that was the first time I witnessed a group confront management. And it exposed the power differential: management completely buckled. They were wide-eyed and freaked out. They had nothing to say. There were no reprisals at that moment. It took them a long time to regroup. And when we'd done that, everyone wanted to be on the bandwagon. They saw the success.

From there other stations that didn't have any activist presence started asking questions. We found volunteers and we started building-up until we had representatives in every facility. We escalated the campaign to start issuing joint demands across facilities and responding together to various tricks by management or suspension threats.

## How did your elected local leadership respond as the campaign developed? Did they change their tune?

They weren't doing anything helpful. At one point we held a citywide activist meeting. We were the ones who hosted the meeting. I had an ally who was able to get us access to one of the labour halls to meet in. We set the agenda, we were the main speakers, and we ran the meeting having

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## BUILDING RANK- AND-FILE POWER

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workers from different stations sharing their stories about how forced overtime impacted them.

We had one ally in the union office, who would call me and laugh about how the labour-relations guy from Canada Post would call the union office and be like, “you have to get these people under control, or we’re going to start firing people” and the person in the union office would just start laughing and say “they’re not listening to us.” That just chilled the company because the company was relying on the union to muzzle us, but in fact ‘the union’ was not in control of the situation.

Ideally, you would have local leadership supporting those sorts of actions, or at least facilitating them in a creative way, but it’s not necessary to have local leadership’s support. Although, if you’re going to be potentially bumping up against the bureaucracy, you do need a coordinated group that knows what they’re doing so that they’re not going to back-down because the elected labour leadership is saying “you have to stop, you’re going to get in trouble.”

### How has the 2011 forced-overtime fight changed your local?

We made mistakes along the way but there were so many inspiring lessons. A group of us decided to try to enshrine those lessons in a training manual. We built a course called “Taking Back Our Workfloor.” It uses the videos of those confrontations and goes through the whole process: how to build up your base; find your Ones and Twos; develop a heat map; find your allies;

take the temperature; identify natural leaders in the workplace; find an issue; and how to prepare people properly for job action.

What I think is unique about our training course is that we put an extreme emphasis on roleplay. We’ll get 30 people in a room and we really push them to practice their public speaking. When I facilitated the first courses, I would be a manager. I’d be really harsh with the group about an issue—I’d be a bully boss demanding them to do certain work methods that aren’t safe. We’d really push them to fight back. At first they don’t have any training or skills, so in the first roleplays when I start yelling, everyone just freezes up. That feels like it should. That’s realistic. We don’t have the skills, we don’t know what we’re doing, so we freeze up. That’s okay. Then we slowly build people up, and by the end of it, you have a group of people laughing, really supporting each other, and shouting down management.

Is it the same as actually fighting the boss? No, but it gives people those repetitions and a little bit of confidence. I’m really proud to say that after running those courses we saw an immediate response from our workfloors. Within months we had job actions that had never occurred before.

### What do you see as the main challenges to replicating Edmonton’s success in other locals?


It comes down to trust issues, fear and a sense of hopelessness. So in my role, I’ve cold called presidents in pretty much every major local and been like, “hey, my name is Roland, this is what we’re doing in Edmonton, this is why it’s successful. Is this something we can work together on??” Most of the people I contacted were like, “why are you calling me

directly? Did you talk to my region? Does national know you’re talking to me?” Well the answer is no.

And it’s not so much that they’re against what I’m trying to offer, it just comes down to informal hierarchies in the union. A local officer doesn’t want to make problems for themselves by getting on the wrong side of their regional director. Because if unionism is mostly proceduralism, the relationships between officers is based on support on a technical and procedural basis, not on building the whole union.

But we just need to stick to the process and build up our allies slowly and keep nurturing relationships between the locals. If Edmonton is able to go to Winnipeg and then to Calgary to share our training and then they start doing it themselves and also sharing it, the union starts building that broader capacity to take the next step in the struggle.

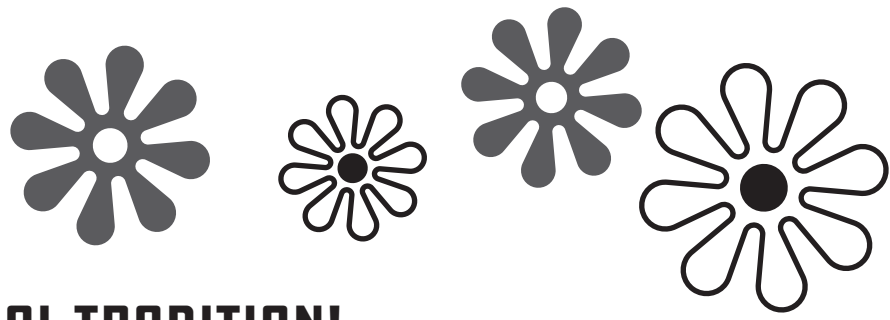
So we keep on trying to spread the tools to other locals to build up capacity. Then if something pops off, like maybe a sexual harassment problem or a staffing problem, or a restructure or whatever, if there’s enough locals who have the training then that means we have liaisons in each location. Those liaisons can have conversations similar to what we did in Edmonton: “hey, what are people pissed off about?” “Here’s how we can support each other.” You build confidence that way. All of a sudden, more locals want on board and it develops its own momentum.

I’ve seen it. It’s absolutely real, and you can do it. You just have to build it brick by brick. 



Kyle Turner, 2022

# FRONT YARDS IN BLOOM



## AN EDMONTON LOCAL TRADITION!

*CUPW 730 continues its 20-plus-year involvement with this popular community connection initiative.*

By Kathleen Mpulubusi

**C**UPW 730, along with our partners the City of Edmonton and the Edmonton Horticultural Society are launching a new year of Front Yards In Bloom – a beloved tradition for gardeners, yard enthusiasts, and community members. Since 1999, this partnership has been working to celebrate citizens who work hard to make their space beautiful.

Taking part in FYIB is easy to do. Help by nominating a customer's beautiful yard, public space, or balcony along your

delivery route, and even if you don't deliver mail, you can still nominate the yards in your neighbourhood. Lawn signs will be placed on nominated yards and the owners will receive a brochure of recognition. Customers are very appreciative when their yard is nominated by their delivery person.

This program helps to foster community connections and is good public relations for our Local as the CUPW logo is displayed on both the lawn sign and the brochure. Over 6000 yards were nominated last year, with approximately 1/3rd having been nominated by CUPW members.

On our Local website (cupw730.ca), you can find a nomination form to make nominations for FYIB. Printed nomination

forms are also distributed at depots and the EMPP, but you can also email Kathleen Mpulubusi (kmpulu@gmail.com) if you would like to request a form or help distribute them. You can also nominate directly on the City of Edmonton website at [www.frontyardsinbloom.ca](http://www.frontyardsinbloom.ca), where you can indicate that you are a postal worker.

FYIB allows communities to come together and stay connected, as well as foster our connection to our communities and help make our work days a little more enjoyable – if even for a moment, it's always good to appreciate what's around you!

The deadline for nominations is **June 30th.** 

# WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?

**T**he World Health Organization defines mental health as “a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to their own community”.

Factors contributing to mental health include social, psychological and biological risks.

There are many ways to promote mental health. Early interventions, support for those needing it, and understanding and acceptance of those with mental health issues are just a few ways we can support friends, family and co-workers.

If you or someone you know are looking to talk to someone to find out supports in your area, please contact a Social Steward or call 211.



# CUPW730.CA

**YOUR MOST UP-TO-DATE INFO SOURCE**

**TWITTER @CUPW730 FACEBOOK.COM/CUPW730**

**YOUTUBE: CUPW LOCAL 730 - EDMONTON & AFFILIATES**

**NEWSLETTER E-MAIL: COMMUNICATIONS730@GMAIL.COM**

# SOLIDARITY STYLE OFFICIAL CUPW 730 SHIRTS



**To order:** email [union@cupwedm.net](mailto:union@cupwedm.net) with your shipping address and size. Please note that the XS-L shirts are a more tight fit. The XL-XXL sizes fit as normal. All extra proceeds from a 'comrade' sale goes to our local Goods & Welfare Committee to help members facing sudden hardship.

**REGULAR - \$30**  
**COMRADE - \$40**  
**SHIPPING - \$5**

**CUPW 730 EDMONTON & AFFILIATES**

# **GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING**

**VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE  
SATURDAY, JUNE 4, 2022  
11:00 AM – 1:00 PM**

**REGISTER @  
CUPW730.CA /CALENDAR  
BY JUNE 3 @ NOON**

**JUNE IS PRIDE MONTH**



*Show your pride  
Show your support*

*Pronoun pins in 2 styles and  
many pronoun combinations*

*Available soon*