

YOU ARE YOUR UNION

**A new
member's
handbook**



**LOCAL
79
CUPE**



WELCOME TO LOCAL 79

Welcome to the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) Local 79, a union of more than 16,000 workers at the City of Toronto, the Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) and Bridgepoint Hospital. As part of CUPE, we stand shoulder-to-shoulder with more than half a million public sector workers across the country. We are also affiliated with the Toronto and York Region Labour Council, the Ontario Federation of Labour and the Canadian Labour Congress.

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CUPE Local 79 members accomplish a great deal on the job

Local 79 members serve the public as nurses, planners, clerks, social service employees, cleaners, court services staff, ambulance dispatchers, child care workers and many, many other occupations. We work at the various civic centres including City Hall and Metro Hall. We provide services for the people of Toronto at the Recreation Centres and the Homes for the Aged. We work at TCHC and at Bridgepoint Hospital. We ensure that Toronto's water is clean and safe to drink. We make sure that food at grocery stores and restaurants is safe. We inspect apartment buildings, homes, and workplaces to make sure they are safe as well. Our Public Health members work to stop infectious diseases. We work to provide shelter for those without homes. Every one of our jobs is important. Toronto works because of the contribution of members of Local 79.



What does the union do?

The Local 79 Executive is composed of your fellow workers from the City of Toronto, TCHC and Bridgepoint Hospital who are elected to run the union. We take great pride in the union work we do at Local 79. We do it because we believe that members should help each other. Union activists have been running the local successfully since 1942.

As union members, we all fund and participate in a union local that stands up for us. It is very important for members to support their bargaining team during contract negotiations. We negotiate the best contracts possible – contracts that include good wages, employment security and benefits. We also make sure our employers honour the terms of those contracts each and every day. We protect each other from discrimination, sexual harassment and unfair treatment. We provide education around issues that may affect us in the workplace.

The union protects you from discrimination, sexual harassment and unfair treatment.



Members of our local are available at the union office to provide expert advice on WSIB (workers' compensation), health and safety and benefits. Members monitor and take action to ensure our workplaces maintain good health and safety records.

CUPE Local 79 makes deputations at City Hall and TCHC, and meets with City, TCHC and Bridgepoint Hospital officials on your behalf. We also do research and advocate for better local, regional, national and international government policies that affect all working people.



Remember:

When you experience difficulties at work, or simply need someone to turn to, your fellow union members are there for you.



How does Local 79 work?

Local 79 is run by the members for the members. It is a democratic organization. The Executive of Local 79, which makes the day-to-day decisions, is elected through a mail-in vote of the membership every three years. Major decisions, such as whether to accept a union contract, called a Collective Agreement, are made directly by a vote of the membership. The Executive Board consists of a seven-member Executive Committee (President, First Vice-President, Vice-President - Chief Steward, Vice-President Equity, Recording Secretary, Membership Secretary and Treasurer), nine Unit Officers and fourteen members at large. The Executive Board meets monthly and their recommendations are forwarded to the General Membership meetings.

A bit of Local 79 history

A group of City of Toronto employees began to organize Local 79 in 1941, seeking better wages and working conditions. The Trades and Labour Congress issued a Charter to the Toronto Municipal Association Local 79 (now CUPE Local 79) on March 23, 1942. When the Charter was dedicated at Toronto's Old City Hall, Local 79 represented 1,400 workers at Toronto's City Hall and at Riverdale Hospital. Local 79 has always been the largest municipal local union in Canada, and grew substantially following municipal amalgamation in 1998. Today we represent more than 16,000 members, both full-time and part-time.



There are many ways members can participate in the union. CUPE is active in many campaigns to improve both the working lives of our members and our society. Members volunteer to serve on committees, including the Status of Women Committee, the Human Rights Committee, and our Political Education Committee. We send delegates to labour bodies such as the CUPE District Council and the Toronto and York Region Labour Council and representatives to work with the United Way.

There are many ways members can participate in the union.



We have members who serve as union Stewards at most workplaces. Stewards stand as the first line of defence when a problem occurs. A Steward is the person to see when you have questions about your rights or questions about the union.

We also have regular labour-management meetings at many workplaces where issues outside the contract are resolved. As a labour-management committee member, you would canvass other members in your workplace regarding issues of concern. These meetings often provide an opportunity to contribute creative solutions to problems in the workplace.

Members can also participate in Local 79 by attending the regular membership meetings which are usually held on the 4th Tuesday of every month (except for July, August and December).

What does it cost?

Running a union does cost money. We maintain a centrally located office, hire staff to work on your behalf, pay legal fees, particularly for representing members through the grievance and arbitration process, print newsletters and mail information to our members. We also set aside funds to provide you with strike pay, in the event of a strike or lockout. We contribute financially to CUPE National, CUPE Ontario, the Labour Council of Toronto and York Region and other labour organizations that work on your behalf.

Each union member pays dues to help cover these expenses. Dues are 1.55% of your pay. Put more simply, you pay \$1.55 per \$100 of regular earnings. You never have to write us a cheque – your dues come directly off your pay in the same way as CPP and EI premiums are collected. The return you get for paying union dues is excellent. The average union wage in Canada is \$5 an hour higher than the non-union wage and union dues are tax deductible.

It pays to be a union member: \$5 more per hour

Union members typically make \$5 more an hour than non-union workers. The difference is even greater for women who earn almost \$6 more than their non-unionized counterparts.

But unions mean more than higher wages. Through collective bargaining, they typically make wages more equal among workers. Only 8% of union members earn less than \$10 an hour as compared to a third of non-union employees.

www.canadianlabour.ca



Your Collective Agreement

Members are strongly encouraged to read their Collective Agreement.

The Collective Agreement is the contract between the union as bargaining agent and your employer. It covers such issues as wages, working conditions, benefits, rights, and procedures to be followed in settling disputes. Your Collective Agreement protects you from discrimination because of race, creed, colour, national origin, political or religious affiliation, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, family relationship, handicap, or membership in a labour union.

Local 79 asks members to submit their ideas and recommendations for improvements before contract negotiations begin. These recommendations guide the union's negotiating team. The negotiating

If you don't have a copy of your Collective Agreement contact a union Steward or the union office

team includes the Local 79 Executive Table Officers. It also usually includes the relevant Unit Officers and representatives from various departments within that bargaining unit.

A new Collective Agreement cannot come into effect until the local membership votes to endorse it.

CUPE Local 79 negotiates a number of union contracts. We have nine bargaining units, each with its own contract. City of Toronto agreements cover City of Toronto full-time workers, Homes for the Aged part-time workers, Recreation part-time workers, and one for all other City of Toronto part-time workers (Unit B). There are four bargaining units at Bridgepoint Hospital that fall under two Collective Agreements, one covering nurses and paramedical employees and the other covering service unit employees. Each Bridgepoint Hospital Collective Agreement serves both part-time and full-time workers. There is one bargaining unit covered by one Collective Agreement for the Local 79 members working at TCHC.

If you have trouble understanding anything in your Collective Agreement, a Steward in your workplace would be more than happy to assist you. You can also call the union office and ask to speak to a Duty Officer if a Steward is unavailable.

Here are some examples of what you'll find in your Collective Agreement:

- Details of sick pay/benefits
- Details of vacation or vacation pay
- When you receive premium pay (i.e. overtime, shift bonuses), and how much you will be paid
- Meal breaks: how long and when?
- Calculation of seniority
- Scheduling rules
- Conditions for leaves of absence
- Allowance for protective clothing
- Transportation allowance for those authorized to use their vehicles on employer's business
- Various grievance procedures
- Alternate rates when an employee is asked to perform duties of a higher-rated position for at least a full day
- Request for transfer provisions



Get to know your Steward

Union Stewards are co-workers who volunteer to be leaders in our workplaces. They can answer your questions about the workplace and the union. When there is a problem, the first person you should speak to is your Steward. They are there to help you. To find out who your Steward is, please contact the union office.

My Steward(s)

NAME: _____

TELEPHONE: _____

NAME: _____

TELEPHONE: _____

Duty Officer: If an urgent situation arises and you cannot contact your workplace Steward, please contact the Local 79 Duty Officer at 416-977-1629 between the hours of 9 am and 4 pm.



Frequently Asked Questions

Here are some common questions:

Am I on probation?

As a new employee you are entitled to the benefits outlined in your Collective Agreement, with some exceptions. You must go through a probationary period, outlined in the contract. It is much easier for an employer to terminate your employment during probation, if they are unsatisfied with your work performance. Check your Collective Agreement for more details or talk to your union Steward.



Could I end up on strike?

Workers in our Homes for the Aged and Bridgepoint Hospital do not have the right to strike under provincial law. They can, however, participate in bargaining and campaigns to improve our Collective Agreements.

Other Local 79 members have the legal right to strike. Most rounds of collective bargaining do not include job action. Strikes and lockouts occur in fewer than five per cent of rounds of bargaining between

CUPE and employers across the country. Strikes have been rare in our history but members of CUPE Local 79 have taken up the challenge when it proved necessary to protect union contracts. A strike cannot occur unless members of Local 79 vote to give the union a strike mandate.

Members who join the picket lines receive strike pay from the union. Members who cross picket lines during a strike undermine the efforts of their co-workers and can be subject to penalties from the union, including fines.

If I face employer discipline, who helps?

If you are called to a disciplinary meeting with the employer, you have the right to have a Steward or another Local 79 representative present. You also have the right to have access to your personnel file.

What is a grievance?

What happens when the employer does not abide by the Collective Agreement? You have every right, as a union member, to file a grievance against the employer when your rights under the contract have been violated. Grievances can be filed by an individual, a group, or directly by the union. A grievance often involves the following steps:

Step 1: The member, accompanied by a union Steward or Local 79 representative, meets with the workplace supervisor to try to resolve the dispute.

NOTE: The Bridgepoint Hospital grievance process is slightly different from the City's and TCHC's.

Step 2: If the dispute is not resolved at Step 1, the grievance is submitted in writing to the division head, with a copy given to the supervisor.

NOTE: Issues such as suspension, discharge or harassment begin at Step 2.

Step 3: If the division head's response is unsatisfactory, the grievance can be forwarded to the Director of Employee and Labour Relations. A Local 79 representative then meets with the Director.

Mediation: If the results of meetings remain unsatisfactory, the union may decide to take the grievance to mediation. A mediator is a third party who tries to bring the two sides together by working towards an agreement.

Arbitration (Final): When grievances do not get resolved, many of them are referred to arbitration, where an independent arbitrator decides the outcome. An arbitration hearing is convened in which both sides present their arguments. The final decision of the arbitrator is binding.



Length of service

The length of time you work for the employer may determine your rate of vacation pay, how much sick pay you have accumulated, and retirement benefits. It may also play a part in determining such issues as promotions, call-ins and scheduling. Check your Collective Agreement for details.

Volunteers

Volunteers are involved in various capacities throughout the City, Bridgepoint, and TCHC. You should be aware that volunteers are not allowed to perform the work of or displace a union member.

Local 79 keeps you informed

A *Local 79 President's Report* is mailed to each member at least nine times a year. Special bulletins are also produced during bargaining. Often included with the *President's Report* is an information order form that allows you to choose to receive more detailed information, such as copies of Local 79 correspondence, committee reports, briefs and more.

For more detailed information about Local 79, please visit www.cupelocal79.org



A final note about solidarity

As unionized workers, we benefit from the work of those who went before us. Never forget: our wages, our benefits, and our rights were won at the bargaining table. They were not “given” to us.

We owe a lot to the hard work of members of the union who preceded us. There was a time when workers who quit their job without permission from their employer risked going to jail! We have come a long way! Our day-to-day experiences indicate that we have further to go. We not only need to defend our legacy, but we must build on it as well.

The more we support each other the more successful we all will be.

Solidarity is also about supporting your brothers and sisters in other bargaining units and members of other unions when they are involved in a strike or lockout, or working in community coalitions to address social issues. The union movement is about sticking up for each other, but that is not the only reason to show our support for others. Every union contract has an impact on other Collective Agreements. Their gains become our gains. If there is a defining characteristic of the Canadian Labour Movement, it is summarized by J.S. Woodsworth, labour activist and founding leader of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF): “What we desire for ourselves, we wish for all.”



Local 79 Structure

LOCAL 79 MEMBERSHIP

City Full-Time
City Homes for the Aged Part-Time
City Recreation Workers Part-Time
City Unit B Part-Time
Toronto Community Housing Corporation
Bridgepoint Hospital Nurses and Paramedical
Bridgepoint Hospital Service



EXECUTIVE OFFICERS (7 members)

President
First Vice-President
Vice-President - Chief Steward
Vice-President Equity
Recording Secretary
Membership Secretary
Treasurer

EXECUTIVE BOARD (30 members)

7 Executive Officers
9 Unit Officers
14 Members-at-Large

UNIT OFFICERS (9 members)

3 City Full-Time
1 Homes for the Aged Part-Time
1 Unit B Part-Time
1 Recreation Workers Part-Time
1 Bridgepoint Hospital Nurses/Paramedical, Full-Time and Part-Time
1 Bridgepoint Hospital Service, Full-Time and Part-Time
1 TCHC

3 Auditor-Trustees





Local 79 members

Workplace photos by Jocelyn Richards.

All photos are of CUPE Local 79 members at work or, *below*, making masks for Labour Day, or marching in the Labour Day Parade.





This booklet is intended as a brief introduction to the Local. If you have any questions or comments, please talk to your union Steward or contact us directly at our office.

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