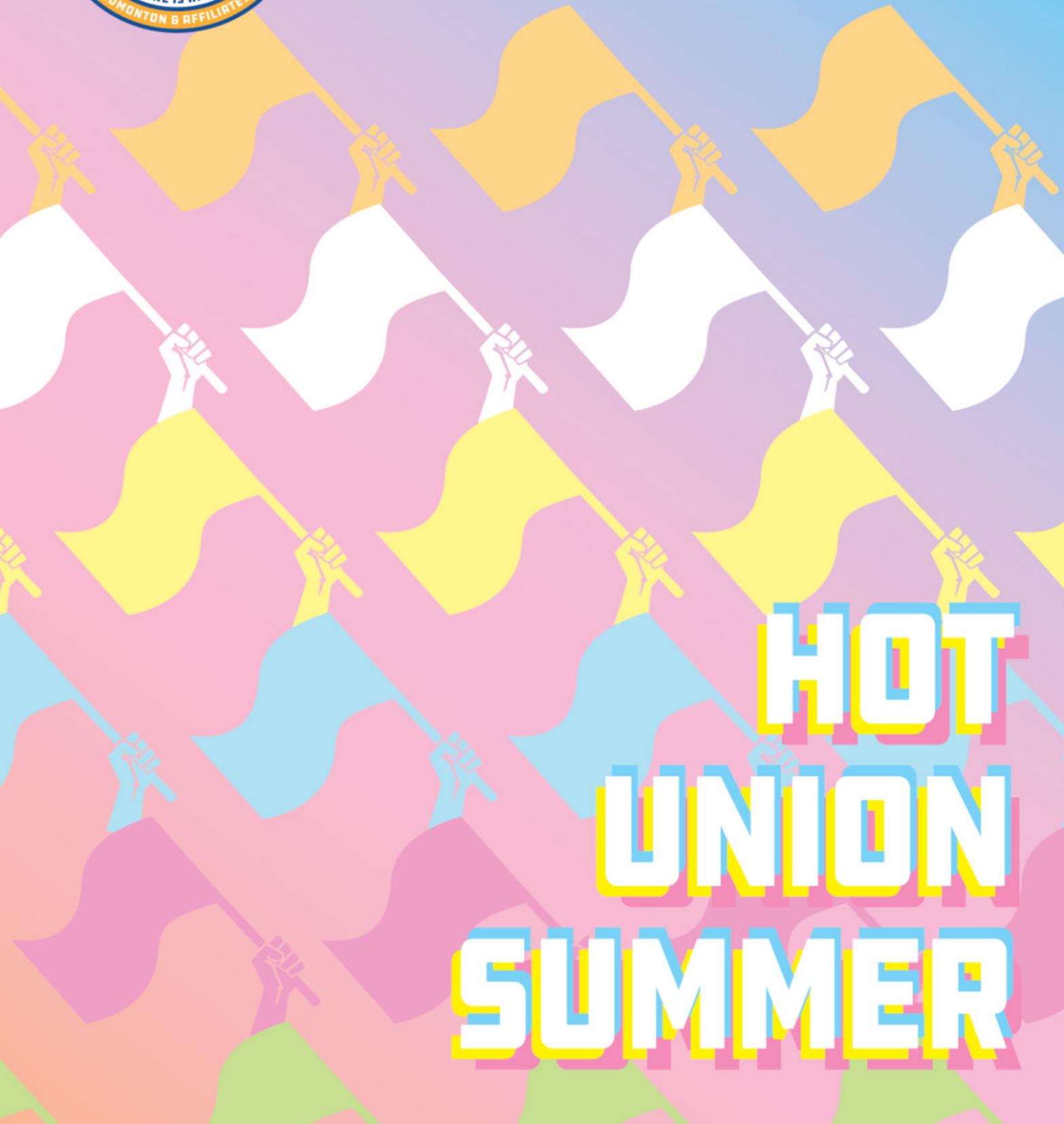




OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF CUPW 730

SUMMER 2022

# INSIDE OUT



# HOT UNION SUMMER



**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).

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**EMPOWER ORGANIZE RESIST**

## SUMMER 2022 CONTENTS

- 4** Interim President's Report : Steady On  
- Devon Rundvall
- 5** Important Dates in June
- 6** "Picket Lines Mean Do Not Cross"
- 7** Compensatory Time Arbitration Decision
- 8** Second Anniversary of the Cessco Lockout  
- Kyle Turner
- 11** Worker Solidarity
- 12** 1981 Postal Workers' Strike for Maternity Leave  
- Dave Nesbitt for Rankandfile.ca
- 13** History Bits  
- Greg McMaster
- 14** Building a Caucus to Rebuild Union Power  
- Ben Sichel for Rankandfile.ca
- 17** No Relief: The Initiative, Part I  
- Kyle Turner
- 18** Pronouns on the Workfloor

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# INTERIM PRESIDENT'S REPORT JUNE 2022 GMM

## STEADY ON

*Organizing isn't about individuals or egos. It is about uniting as a class and fighting to make things better for all workers, but we need to work together if we are to achieve this goal.*

### Crossroads

We at the Edmonton local find ourselves at an important intersection. Like any crossroads, the choice of paths to take can be intimidating or confusing. But this hesitancy only exists if we don't understand the journey that we are on. If one knows where they started and where they are going, then one need not hesitate at every choice presented. Instead, you point yourself towards your goal and you take the next step.

### Where We Have Been

Our union has come a long way in its 57 year journey. We have won many victories over the years, many of which have not only improved the lives of postal workers, but all Canadians. Nearly all of these achievements have been realized because Postal Workers have been willing to

organize and fight the ruling class through direct action.

Our last contract ratification is a stark reminder that our Union seems to have forgotten this. We have replaced our demands for a real raise with begging for a fair negotiated settlement. We have traded our picket captains for corporate lawyers. At a local level, for years we had been mired with individuals clinging to small pettiness and personal slights. Often times resorting to backstabbing and ridiculous political maneuvering. All of which puts an individual's personal ambitions ahead of the collective benefit of all members.

Over the last few years our local has taken a bold step to revitalize the historically proven strategies of direct action. To attempt to put aside petty differences, and actually begin to believe that we can make a difference in this world, if only we work together.

### Where We Are Going

I talked of a journey, so let me be clear about where we are going, and what is it that we are continuing to struggle towards? It's the same thing that, for

generations, workers have been fighting for. Put simply, it's a fight to improve the lives and working conditions of all workers. That our bodies would be protected from injury during our long careers. And through our labour we would be able to provide for ourselves and our families. It wasn't long ago that a family could be comfortably raised off the wages of an individual union job. As I say that out loud it sounds like some sort of a nostalgic dream. It just goes to show you how far we have to go just to regain what we have lost.

How we get there is clear: direct action. History tells us that this must take the form of job action and strikes, which will in all likelihood lead to defying federal back to work legislation. If we are to be successful, we need to prepare our members both locally and nationally.

Throughout the "Big L" Labour movement, we know that this is accomplished through education and organizing that starts small and builds. This work of preparing our members cannot be taken lightly. If we want justice, or even an actual raise, we need to stop begging

for the crumbs that fall off the master's table.

### Where We Are

Our local leadership has been quite clear about the path we are on. Although Roland has moved on to National, the path that we as a local are on has not changed. Despite a COVID pause, we are now continuing our education classes and looking to build upon the foundations set pre-COVID. As we build our organizing capacity in our local, we will be working closely with other locals both in and outside the prairie region.

Let me be clear about one thing. This is not about me. Just like it was not about Roland. It's not even about you. We have a chance to make a real difference in this country. But the only real hope we have of doing that is if we learn to organize and engage ourselves. There are no heroes that work here. It's just you and me. But that's enough. I am working to support our officers and stewards throughout the local. I ask each and every member of our local to do the same. When you go back to work this week, I also ask that you reach out to a coworker and in some small way share a little hope. I ask that the hope you share is that of workers walking in solidarity to change the world. 🇺🇸

Steady on.



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

## MESSAGE FROM THE COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

### IMPORTANT DATES IN JUNE

**As a committee, we decided to take our time in June** to share skills with each other for newsletter production and updating the website, therefore postponed the newsletter until July. We do feel it is important to acknowledge these dates in June.

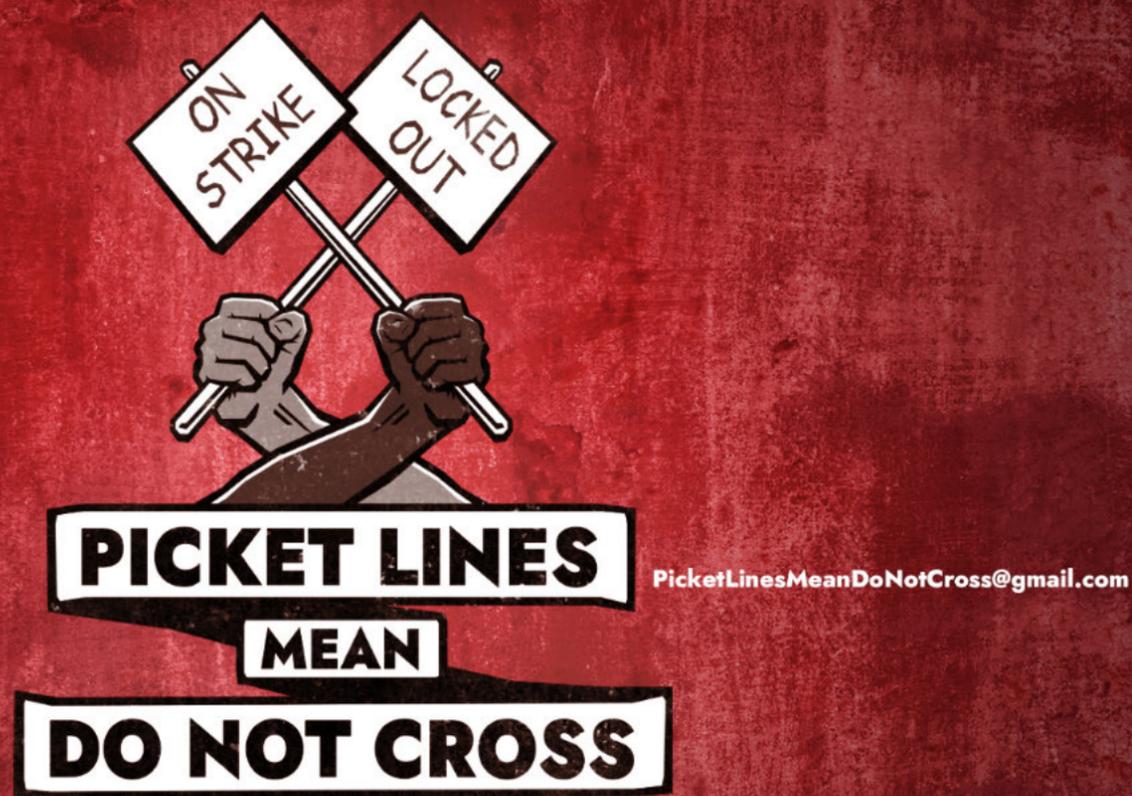
**Pride Month** - June is Pride Month, the origins of which are found in the Stonewall Riots of June 28th, 1969. The riots were a response to violent police raids on the Stonewall Inn. Patrons of the Stonewall Inn and other gay and lesbian bars in the area fought back. In the weeks that followed, activists began organizing and demanding the right to live openly and without fear of being arrested. The first pride marches took place a year later in Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco.

**National Indigenous History Month** - In 2009, June was named National Indigenous History Month in order to recognize, celebrate the diverse heritage and the achievements of the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis.

**June 11th - William Davis Day (Nova Scotia).** William Davis is a coal miner who was shot and killed by company police during the 1925 Cape Breton Miners' Strike. Miners were fighting back against a 20% wage rollback by the British Empire Steel and Coal Company (BESCO). The following year, William Davis Day began as workers refused to work and marched instead. It was not recognized as an official holiday until 1969.

**June 19th** - Known as Juneteenth, Jubilee Day, Emancipation Day, Freedom Day, Black Independence Day, and now officially as Juneteenth National Independence Day, June 19th has been treated as a holiday in various parts of the United States since 1865. It was recognized as an official holiday on June 17th, 2021. It celebrates the emancipation of enslaved people in Texas, which was the last state in the Confederacy to have institutional slavery.

**June 21st - National Indigenous Peoples' Day.** Since 1996, June 21st has been celebrated as National Indigenous Peoples' Day. This day falls on the solstice, a day of significance as Indigenous Peoples and communities have honoured their history and culture on the solstice for generations. 🇺🇸



## NEW CAMPAIGN SAYS “PICKET LINES MEAN DO NOT CROSS”

**At our May GMM, our Local voted in favour** of supporting a new campaign organized by Labour Fightback. This campaign is called Picket Lines Mean Do Not Cross and it stresses that it is never OK to cross a picket line.

United with other labour activists and trade unions, this campaign will educate the public on the importance of respecting picket lines. With inflation, government attacks on workers and lockouts, we can expect to see more picket lines. Because of this it has never been more important than it is now to rebuild the tradition of

strong pickets that are essential for workers to win.

We were already headed toward an economic slump and the COVID-19 pandemic blew that crisis out of proportion. How did the bosses respond? They used the crisis to squeeze record profits from the workers. While frontline workers were literally risking their lives, many bosses turned to lockouts to force down wages, gut pensions and benefits, and erode union rights.

While our government did create some programs to help ease the economic pain of the pandemic – such as the

Canada Emergency Response Benefit, or CERB – over 90% of that funding was handed out as corporate welfare. Wages for workers remained stagnant while corporate profits ballooned by 46% to almost \$1.4-trillion.

The high rate of inflation has also basically turned into wage cuts for workers, as the cost of everything goes up by 5% without our wages reflecting that. If the boss refuses to pay us the true value of our work, then we must continue to fight. This will inevitably lead to more picket lines, like it did during the labour struggle of the 1970s.

Of course, the government will seek to balance their books off the backs of the workers. Public sector workers will be blamed and nurses, teachers, cleaners, postal workers, bus drivers, and so on, will be forced to endure wage restraint and layoffs.

Every road leads to the picket line. Otherwise, workers and unions that aren't willing to fight will see everything they gained taken away. It will be a struggle just to keep our heads above water. This is why that it is vital that when workers picket, their lines are strong and respected. This tradition of respect has been lost over recent decades as people seem to have forgotten that no one goes on strike without it being deadly serious – it is the last option for workers and anyone crossing that line is literally taking food out of the mouths of the workers on the line. We need to

make hard pickets and anti-scab policies the standard expectation in the labour movement.

We call on everybody to join the Picket Lines Mean Do Not Cross campaign, take the pledge never to cross a picket line, build flying squads to support striking or locked out workers, and win over our unions to a no crossing policy.

Strike to win and change the world! ✈️



### HOW TO GET INVOLVED:

1. **Join our Facebook group** for updates! <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1132045027620027>

2. **Help us Spread the Campaign!** Contact us at [PicketLinesMeanDoNotCross@gmail.com](mailto:PicketLinesMeanDoNotCross@gmail.com) to learn about how you can bring the campaign to your union local or organization. We are more than happy to provide guest speakers, resources and advice at your organization's meeting or to a group of workers outside of them!

3. **Make a Personal Pledge** to never cross a picket line! Petition out soon.

(Article adapted from <https://www.marxist.ca/article/exciting-new-campaign-says-picket-lines-mean-do-not-cross>)

## COMPENSATORY TIME ARBITRATION DECISION

**For any CUPW member who has ever tried to use their comp time** (time off banked instead of overtime payment) in order to take leave, they know it is needlessly difficult to access. However, the Atlantic Region received a formal arbitration decision in April 2020 that should make accessing this time off easier for Group 1 and Group 2 employees.

Our union argued that when it comes to comp time, based on

Article 15.32, the only things the employer can consider are service standards and the availability of workers to do the work without incurring overtime. The employer argued that it could deny the use of comp time for any reason, including not wanting to call temporary employees and not wanting to affect the bar charts.

The arbitrator ultimately agreed with CUPW, reiterating that the employer need only focus on

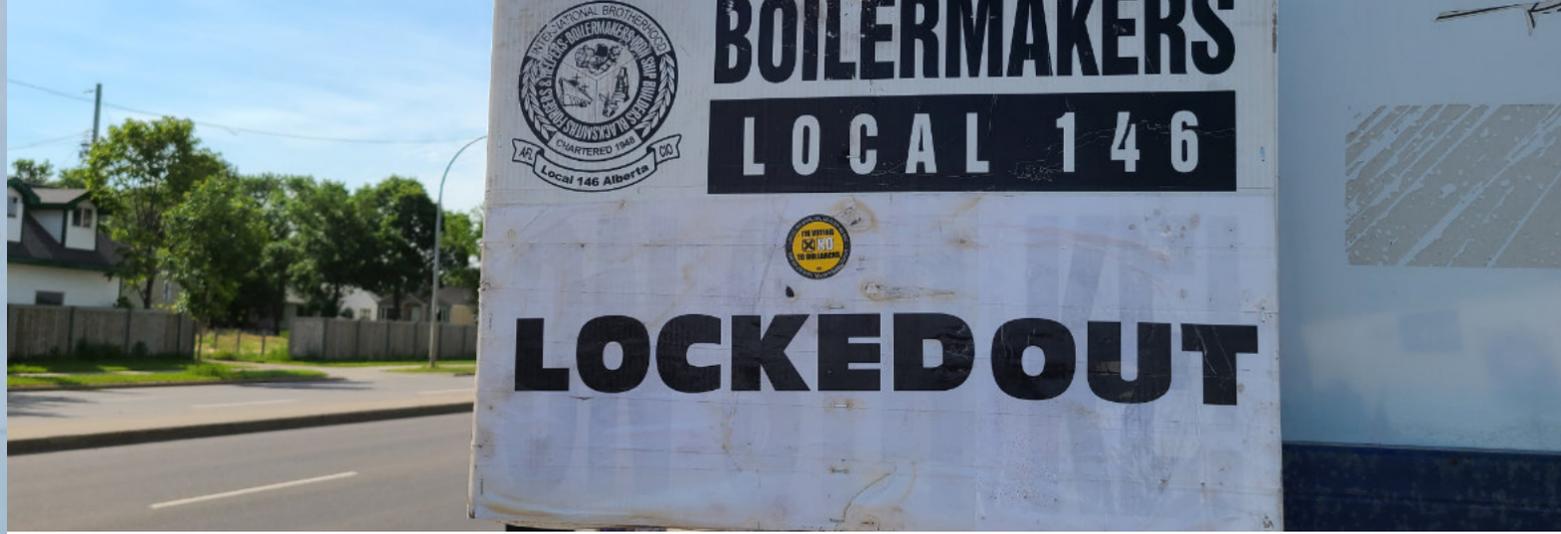
service standards and the payment of overtime when considering requests for leave. This should make it easier to access your comp time, but it doesn't mean that the Corporation won't need to be reminded of this victory if they choose to deny your request.





# SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF THE CESSCO LOCKOUT

By Kyle Turner



**June 28th, 2022, marked the 2nd anniversary** of members of Boilermakers Lodge 146 being locked out of CESSCO Fabrication and Engineering LTD.

In that time, members of Lodge 416 have dealt with a number of challenges. Initially, one of their own members was trying to have their union decertified. After contract negotiations were stalled by the employer and Lodge 416 was locked out, some of their members crossed their own picket line. Those who crossed the picket line – scabs – have since been fined and expelled from the union and they are unlikely to have a union job ever again.

The pool of people willing to scab at CESSCO seems to have largely dried up. When I was on the picket line a year ago in the Summer of 2021, there were still masked drivers driving buses with tinted windows to try to keep scabs’ identities hidden. There are no buses coming in and out of CESSCO anymore.

Scabs have either been shamed from continuing to cross the line or they found more secure work elsewhere.

Unfortunately, members of a Teamsters local crossed the picket to move scab-produced

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***“There’s an old saying from the labour movement: the longer the picket line, the shorter the strike. The more people on the line, the greater the show of solidarity, the less time you’ll have to be on the line.”***

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goods back in March of 2022. Talking to people on the picket line on the 2nd anniversary of the lockout, they are still disappointed that this happened: no union contract would require you to cross a picket line. Even as postal

workers, we do not have to cross picket lines. Someone from CESSCO had to go to the depot to pick up their mail and rumour has it they were not happy about it.

It doesn’t sound like the Teamsters local will face any repercussions. Calls were made and the answers were the same as the original scabs: we have mouths to feed. Members of Lodge 416 also have mouths to feed, so this isn’t really a reason.

There’s an old saying from the labour movement: the longer the picket line, the shorter the strike. The more people on the line, the greater the show of solidarity, the less time you’ll have to be on the line.

Unions have been under attack for decades but, if we’re being honest, they have been under attack since workers started exercising collective action. Those who would prefer to see us fail have been highly effectively, so the fact that these scabs don’t understand unions

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## CESSCO LOCKOUT

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or solidarity shouldn't be surprising. But if they all joined the picket line instead, everyone could have eaten and they could have done it much sooner.

It seems, however, that CESSCO never came back to the bargaining table and workers are now investigating the possibility of severance packages. As for the future of CESSCO, it's hard to say. The company was acquired by Canerector, which owns over 50 facilities across North America.

According to a statement from CESSCO, this outcome did not "reflect our goals" and that it has "severely hurt our enterprise." Currently, CESSCO "has no work assignments that would enable reinstatement," but claims it is "committed to dealing with its workers fairly" once work does become available.

The conversation eventually went in a familiar direction that has become even more familiar over the last two years. The bosses continue to make record profits while paying little to no taxes and enjoying government support.

But for the working class, it's the same old story: we are expected to take wage cuts and benefit rollbacks while cleaning up the mess and while the employing



class reaps the benefits of our labour.

Under the Alberta Labour Relations Code, a strike or lockout is required to end two-years after it starts. Employees can then request to be reinstated over any scabs that were hired, but there is nothing requiring the employer to rehire someone if no one is doing the same or similar work.

The relatively recent passing of Bill 32, passed a month after

the lockout, also created strong rules against unions and blocking or delaying anyone from crossing a picket line, in addition to requiring that unions ask for permission to picket a second site.

When it comes to the law, the odds are against us. But we have the numbers to overcome this. We just need the courage and solidarity. ✈️



# WORKER SOLIDARITY

## LABOUR VICTORY AND STRUGGLE, AT HOME AND ABROAD

### Starbucks

In the United States, 164 Starbucks locations have unionized while 300 more locations have filed for or announced their plans to unionize. In Canada, workers at 5 Starbucks locations in Lethbridge, AB, have filed for a union election with representation from United Steelworkers. For updates from Lethbridge, follow @lethbucks on Twitter.

### HBC Logistics

330 e-commerce workers represented by Unifor in Scarborough, ON, went on strike on June 22nd. According to Unifor, negotiations broke down after the employer only offered wage increases on a going forward basis, refusing to retroactively acknowledge the period since the contract expired in May 2021, despite these workers stepping up to deal with the surge in online shopping during the pandemic. HBC received government support in the form of the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS).

### South Korea Trucker Strike

25,000 unionized truck drivers in South Korea went on strike over concerns about pay, rising gas prices, and maintaining the minimum freight rates system that guarantees minimum wages. After a one week strike, the government agreed to extend the minimum freight rates system and subsidize the cost of fuel.

### Sea-to-Sky Transit Workers Strike

Transit workers in BC represented by Unifor just ended the longest transit strike in BC history on June 14th. Members from Squamish, Pemberton, and Whistler had been on strike since January. Workers won a Cost of Living Adjustment, which will be triggered when the average monthly consumer price index in BC is greater than the annual wage increase as provided by the new Collective Agreement.

### CN Rail

Members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), over 750 signal and communications employees at CN rail, went on strike on June 18th.

### Rolls-Royce

530 workers represented by the Syndicat de travailleuses et des travailleurs de Rolls-Royce Canada (CSN) in Montreal, QC, have been locked out since March 15th, 2022. Workers had been without a contract since March 2020. Workers' demands include a five year contract, improved wages and work schedules, and maintaining their current pension plan.





## THE 1981 POSTAL WORKERS' STRIKE FOR MATERNITY LEAVE

By Doug Nesbitt for Rankandfile.ca

**On June 29, 1981, some 23,000 inside postal workers** began what would become a long 42-day strike. The Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) stayed out and won 17 weeks of paid maternity leave at 93% of full wages.

CUPW's breakthrough agreement sets a standard for

other unions, although CUPW was simply following the lead of Quebec public sector unions which had secured 20 weeks paid maternity leave 18 months earlier. The 15 weeks of maternity benefits through Unemployment Insurance was deemed too little – a 40% pay cut for postal workers.

33-year-old postal clerk Claudette Leaker (not the person in the photo), was one of the 7,200 women on strike with

CUPW. She walked the picket line in Ottawa with her 10-month-old Jessica:

“We’re not asking for the moon. As it is now, a woman is almost penalized for having a baby. Most of us come back to work afterwards, so why should we lose our salaries while we’re at home having a baby?”

CUPW president Jean-Claude Parrot explained that these benefits would cost two cents

an hour – the pay rate for inside postal workers was reported at about \$9.33/hour. The union reported that if postal workers took 20 weeks unpaid leave, they’d lose 40 percent of their salary.

### Business opposition

What did the business class think?

While they publicly campaigned for strikebreaking legislation, Canada’s major business lobby groups opposed paid maternity leave. John Bulloch, president of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, said:

“Paid maternity leave is a totally ridiculous kind of demand to expect employers to pay. Those who want to have babies should pay for them.”

### La lutte continue...the struggle continues

As the union CUPW argued during the 1981 strike:

“Ever since the Industrial Revolution when the home ceased to be the centre of production, women have been forced to bear the double load of wage labor as well as unpaid labor within the home. Despite the obvious injustice of having to perform a double role in society’s distribution of work, women have also traditionally suffered from discrimination at the workplace with respect to wages, working conditions and opportunities.

“The conditions under which most women are permitted maternity leave is another example of the penalties that

women workers experience as the result of their sex. Clearly child bearing remains as necessary as ever. No less clearly, the wages of working women are as necessary to them as to their male counterparts. Surely, if women are to have equal rights in the work force, they must not be financially penalized because they are the ones in our society who bear children. The time has come for fully paid maternity leave. 

Sources:

Quotes from the *Ottawa Citizen*, July 15 1981 and *Winnipeg Sun*, July 31 1981.

## HISTORY BITS

By Greg McMaster

**Cost of Living Allowance (C.O.L.A.)** - The first C.O.L.A. Clause was negotiated by the Letter Carriers' Union of Canada (LCUC) in the 1975 strike. It was based on a demand from Edmonton's Local 15 and it was submitted by Secretary-Treasurer Don Wenzel.

**1987 Strike** – The LCUC strike in 1987 was fought over issues including relief staffing of letter carrier and MSC absences, the contracting out of MSC 5-ton shuttle routes, and the part-

timing of letter carrier business routes. After an agreement was negotiated in July, LCUC would not sign the agreement until the Corporation agreed to rehire every member who had been fired during the violent strike.

**Unionized Delivery** – Letter carrier delivery to new municipalities was frozen in 1976. That year, Fort Saskatchewan received letter carrier service, but, a month later, Leduc and Nisku was to be delivered by contractors. In

1984, the corporation imposed the “Iron Ring” whereby letter carrier delivery would not expand into these areas as the suburbs were to be SS driver-delivered. In 2003, 6,000 of these non-unionized workers became members of CUPW as Rural and Suburban Mail Carriers (RSMCs).

The struggle continues, however, as we work to bring RSMCs up the same levels contractually as LCs and MSCs. 



## BUILDING A CAUCUS TO REBUILD UNION POWER

By Ben Sichel

From Rankandfile.ca, published January 21, 2022

**A worker approaches a union staffer** to discuss a problem in the workplace.

The staffer has heard about this problem before. “We’ve brought this to the labour-management committee,” they sigh. “We can try to bring it up again.”

The worker is disappointed. Is there something else we could do? Can the workers at the site take some sort of action? Could they refuse to do certain tasks?

“Things don’t really work that way,” says the staffer. There are protocols to follow, chains of command to respect. Labour actions can only take place at

specific times in the bargaining cycle.

The worker gets up to leave, frustrated. “The union seems to be very good at telling us what we can’t do,” she says. “Maybe it could get better at telling us what we can do.”

This is a true story (paraphrased), told to me recently by a veteran labour activist and former union staffer. If you’ve ever asked your union to take action on an issue, it may sound familiar to you too.

At their core, unions are about solidarity and collective action. A single worker has no power against the whims of their employer.

For most members of modern unions, though, that core purpose can often seem distant. Union staff are good at

helping members access group insurance and other benefits, and members are called upon to ratify contracts every few years. But rarely is there a sense of members actually coming together to fight for improvements at work. Union meetings tend to be dry, top-down affairs and are attended only by a committed core of reps/stewards and executive members.

Labour action today most often takes place within a fairly narrow legal framework. News stories talk about unions being in a “legal strike position” once other options in a bargaining cycle have failed, and unions rarely consider striking or applying other pressure tactics outside this cycle. The same principle applies with workplace grievances: workers are urged to call the union office and let

them handle it, which can sometimes take years.

This state of affairs wasn’t always the case, though. As per historian Tyler Shipley:

*“By the middle of the 1960’s, strikes [in Canada] were happening at a rate of more than a thousand per year, with roughly half of those illegal or “wildcat” strikes. Workers were emboldened – the 1965 postal workers’ strike forced the government to make real concessions – and the Canadian government increasingly took coercive measures like the passing of legislation to make strikes illegal and the use of police to physically end the strikes. At the same time, the processes by which legal strikes could occur were made increasingly complex, requiring a wider layer of professionally trained lawyers and staff to help workers navigate them. The effect was to make workers more dependent on professionals whose incomes were not directly tied to the outcomes of particular workplace negotiations and who served to conservatize their movements by bogging them down in legal processes that dampened militancy.”*

Besides disconnecting members from their union, this “professionalized” approach to unionism hasn’t been particularly effective. Increases to the cost of living consistently outpace increases to workers’ wages. If workers do strike, they are routinely legislated back to work, especially in the public sector; their union officials

respond by spending millions on lengthy court challenges.

When workers re-discover the power of collective action, they can revitalize their unions and make concrete gains for their members. We saw this in 2018-19 during the “#RedForEd” teacher strikes across several U.S. states, notably in West Virginia, where teachers defied their own union leaders and flouted anti-strike laws in order to win salary increases. In Arizona, teachers won a 20 per cent salary

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**“Coming together in the street to demand concessions from an employer is – or at least, should be – the essence of what it means to be in a union.”**

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increase over two years as well as the restoration of broader public education funding that had been cut in recent decades.

My own union, the Nova Scotia Teachers Union, had its own recent experiences of member power. In 2015-17, members rejected three straight tentative agreements presented to them by their executive, and overwhelmingly approved a strike mandate. While the resulting strike was short-lived and ended with a contract imposed by legislation, the pressure applied by teachers did result in a few modest gains

compared to the original contract offer.

A year later, when the Liberal government tried to impose a package of corporate-inspired education “reforms,” union members leafleted, held public town halls, circulated petitions and even took an (illegal) strike vote, which again was approved by a huge majority of members. Last-minute talks averted the strike, but again, the attention teachers brought to the issue did force the government to make a few concessions.

The victories in these cases were small, in the context of what were, overall, disappointing results. But they did give many teachers a taste of the power of collective action. Coming together in the street to demand concessions from an employer is – or at least, should be – the essence of what it means to be in a union. Conversely, many workers ordinarily think of “the union” as something external to themselves. The union means the president, executive, and professional staff. But no matter how eloquent a spokesperson a president is, or how experienced their staff, the real power of a union is in its members’ willingness to act together. The members are the union.

It can be hard to change the internal culture of a union, but here again, collective action is key. In some cases, social media can swiftly bring people together and channel anger into

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## BUILDING A CAUCUS

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action. Members can bounce ideas around and quickly and efficiently organize demonstrations or similar actions.

Over the long term, though, social media platforms can get messy (as any member of a large Facebook group can attest), and initial bursts of energy fade. Social media is a powerful tool, but it doesn't replace sustained, strategic organizing as a way of creating lasting change.

In many large unions, especially in the U.S., members intent on re-energizing their unions have formed caucuses. These are groups who come together independently of official union structures to strategize about moving the union in a more activist direction. A caucus can help members feel less alone in navigating the often-complex structures of a modern union. Members with various levels of "official" union experience learn from each other about what channels to work through, what structures need to change, and what kind of action can be taken independently.

Several well-known teacher union successes in recent years started with the work of caucuses. The Chicago Teachers' Union (CTU) made headlines in 2012 with a strike

that brought important gains for teachers' wages and working conditions, while fighting back against a corporate-led education "reform" agenda. The CTU victory was made possible by years of organizing work by the Caucus of Rank-and-File Educators (CORE), who worked independently to organize union members for action before eventually winning elected office. In Los Angeles, the Union Power caucus won office in 2014 and led United Teachers

***"Unions remain one of the best tools we have to create a better, fairer society – if their members remember what they can do, not get wrapped up in what they can't."***

of Los Angeles (UTLA) members to a historic strike which won smaller class sizes and increases to support staff, along with salary increases.

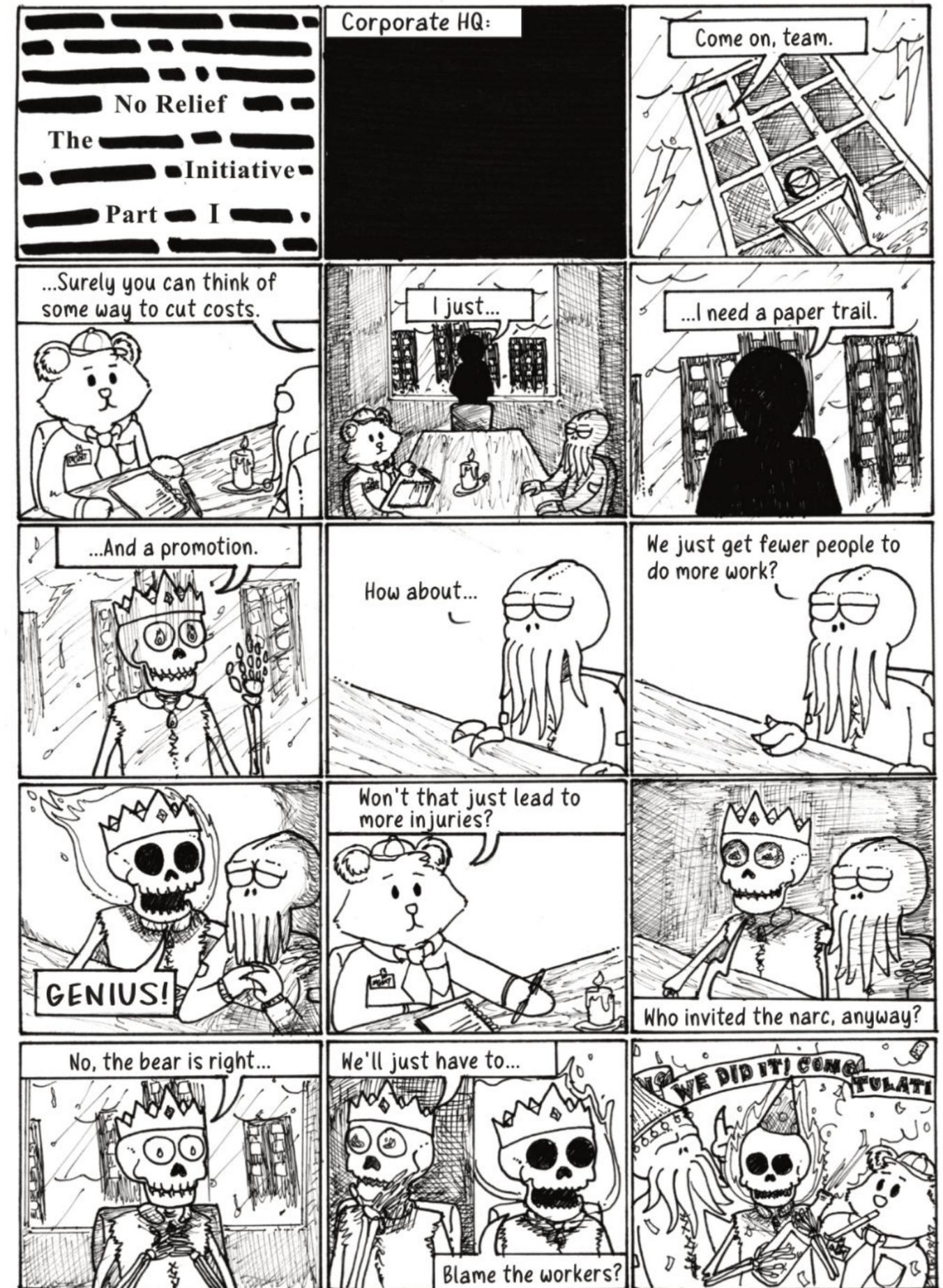
Key to these victories and others has been the slow, steady work of organizing members for action – and not just at contract time – as well as consistent coalition work with the broader community. Both Chicago and LA teachers went so far as to put demands for affordable housing and other community goods into their bargaining demands, which went a long way toward building

trust and gaining support from parents and the public.

Here in Nova Scotia, Educators for Social Justice – Nova Scotia has been organizing on educational issues since 2015. We meet monthly (on Zoom since the start of the pandemic) to work for a more active and progressive union, and on other issues in education. Among other things we've: hosted a weekend symposium on social justice education; done a study on teacher workload and morale following our contract dispute; campaigned successfully to get our union into the provincial federation of labour; organized a demonstration for a COVID-safe return to school in September 2020; and hosted a press conference on child poverty during the 2021 provincial election. Currently we have an active workload campaign in the province's largest school district, an ongoing campaign against child poverty, and a regular reading group on the topic of teacher unions and social justice.

Unions remain one of the best tools we have to create a better, fairer society – if their members remember what they can do, not get wrapped up in what they can't. 🗳️

*Ben Sichel is a high school teacher in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, and a member of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union.*



# USING PRONOUNS ON THE WORKFLOOR

Using the correct pronouns and names to talk to, or about, your trans and GNC (gender non-conforming) co-workers, friends, and loved ones, is important. Everyone deserves and has the right to be validated and affirmed as their authentic self. Making it difficult or awkward is an act of "othering," and at minimum is a detriment to morale and solidarity.

Here's some tips to help make this change in a positive, supportive way.

Hi, I'm Jace, they/them pronouns, I just bid into the depot.

Hey Jace, nice to meet you. Dave, he/him.

Offering your own pronouns (even if you think they are "obvious") normalizes the practice, shows allyship, and helps trans/GNC persons to feel safer.

So I was talking to Chris after shift, and she-- sorry, I was talking to Chris and he said...

If you slip up, correct yourself quickly and move on. (Repeating the phrase with the correction can be a helpful re-learning tool.)

The supervisor was really hounding Steve for no reason, and I--

You mean Stacey.

-- Right, thanks! and Stacey just wasn't having it...

The same applies when you are corrected by another. Use correct names and pronouns, even when the person is not present.

Lonnie is wild! You know where she goes--

They.

Oh, yeah. You know where they go on the weekend?

Get into the habit of politely correcting others, without fuss.

Yes. Every time.

## PLEASE, DON'T:

~~I'm sooo sorry, I'm trying, this is really hard for me :(~~

~~Huh. You don't look like a girl to me/don't look any different.~~

Don't make a scene, apologize profusely, or say things like, "this is hard for me."

Don't centre your own discomfort, make the person feel like a burden, or put them in the position of having to make you feel better.

No one, **absolutely no one**, owes it to you to "look right" for their gender according to your specifications.

Thanks for being patient, and for sharing your authentic self with me. I appreciate it.

*It's OK to make mistakes when un-learning old habits. But that is YOUR struggle. Not theirs.*

Further reading:

[@tai.draws](#) on Instagram (whose guides are excellent, and inspired this one.)

<https://egale.ca/awareness/pronoun-usage-guide/>

<https://hbr.org/2021/09/how-to-talk-about-pronouns-at-work-a-visual-guide>

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# **GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING**

**VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE**

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2022**

**NEW TIME >> 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM**

**REGISTER @**

**[CUPW730.CA/CALENDAR](https://cupw730.ca/calendar)**

**BY SEPTEMBER 9 @ NOON**

