the Rose

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Pay Equity: Everybody's Fight

RSMCs in Sudbury, Ontario, wearing T-shirts in support of the union's fight for pay equity

Pay equity is a basic human right in section 11 of the *Canadian Human Rights Act*. It is also covered under the *Canada Labour Code* and the *Equal Wages Guidelines*.

Pay equity is different from "equal pay": it refers to "equal pay for work of equal value."

The *Canadian Human Rights Act* states that it is discriminatory for an employer to "establish or maintain differences in wages between male and female employees employed in the same establishment who are performing work of equal value."

The *Equal Wages Guidelines* outline the four factors used to assess the value of work: **skill**, **effort**, **responsibility** and **working conditions**.

Pay equity is intended to stop discrimination related to the under-valuation of work that is traditionally performed by women and groups that are made of mostly women. The scale for determining this is:

- **70% if the group has less than 100 employees;**
- **60% if the group has more than 100 but less than 500; and**
- **55% if the group has 500 or more.**

Our Rural and Suburban Mail Carriers unit has 8,561 members, 70% of whom are women. The Urban Unit remains "male dominated," with 40,720, of whom around 60 % are men.

Some question whether RSMCs do equal work because in some locations there are no mobile routes and RSMCs do not deliver on foot. This is where the importance of work of equal value comes in: We all sort mail and parcels, we all scan and prep, we all deliver mail.

Many urban letter carriers do not deliver on foot. Should they be paid differently? Clerks sort mail. Should they be paid differently? The answer is **NO**. We should all have the same benefits and the same pay: we do equal work of equal value.

We want justice for our RSMC Sisters and Brothers. After Canada Post dragged our sister unions' fights for pay equity out for decades, CUPW seized the opportunity to get a much shorter process started at the bargaining table. We are justly proud of our union's fight for paid maternity leave and we can take pride once again in our fight for pay equity. RSMCs deserve the support of every single CUPW member!

These are the words of Yousra Badi, a worker at Poste Maroc, the Moroccan post office and an executive member of the Moroccan postal workers' union, la Fédération Nationale des Postes et Logistiques.

Sister Badi's work is indeed inspiring. She was active in the successful struggle for a Moroccan postal bank and is also a fierce campaigner for equality and women's rights. Women postal workers in Morocco have staged 24-hour strikes on International Women's Day and Moroccan rural and urban postal workers have won pay equity. Because the post office and postal banking in particular depends on the work of women, women's strikes have shut down the post office.

Women in Morocco experience gender-based challenges in a different cultural context from those faced by Canadian women. They don't have legal protections from harassment or the same social right to independence. For example, Moroccan women who get divorced or who choose to live alone or not to wear a scarf face strong peer pressure. Because there is a widespread tolerance in Moroccan society for men sexually harassing women on the street, men also harass women in the workplace.

At the Moroccan post office, women mostly work the front desk and take care of financial operations. As in Canada, women are usually the primary caregivers to children, so they are also expected to come home and take care of everything there, even if they have full-time jobs. At the head of the post office, women are still a minority among the leadership. In Sister Badi's union, women in leadership are also still in the minority, so it's harder to make change happen.

Sister Badi envisions a "strong union of women that are capable to make that change" and she is now working to build it.

"I believe in women's strength because I know what they are doing in my country," she says.

A women's committee connected to broader society can make lasting changes that could lead to change in other countries.

Edmonton Local Women's Committee Equinox Retreat 2016

On the weekend of September 23, 2016, the 15th annual Equinox Retreat gathered 28 union sisters and friends at the Bennett Centre in Edmonton. The theme this year was "Finding Your Voice" and find it we did!

For many of us, the Equinox is our first foray into Union life. It can be an important stepping-stone into becoming more active union participation, encouraging strong, confident union sisters who are ready to take their place at the table, on the work floor and the picket lines.

Members of the Edmonton Local Women's Committee include Bena Pattni, Suzy Fong, Mary Lussier, Michelle Woods, Michelle Caouette, Kathleen Mpulubusi and Karen Kennedy.

HEY SISTERS!
What's your Local Women's Committee up to?
Share it with The Rose!
Email us at feedback@cupw-sttp.org or contact your National Women's Committee Representative!

A Child Care Fund to Celebrate

CUPW is one of the few unions in the world to have negotiated a Child Care Fund to support members with their child care needs.

Many postal workers need child care outside of the traditional nine-to-five, five-day work week. We also know that quality child care is expensive and unaffordable for most. We believe child care is a collective responsibility and that is why we have been actively engaged in fighting for child care as a public good, and as a right for children and their families.

Like many of our gains, the Child Care Fund was the result of a long struggle that began in the early 1980s when CUPW women pushed to make child care a priority for our union at the 1980 National CUPW Convention. Between 1984-87, CUPW put child care on its bargaining agenda and in 1987, the union won an agreement for a joint study on the child care needs of postal workers. Based on this joint study, CUPW successfully negotiated the Child Care Fund with Canada Post.

A happy face at the Ska:Na Family Learning Centre, Windsor, Ontario

Our biggest project, the Special Needs Project, came out of a second study in 1996 looking at workforce barriers for parents of children with special needs. This research project was the first of its kind in Canada and Quebec, and was a catalyst for the Special Needs Project which is believed to be the only one of its kind in North America – and perhaps the world – that provides support to union members who have children with special needs.

The project's impact went far beyond easing the financial burden on parents. Members reported lower stress levels for the whole family and an increase in the well-being of their children with special needs.

After hearing from members that they still need help with their adult sons and daughters with disabilities, in 2005 CUPW again undertook to develop our "Moving On Project," which supports postal workers who have additional challenges when their sons and daughters with disabilities move "on" into adulthood.

When children with disabilities turn 18, they must enter the world of adult health and social services. Programs and supports are no longer available, yet the needs remain. Families experience frustration and often lack adequate services, supports and resources. As well, families face additional financial, emotional and/or physical stress as they try to balance work and home life. The Moving On project is our union's attempt to support members who have adult sons and daughters with disabilities.

Last year, CUPW celebrated the 20th anniversary of our Special Needs Project in 2016 and the 10th Anniversary of our Moving On Project. We can all be proud of what we have accomplished!

To contact the Special Needs Program, call toll-free ***1-800-840-5465***

Want to comment on The Rose?
CUPW
377 Bank Street
Ottawa, Ontario, K2P 1Y3
feedback@cupw-sttp.org

The struggle against gender-based violence continues

This year marks the 27th anniversary of the murders of 14 women at École Polytechnique in Montréal, Québec. The December 6th Montreal Massacre specifically targeted women and feminists and since then, December 6th has been commemorated as the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women.

While many things have changed over the last 27 years, violence against women is not a thing of the past. While rates of reported domestic violence have fallen due to increased financial independence and social equality, making it easier for women to leave abusive relationships, it is still estimated that 70% of spousal violence is not reported to the police.

In Canada, Indigenous women are still 3.5 times more likely to experience violence than non-Indigenous women. The Native Women's Association of Canada has been observing Sisters in Spirit vigils every year on October 4th to remember thousands of Indigenous women and girls who have been murdered and gone missing. After years of pressure from Indigenous women, communities and allies, the current government launched a National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. The final report is due in 2018.

This year the Legislative Assembly of Ontario tabled Bill 132 – Sexual Violence and Harassment Action Plan. This bill provides new protections for survivors of violence and harassment, such as allowing the early termination of a tenancy, compensation for victims of violence, and measures that require employers to protect workers.

In honour of International Women's Day, 2016.
The Canadian Union of Postal Workers

Art: "Still Dancing" by Jonathan Labillois www._jonlabillois.com
Donated to the Montreal Native Women's Shelter

In honour of International Women's Day 2016, our union created this beautiful poster based on the art of Jonathan Labillois to raise awareness of the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. You can get a copy of this poster through your local or download the image from our website, cupw.ca

The Rose is a newsletter from the CUPW National Women's Committee, sent to all Sisters of CUPW.
Look for us in the next issue of Perspective!

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