

January 2010

TO ALL CUPE CHARTERED ORGANIZATIONS

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

MARCH 8 – INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

On March 8, International Women's Day, events are held throughout the world in recognition of the struggles and achievements of women. It started just over 100 years ago, in 1909, when women marched through the streets of New York, calling for shorter hours, better pay, and voting rights. The next year, at the Socialist International meeting in Copenhagen, the delegates unanimously agreed to establish a Women's Day, international in character, to honour the movement for women's rights and to call for universal suffrage for women. The Triangle Shirtwaist Fire in 1911 in New York City killed more than 140 young working women, most of whom were immigrants. This tragedy highlighted the demands that women were making for improved working conditions and was used as a rallying cry in International Women's Day marches.

It is important to understand this history as we try to deal with the challenges facing us today. As CUPE members know, women's rights in Canada are under attack and are being threatened by right-wing governments, particularly at the federal level. There are many examples, including:

- The taking away of the right of workers in the federal sector to seek pay equity through human rights complaints.
- The continuing cuts to women's advocacy groups.
- The ignoring of the plight of Aboriginal women and children, many of whom are victims of violence.
- The failure to establish a national child care program.
- The introduction of legislation to abolish the long-gun registry.
- The attack on pensions, which are of critical importance for women.
- The promotion of privatization which is an attack on women and other equality-seeking groups.

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CUPE is engaged on many fronts trying to address these issues in order to move women's equality forward, including:

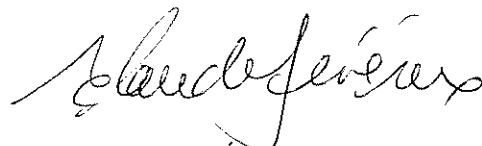
- Educating and encouraging locals to make women's equality issues a bargaining priority, through the promotion of material from the *Bargaining Women's Equality Conference*, which includes excellent research data on issues such as wages and benefits, pensions, work/life balance, violence, and child care (*go to cupe.ca for more information*).
- Establishing funding for anti-privatization work, which includes a campaign for public child care, and one for improved long-term care – both of major importance for women.
- Highlighting the issue of water as an integral part of the public good, through the Blue Summit and other ongoing activities – another issue that has a profound impact on women, particularly in the developing countries.
- Actively participating in the Canadian Labour Congress campaign to lobby governments to make changes to secure pensions for all workers.

CUPE is proud to continue the legacy of the brave women who marched over 100 years ago and we invite you and your local to mark March 8 by getting involved in any number of ways, such as having a speaker on one of these issues at your next meeting, holding a brown bag lunch and highlighting one of the topics from the *Bargaining Women's Equality Conference*, sending financial support to a shelter for victims of domestic abuse, or getting involved in anti-privatization and/or other political campaigns in your region.

In solidarity,



PAUL MOIST
National President



CLAUDE GÉNEREUX
National Secretary-Treasurer