



Executive Committee Local 229

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CAW Local 229 District Paramedics Ratify Collective Agreement

On March 10, 2003 CAW Paramedics at 14 district ambulance bases ratified a new collective agreement by a narrow margin of 57% with the City of Thunder Bay.

Bargaining Committee Chair, Nick Enders said, "By far the most contentious issue was the stand-by. Paramedics are expected to be on-call, with a response time as low as seven minutes for a rate of \$2.50 per hour." District ambulance bases are only staffed between 10 and 12 hours per day, the remainder of which is covered by stand-by.

The collective agreement does include improvements in wages, vacation and benefits, and will expire October 31, 2004. "The committee realized that the stand-by pay would be an issue with the members and put management on notice that is the next round of bargaining substantial increases would have to be made in this area." Said CAW Local 229 Vice-President, Katha Fortier.

The 14 bases were previously run by a variety of operators and the employees were members of CAW, SEIU, CUPE or non-union until January 1, 2003 when the City of Thunder Bay took over administration through an application to the Ontario Labour Relations Board. The bases are located throughout the district and include, Longlac, Geraldton, Nakina, Beardmore, Nipigon, Red Rock, Armstrong, Shuniah, Terrace Bay, Schreiber, Marathon, Manitouwadge, Conmee and Upsula.

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Fort William Clinic Ratifies Collective Agreement

THUNDER BAY, April 8, 2003/ The membership of CAW Local 229, employed at the Fort William Clinic voted last night 100% in favour of a contract that will see general wage increases of 9% over the life of the agreement. Increases to paid flex time, sick time, benefits, and pregnancy/parental leave top-up to 93% were also part of the three year deal.

"We were able to make substantial gains this round, in areas that are extremely important to women who work," said Bargaining Committee Chairperson, Jackie Wheatly, "and voter turnout was greater than 95%, so this ratification was particularly gratifying." Additionally, new language was also negotiated in workplace harassment, no discrimination, violence against women, union representation, and paid education leave.

CAW Local 229 represents members at the clinic who work as assistants, phlebotomists, and accounting clerks.

New Unit Chairs/Council Reps

- Versa Care - Mona Hurd
- Nipigon Hospital Service- Anne McMahon
- Wilson Memorial Hospital, Marathon, Service - Michelle Angers-Belanger
- Community Care Access Centre - Ruth Sitch
- Thunder Bay Ambulance - Pat Dixon
- District Ambulance, David Bott, Brian White, Susan Lemcke

Also congratulations to Jason Cummings and Amy Rubino, the new CAW Council reps.

CAW Local 229 Thunder Bay Paramedics Attempt to set a Guinness World Record

Beginning Monday April 21st at noon, at the Thunder Bay Tournament Centre, CAW Local 229 Thunder Bay Paramedics will attempt to set a Guinness World Record for the Longest Hockey Game, expected to end Thursday April 24th at 8:00pm. Proceeds from the event will be in support of the Trauma Services at the new Thunder Bay Regional Hospital.

Volunteers are urgently needed for this endeavour, around the clock. If you are able to donate some time to this worthwhile event please call Terri Hrkac at 343.7109 ASAP.

Volunteers are needed for greeting, ticket sales, food services, and scrutinizing, time-keeping, and miscellaneous duties. And of course, everyone is invited and encouraged to come out and cheer them on!

Thunder Bay Save Medicare Committee Update

The Thunder Bay Save Medicare Committee will be meeting at the CAW Local office in the Chapple Building on Thursday April 17th at 5:00 pm to discuss plans for a local rally on May the 10th to coincide with the Ontario Health Coalitions' planned Caravan of Protest in Toronto.

The committee will also be discussing methods of getting a large number of election pledge cards signed from people who will commit to only voting for candidates who will support universal, not-for profit medicare. Pledge cards are available at the Local office.

Everyone is invited to attend this meeting

May Day – A Labour Perspective

There are really two labour days in Canada. The first Monday in September is the one we officially call "Labour Day." But celebrating "May Day" on May 1 is a tradition that goes back centuries. Some labour groups in Canada still hold events on this unofficial labour "holiday."

The roots of May Day go back to pagan Europe, centuries ago. The ancient Celts and Saxons celebrated May 1 as "Beltane," or the day of fire (Bel was the Celtic god of the sun). They rejoiced in the end of winter and the return of the sun and fertility of the soil. During the Middle Ages, the various trade guilds celebrated feast days for the patron saints of their craft. The two most popular days were on the summer solstice (late June) and May Day. Peasants and villagers would select a May Queen and raise a Maypole, around which single men and women would dance. As trade societies evolved from the guilds, eventually into unions, the May Day traditions remained strong into the early 19th century. The modern celebration of May Day as a worker's holiday evolved from the struggle for the eight-hour day in 1886. On May 1 of that year, there were strikes throughout Canada and the U.S., organized by the Knights of Labour (a forerunner of our modern trade union movement). In Chicago, police attacked striking workers, killing six. The strikers protested the next day at a gathering in Haymarket Square. A bomb exploded in the middle of a crowd of police, killing eight. The police arrested eight strikers, and four were eventually convicted of the bombing, and executed.

The next year in Paris, the First Communist International declared May 1 an International worker's holiday, in commemoration of the Haymarket

strikers. May Day has been celebrated as a worker's holiday throughout Europe since.

Last year, for instance, 1.5 million trade unionists marched in Russia, protesting the Yeltsin government's policies. Germany's 11.7 per cent unemployment rate was the focus of over 100,000 workers marching there. Large demonstrations were also held in South Korea, Japan, Turkey and Mexico. In Canada, labour groups in several cities mark the day, and Mayworks - labour-sponsored arts festivals - are connected to the same celebration. But May Day demonstrations in this country are usually small gatherings, attracting hundreds of supporters at best. According to Eugene Plawiuk - an Edmonton, Alberta union activist who has written a May Day history and runs a May Day web site - "I would hazard that the St. Catharines Day of Action will be one of the biggest ever May Day events in Canadian history. It'll be an historic day no matter what." If May Day is an international worker's day, then where did "Mayday" as an emergency distress term come from? Actually, Mayday is the Anglicization of m'aidez, which means, "help me" in French. So historically, the two terms have nothing to do with each other!

April 28th is a Day of Mourning

Each year hundreds of Canadians lose their life as a result of their employment. It is estimated one in sixteen workers will suffer a workplace injury. All workers are entitled to a safe and healthy work environment. Legislation is needed to put corporations on notice that they not only have a responsibility to provide a safe and healthy workplace, but they will be accountable for failing to take steps to provide safe working conditions.

First Ministers' meet to discuss Accord on Health Care

On February 5th, 2003 the first ministers released the federal-provincial Accord on Health Care Renewal. Here are some of the responses to the Accord by CAW President Buzz Hargrove. In it they agreed that new public investment is essential to health care reform. In addition, the Accord moves forward on many areas CAW and the Romanow report endorsed. This includes; primary health care reform, expansion and improved access to home care, catastrophic drug coverage; improved transparency; a national electronic health records system; expansion of diagnostic care including new equipment and training for specialized staff; maintaining Medicare's five guiding principles as contained in The Canada Health Act.

However says Hargrove; other key recommendations have not been addressed. These include;

- No definition of "Universal home care" to reflect the services that will be covered.
- The agreement does not address long term home care for the frail elderly and people with chronic conditions.
- Primary health care reform has committed that by the year 2011, 50% of Canadians will have access to the appropriate health care provider; NOT 100%!!
- There is no set dollar figure at which the catastrophic drug plan would kick in.
- It does not resolve the issue that some prescription drugs are covered in some provinces and not in others.
- The health care needs of aboriginals and those living in

rural and remote communities are not adequately addressed.

- It does not expect accountability by the provinces to deliver health services, which will allow them to do what suits their agenda including privatization.
- It does not talk about amending the Canada Health Act to make tougher definition around private clinics of diagnostic services

The fight to protect our health care must continue, and we need to continue to be active and let our politicians know where we stand. Upcoming provincial elections will provide us with the opportunity to let them know what we want and demand. Also look to your local for events you can participate in to keep up the fight for Medicare.

The People of 229

Katha is the current Vice-President of Local 229, serving as a full-time officer since December 2002. Born and raised in Nipigon, she has worked full-time at the Nipigon District Memorial Hospital as both a registered practical nurse and a ward clerk since her 1982 graduation from the Nursing Assistant Program in Thunder Bay. Katha's main residence is in Nipigon, but she stays with friends in Thunder Bay to avoid daily travel. Her only child, Dustin is very supportive of her work in the union. She firmly believes it is the job of all trade unionists to teach their children about the vital role unions play in society. "Dustin proudly shares a birthday, March 8th with National President Buzz Hargrove and International Women's Day, and at 15, can hold his own in a discussion on the necessity of unions."

Involvement in the union was a natural process for Katha, particularly after her

participation in her workplace pay equity committee in the early 90's. She says, "I was able to see first hand, that by working together, we could make real progress for workers." She later became unit chair and a member of the executive board representing outlying area members, becoming involved in the women's committee's at a provincial and national level. Katha was a staunch supporter of the move to CAW, seeing the union as a strong organization with a firm commitment to working people, progressive enough to use their power to support social justice issues.

In the community, Katha is active in the New Democratic Party, the Thunder Bay and District Labour Council and the Thunder Bay Save Medicare Committee. She also commits time to several Local committees and is the Vice-President of the CAW Ontario Health Care Council. She admits to thoroughly enjoying every moment of her union duties and says of her new full-time position, "It's like coming to work and being able to do exactly what you want. I'd like to say I do what I do for purely selfless motives, but it's what I love, challenges and all." As for long term goals, Katha simply says that she aspires to do the best job of vice-president that she is able to do. "I don't have a vision for 5 or 10 years down the road, other than to know that it's very likely I will be involved in the union in some capacity."

Katha is very optimistic about the future of the local union. "229 has amazing and talented activists, working at the Unit level, the Local level and the National level, and for a newcomer within the CAW structure we are doing phenomenal work. There's always more to do, but there is always someone willing to step up to the plate." She encourages everyone, especially women, to "grab the bat and start swinging."

Tories Cut Backs Since 1995

These are a few things that need to be remembered, with provincial elections looming in the future. Here part of their record on women's issues.

Since 1995 the Tories Have:

- Restricted pap smears breast examinations and osteoporosis bone density scans
- Laid off 26,000 hospital workers, including nurses
- Destroyed the job security of women for home care by privatizing the bidding for care
- Cut off thousands of frail elderly women from home support services in 2002
- In 1999 closed the only hospital dedicated to women's health
- Cut violence against women services across the board
- Cut funding to emergency women's shelters on the first day of Wife Assault Prevention Month in 1995 and eliminated all funding for second stage housing programs
- Cut family counseling programs aimed at tackling family violence through early intervention and prevention, all while shelters are witnessing a dramatic increase in demand
- Ignored the recommendations from various inquests on violence and harassment perpetrated against women
- Repealed the Employment Equity Act
- Eroded the effectiveness of the Human Rights Commission by slashing funding
- Imposed a cap on pay equity funding in 1995
- Eliminated funding for Pay Equity Advocacy and Legal Clinics
- Repealed the proxy section of the Pay Equity Act, taking away

- pay equity rights from 100,000 of the lowest paid women in Ontario
- Frozen the minimum wages at 1995 levels
 - Introduced the 60 hours work week
 - Cut welfare payments by 21.6 percent
 - Denied welfare recipients, mostly single mothers, access to both post-secondary education and welfare
 - Cut kindergarten to Grade 12 education funding by 2.3 billion dollars
 - Closed schools and increased class sizes
 - Reduced the number of school principals so that not every school has a principal
 - Put thousands of children in need of special education on long waiting lists
 - Reduced support services including resources and staff
 - Forced schools to rely on fundraising to buy necessities
 - Provided tax cuts for private schools
 - Eliminated adult education
 - Increased post-secondary student tuition between 20-500 percent
 - Granted status to private, for profit post secondary institutions
 - Eliminated funding for non-profit childcare spaces in schools
 - Cancelled new housing supply programs in 1995
 - Removed rent control
 - In 1996 released recommendations to reduce staff ratios, dilute staff qualifications, divert subsidies to unregulated programs and reduced licensing enforcement for child care centres

CAW Local 229 Reaches Agreement with W.J. Stelmaschuk & Ass.

Two collective agreements were overwhelmingly ratified in Kenora this week, providing substantial increases in wages and benefits as well as improved collective agreement language. Jean Shamlock, Unit Chair at Northern Youth Centre said, "Increases will amount to over 20% in three years after parity was reached with the Setterland Centre."

"This is a major victory for our union and our members in Kenora" said Local 229 President Andy Savela. Members at the Setterland Group Home will see increases of 2%, 3% and 3% over the three year term.

Women's Committee Work for Shelter

The Local 229 Women's Committee will be sponsoring a booth in the Victoriaville Mall May 9th and 10th. For a donation to the shelter, you can receive a carnation and an opportunity to phone mom for free anywhere in the world. The committee would like to thank their sponsors, Thunder Bay Telephone, Growers Direct, and Victoriaville mall. If you are interested in volunteering for this event call the local office.

CAW Executive Council

This year's Executive Council will be held on May 2 & 3, 2003 at the Prince Arthur Hotel. Executive Council is an opportunity for Unit Chairpersons and the Executive Board to get together and discuss the business of the Local. This year's event will have a dinner Friday night and it is rumoured that a special guest from the National office will be coming to share their wisdom and knowledge. Although Executive Council is for Unit Chairpersons any steward is welcome to attend on their own time. For further information contact the Education Committee at the Local.

