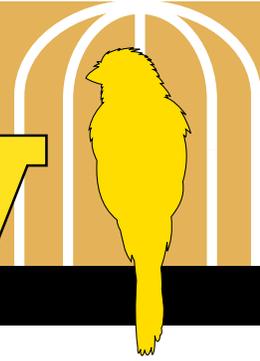


THE **canary**

SPRING 2015



HAZARDS **VIOLENCE**

Domestic violence: A workplace health and safety issue

The results of a new survey confirm that domestic violence affects many workers, and the impacts spill over to the workplace.

Over 8,400 workers from across the country answered an online survey put together by the Canadian Labour Congress and Western University, with CUPE and other unions' help.

Just over a third of the respondents experienced domestic violence in their lifetime.

Over 80 per cent of those individuals said domestic violence had a negative effect on their work performance, and over a third reported that coworkers were affected as well.

Almost nine per cent lost a job because of domestic violence.

Over half said the violence occurred at or near their workplace, in the form of abusive calls and messages, stalking, or the

abuser contacting coworkers or the employer.

Most of the people who filled out this survey were in stable, unionized jobs. Workers in non-union and precarious employment face even more negative job-related impacts.

Women, Aboriginal workers, persons with disabilities and LGBTTI workers were more likely than other respondents to have experienced domestic violence.

Of the respondents who discussed the domestic violence with someone at work, only 13 per cent talked to their union.

Ontario and Manitoba are the only provinces that explicitly require employers to have a policy on domestic violence. In other provinces, domestic violence is covered more generally under occupational health laws.

CUPE's new Violence Protection Kit, due out later this year, will explain workers' rights and what union locals can do to challenge domestic violence and support members.

■ Irene Jansen

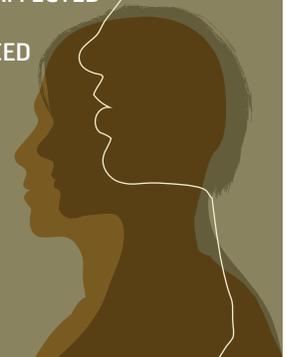
For more results from the survey, visit canadianlabour.ca

33.6%

OF RESPONDENTS EXPERIENCED DV

81.9%

OF THOSE AFFECTED BY DV EXPERIENCED NEGATIVE EFFECTS ON WORK PERFORMANCE.



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Three CUPE members killed on the job in February

Three CUPE members were killed on the job in February.

CUPE 4946 member Dellis Partridge, 60, was killed at work during his first shift as a bus driver with the Peace River School Division. The bus he was driving collided head-on with a semi truck near Grimshaw, Alberta. Fourteen students were passengers on the bus. All sustained injuries, as did the truck driver. There were no other fatalities.

CUPE 30 member Harl Hawley, a pool service employee with the City of Edmonton, passed away suddenly while working at the Grand Trunk Recreational Centre. The cause of his death is unclear.

CUPE 503 member Alain Bissonnette, a heating, ventilation and air conditioning technician for the City of Ottawa, died at the Peter D. Clark Long Term Care Home. He was 40 years old. The Ontario Ministry of Labour was still investigating the cause of death, but also issued orders to install protective cages and railings on ladders in the facility.

“We offer our deepest condolences to the families of these members,” said CUPE National President Paul Moist. “Coming home from work healthy and safe everyday is something we can’t take for granted, as we’ve been so grimly reminded. We must redouble our efforts to protect our members and all workers.”

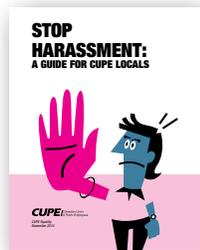
CUPE National Secretary-Treasurer Charles Fleury also offered his sympathies.

“Our thoughts are with the families of these workers, and also with their friends and colleagues,” said Fleury. “It’s been a very difficult month for some of our locals.”

CUPE Equality has several new resources on harassment

Stop harassment: A guide for CUPE locals is a 14-page kit for local union stewards, officers and other activists. It covers:

- The definition of harassment.
- The effects of harassment.
- An overview of workers’ rights and employers’ responsibilities.
- How the union can challenge harassment and support members.



- A checklist for anti-harassment policies and collective agreement language.

The pamphlet *Speak out! Stop harassment* is for members who have experienced or witnessed harassment, or who want to organize on the issue.



A new research paper, *Workplace Harassment and Mental Injuries*:

Examining Root Causes, shows that harassment is a leading cause of stress and mental injury.

Poor working conditions contribute to harassment, and marginalized workers are most affected.



FIND ALL THESE RESOURCES ONLINE at cupe.ca

The Canary, CUPE’s health and safety newsletter, is published four times a year. Canaries were once used in mines to warn mineworkers about changes in air quality. Since then, the canary has become a symbol of workplace safety, and an important reminder of dangerous working conditions. For more information on the importance of the symbol, check out cupe.ca/canary.

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Please email Troy Winters at health_safety@cupe.ca with corrections, questions or suggestions.

Find past issues online at cupe.ca/canary

Subscribe to the email edition at cupe.ca/subscribe



Changes to federal labour code now in effect



Health and safety-related changes to the Canada Labour Code came into effect on October 31, 2014. These changes only apply to workers that are regulated by the Canada Labour Code (rather than provincial health and safety legislation) which includes CUPE members who work in communications, ports, airlines, rail and other cross-provincial border transportation.

There are three significant changes that affect CUPE members:

1) THE DEFINITION OF DANGER

As we previously reported, the Code now requires that a hazard be “an imminent or serious threat” to be considered dangerous. CUPE adamantly disagrees with the new definition, as it implies that long-term exposures to hazardous substances, like asbestos for instance, may not be considered dangerous (See Canary Winter 2014 for a more in-depth explanation). Regardless of the definition, if you are asked to do work you legitimately believe will pose a significant risk to your health and safety now, or your health in the future, **you still**

have the right to refuse dangerous work, and should do so.

2) THE INVESTIGATION PROCESS FOR WORK REFUSAL

The process for investigating a work refusal has also changed, with new mandatory requirements for committee involvement in the investigation and written reporting requirements that previously did not exist. A summary of the new procedure, with a complete explanation from the federal government can be found at cupe.ca (search “right to refuse”).

3) WORK REFUSALS BEING RULED AS TRIVIAL, FRIVOLOUS OR VEXATIOUS, OR MADE IN BAD FAITH

The Code now provides both the employer and the Minister of Labour or the minister’s delegate an option to rule an investigation of a work refusal trivial, frivolous or vexatious, or made in bad faith. CUPE strongly opposes the new language. We believe it is designed to make workers fearful of refusing work.

The federal labour program has also released new documents clarifying the committee’s right to

participate in a refusal investigation. The new Interpretations, Policies and Guidelines (IPGs) reiterates that the term “shall participate” requires the Health and Safety Committee to be *actively involved from the beginning to the completion of each of the activities* identified in the Code. This language should be interpreted to mean that participation by committee members is (and has always been) a mandatory requirement.

CUPE continues to oppose any legislation that reduces the basic health and safety of our members at work. The Conservative government has a legacy of policies that hurt Canadian families. But the good news is we’re just one election away from seeing the change we want. The NDP has been built in partnership with the Canadian labour movement and CUPE to be a voice for workers. Together, we are committed to building a better Canada, with stronger laws to make sure all workers are healthy and safe on the job. If you believe it’s time to stand up for Canadian workers, vote for the change you want. Support the NDP.

■ **Troy Winters and Julie Jobin**

safe@work

HEALTH AND SAFETY FACTS FROM CUPE



Shift work

Many important public services are delivered 24 hours a day, seven days per week, requiring some CUPE members to work in shifts. We can do things to lessen the negative health impacts of shift work without compromising services.

Shift work is defined as any arrangement of daily working hours other than the standard daylight hours (7/8 a.m. – 5/6 p.m.).

Effects of shift work

Circadian rhythms are physical, mental and behavioral changes that follow an approximate 24-hour cycle and are enforced primarily by light and darkness cycles in the environment.

Shift workers who experience disruption of the circadian system and altered sleep patterns probably have an elevated risk of breast cancer, and a potentially elevated risk of colorectal cancer.

Other negative effects of shift work include:

- Disorders of the gastrointestinal tract.
- Disorders of the cardiovascular system.
- Metabolic disturbances.
- Increased workplace accidents associated with worker fatigue.
- A negative impact on fetal growth in pregnant women resulting in low birth weight.
- Anxiety and depression resulting from social isolation.
- Disruption in family or personal life.

Strategies to counter the effects of shift work

Individuals who work shifts encounter a variety of issues resulting from a change in eating, sleeping and working patterns. Strategies that workers can adopt include:

- Employing a rapid shift rotation where workers work two or three days, then two or three nights, then have time off. This rotation both reduces the disruption to the circadian rhythm and allows the workers to maintain some aspects of their regular social interactions.
- Negotiate adequate rest periods for shift workers. Eliminate split shifts and nighttime work where possible (but also be careful about working alone).
- In the case of rotational shifts, have the shifts rotating forward from day to afternoon to night because circadian rhythms adjust better when moving forward than backward. Avoid having early morning shifts that start before 6 a.m.
- Have 20-30 minute naps while on breaks, especially during night shifts.
- Regular physical activity facilitates sleep and improves its quality. It also decreases the feeling of fatigue while increasing alertness, vigour and energy.
- High quality meals and snacks, while avoiding high fat, high carbohydrate, sugary and processed foods will prevent energy levels from dropping and minimize sleep cycle disruption.
- Limit the use of stimulants such as caffeine, nicotine and alcohol – especially before bedtime.
- Request that your employer have a dedicated rest area that is as dark and as quiet as possible.

THE INFORMATION ABOVE IS LIMITED. For much more, including broader strategies for dealing with shift work, check out the full-length fact sheet, available at cupe.ca/health-and-safety

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE! cupe.ca/health-and-safety

• more information on workplace health and safety issues • fact sheets and guidelines on a wide range of topics • the latest health and safety news AND MORE