

October 2015

TO ALL CUPE CHARTERED ORGANIZATIONS

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

DECEMBER 10 – INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

December 10 was proclaimed as Human Rights Day in 1950 by the United Nations General Assembly. The proclamation brought worldwide attention to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as the common standard for everyone across all nations.

This year's slogan for December 10 is "Human Rights 365" to remind us that every day is a day to uphold human rights. Human rights include freedom of association and freedom of speech as well as the right to health, education, and equality, among other fundamental rights. The Universal Declaration includes 30 articles that outline the rights that each and every one of us is entitled to. They encompass a wide range of basic rights that are key to binding us together as workers and as a global community.

As we prepare to celebrate International Human Rights Day, the October 19 federal election offers an opportunity to ensure that Canadians get a government which is committed to upholding human rights.

Once a leader in human rights on the international stage, Canada's reputation has taken a beating under the Harper government. In a recent review of our record, the United Nations heavily criticized Canada on a range of issues, such as the treatment of refugees, lack of action on missing and murdered Aboriginal women, political audits of charities, and the federal government's anti-terror legislation, Bill C-51, which strips Canadians of civil liberties, and has the potential to increase racial profiling, mass surveillance and carding activities by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS).

Harper's response to the Syrian refugee crisis is equally devastating, promoting militarism and the criminalization of refugees. Harper's refugee policy was cemented three years ago with the passage of Bill C-31, a bill that made regressive changes to Canada's refugee determination system. Refugee protection in Canada can now be determined according to political whims, rather than ensuring a fair and independent decision about who is a refugee, and making refugees vulnerable to detainment.

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The NDP is committed to getting Canada back on track as a leader in human rights through a number of key initiatives, including the repeal of Bill C-51, a national inquiry into the disappearances and murders of Aboriginal women, and sponsoring tens of thousands of Syrian refugees.

Here are some suggestions for your local to promote international human rights and mark December 10:

- Check out CUPE's Election Hub for information on how the parties line up on key human rights issues at cupe.ca/vote.
- Educate yourself and your local on human rights issues. Read the UN Report on Canada's human rights record at documents.un.org.
- Recognize someone in your local or community who has contributed to improving human rights.
- Invite a speaker on human rights to your local meeting.
- Form a committee on human rights in your local.
- Have a notice board to promote human rights activities, events, news and issues.

Start thinking and planning now. Make December 10 a day that creates awareness of human rights issues, and inspires people to appreciate, to strive, and to ensure that all people enjoy human rights equally.

In solidarity,



PAUL MOIST
National President



CHARLES FLEURY
National Secretary-Treasurer