

#ItsTime

CUPE Local 1022 Sisters, Brothers and Friends

Yesterday, I attended a hearing at the Ontario Labour Relations Board regarding an appeal that we, as a local had submitted regarding a Work Refusal that took place last year. We filed the appeal as the Ministry of Labour and our employer had stated that there was no reason to believe that violence would occur in this case, therefore making the Work Refusal invalid. This decision was made regardless of dozens of incident reports being filed by a member who had been hit, scratched and choked. Further incidents happened to other members at the school working with the same student. The Executive and Health and Safety Committees believed, as did CUPE National, that we had not just a valid case but a precedent setting one as well. With that knowledge the appeal was filed.

As part of our case, four brave women came forward to share their stories, stories of violent incidents that occurred which are traumatic. It was suggested that we try to mediate the case, to try and reach a compromise with our employer. In the spirit of saving our members further trauma by removing the need to relive events and see mediation as a way to promote preventative measures that would ensure violent incidents and work refusals would be drastically reduced, we began discussions.

Early on it was clear that the employer struggled to see the value in, and level of expertise, our Educational Assistants bring to our schools. Nevertheless we persisted, pushing key prevention issues such as involvement in meetings about focus students, more training, clearer incident reports and opportunities for interaction to share the valuable work that all of our members do. In the back of our minds was the four women and the hope that we could spare them from testifying about an emotional event.

At the end of the day, the employer did not share the same concerns for these members and were unwilling to work together to further preventative measures that would value our members rights as provided by the Occupational Health and Safety Act; the right to know, the right to refuse and the right to participate. We now will move forward with the hearing.

In light of the employers actions yesterday, I am calling on all members, colleagues and allies to join us in our #ItsTime Campaign. By coming together in a show of solidarity for these women and all of our members, we will show our board that It is Time that our members are treated with the dignity and respect they deserve in all capacities but notably in the area of Workplace Violence.

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What Can You Do?

- Change your Profile Picture to the black #ItsTime photo (shared on Facebook CUPE 1022 page)
- Look for Information Drops about Workplace Violence - read up on the information and discuss with your colleagues
- We are sourcing out Black Arm Bands that state our slogan #ItsTime. We will be providing more information regarding this action when we distribute the bands.
- Share tweets and posts as they are posted. The more the message gets out the better.
- Ensure ALL violent incidents forms are completed and on work time. If there is any issues please contact the Executive immediately.
- Ensure that you are registered on our CUPE 1022 Website to receive updates and further information.
- If you feel that you are in a situation where workplace violence has not been addressed please contact the Executive and Health and Safety Committees immediately - we are here to help

Its important to remember that our working conditions are our students learning conditions. We believe that the preventative measures that we put forward yesterday would not only ensure the safety of our members but ensure the safety of all of our students. Our students that the right education and we have the right to a safe working environment - CUPE 1022 does not believe that these to rights are exclusive and cancel out each other - they can happen concurrently.

I want to thank everyone in advance for their support behind this campaign. It is a campaign that in my opinion is long overdue and will have the necessary impact to