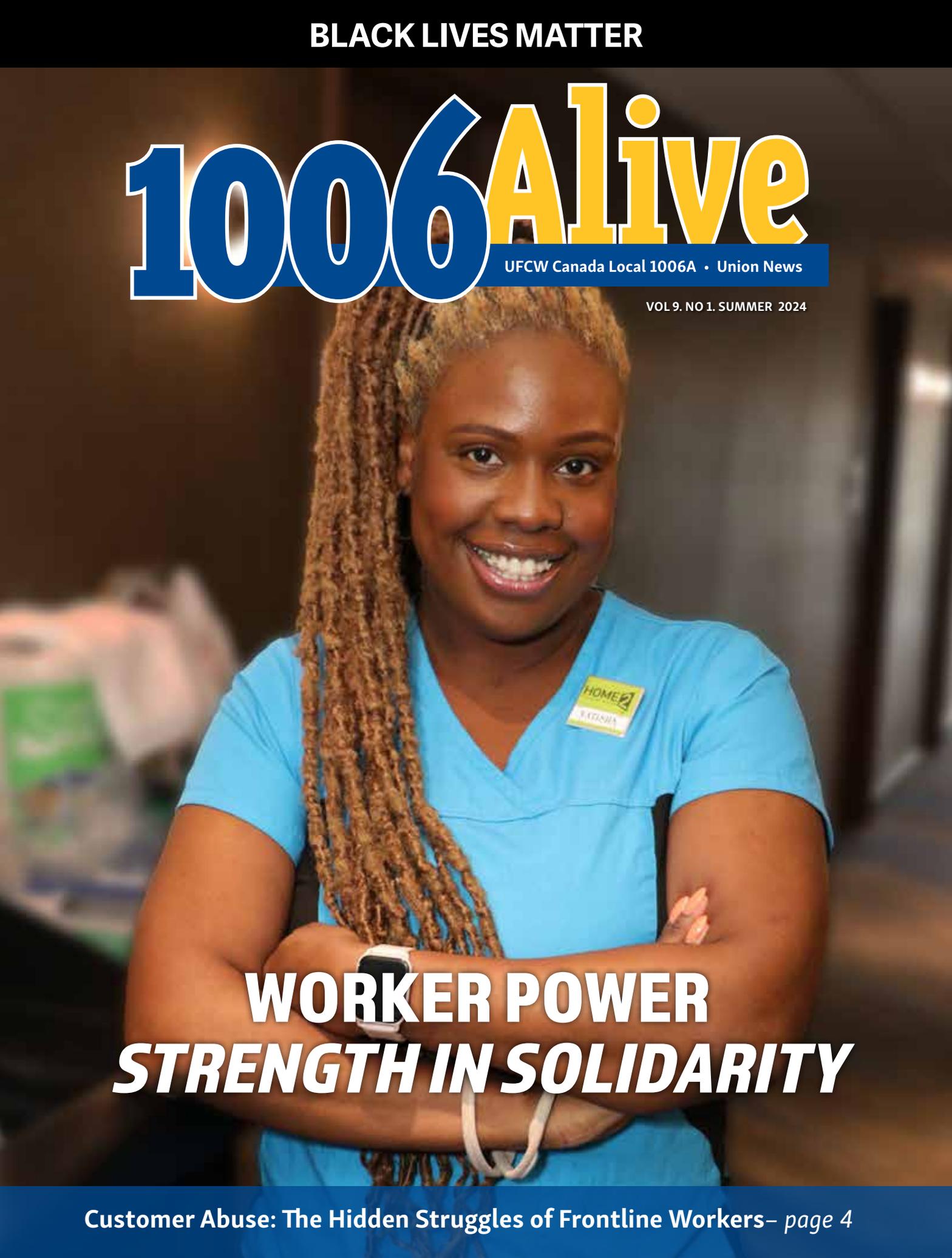


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UFCW Canada Local 1006A • Union News

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WORKER POWER STRENGTH IN SOLIDARITY

Customer Abuse: The Hidden Struggles of Frontline Workers– page 4



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1006A kicks off the 2024 Pride season by participating in the Brockville Pride Parade.



1006A member Audrey created a Black History Month display at her workplace.



1006A takes part in Bear Witness Day in solidarity with Indigenous children.



1006A members and staff stand up for workers' rights at the UFCW International Women's Conference.



1006A young workers learn new skills at UFCW Canada's Young Workers Internship Program (YIP) in Niagara Falls.

ALL WORKERS DESERVE TO BE SAFE



Wayne E. Hanley (he/him)

*President, UFCW Canada Local 1006A
International Vice-President, UFCW*

Building safe and healthy workplaces is a core principle of our union's mission. 1006A members are integral to ensuring this reality.

According to a UFCW Canada general survey of workers, 88 per cent reported experiencing harassment in the workplace and 61 per cent reported facing sexual harassment.

This is unacceptable – harassment or violence must not be tolerated anywhere, not in our workplaces and not in our communities. All workers deserve to be safe.

It's a heartbreaking and difficult situation for workers, who are often scared and unsure of where to turn or who to trust. They are fearful for their safety, for their job, and sometimes even for their lives. Workers from marginalized groups, including racialized, disabled, 2SLGBTQIA+ and young workers are more likely to be targeted.

What is also concerning is that nearly 50 per cent of survey respondents said they did not report incidents of gender-based violence to their employer, steward, or co-workers.

Some may not know who to reach out to, or they may be afraid to speak up – especially if the perpetrator is a supervisor or manager.

Ultimately, the employer has the responsibility to provide a safe workplace for all workers. Though many employers acknowledge their responsibility and act, it's disappointing and disturbing how many others look the other way.

As your union, we want you to know you are not alone. When calling out violence or harassment on the job, we will stand by your side to ensure you are protected and your concerns are addressed.

It's troubling that 61 per cent of workers reported experiencing sexual harassment on the job. This is unacceptable. You have the right to a safe working environment and your union will hold your employer accountable.

If you experience any incidents, contact your union representative right away. You can talk to them confidentially, and they will be able to assist you to ensure your workplace is safe.

Our union reps will provide you with information on available resources, provide you with a safe space to discuss your concerns, protect you and advocate for you. No one, not a manager or a supervisor, should think they can get away with abuse.

We encourage you to let your co-workers know that if they or someone they know, is facing violence or harassment, to contact their union immediately. Be an ally, by encouraging co-workers to reach out to your union for help.

If you want to get involved in taking on systemic discrimination, we urge you to think about participating in campaigns, undertaken by our Women's Issues Network, on eliminating gender-based violence.

At 1006A, our union representatives and legal counsel have a proud track record of helping protect our members and ensuring those who commit these acts are held accountable.

Our collective power comes from each other. It takes us all to keep our workplaces safe and free of abuse. It is our collective responsibility to create safer environments where everyone feels safe and can thrive.



Here for you as always. Contact Your Union Rep.

www.ufcw1006a.ca/unionrep

CUSTOMER ABUSE

THE HIDDEN STRUGGLES OF FRONTLINE WORKERS



As a grocery worker, Mike Ness is no stranger to experiencing and seeing all types of customer abuse at his Ottawa-area store. He has witnessed customers resort to name calling, using slurs, pointing fingers and sometimes, even shoving workers.

"I support our members by reminding them the customers have no right to abuse them," said Ness.

Members working at Loblaw banner stores say they often become the target of customers, who are angry at Chairman Galen Weston or the company about high food prices, lack of staff or product availability. Many frontline workers, instead of being recognized for their hard work, are on the receiving end of public abuse and are facing increasing incidents of violence, threats and harassment. For equity seeking groups, the abuse can be extreme and targeted, with members facing personal attacks, including sexist and racist abuse.

Natasha Grey, a cashier working on the frontlines at a grocery store in Toronto, has experienced devastating customer abuse.

"I had a woman call me the "N" word," she said. "I have been judged because of my weight and it makes me sad sometimes because as much as I am a tough cookie, words do hurt and it made me feel that there is no humanity left."

The abuse can be wide-ranging from customers throwing things to threatening to come after workers.

"I have seen verbal and physical abuse from customers," said Marc Visca, who works at a grocery store in Toronto. "With these incidents, the most effective thing members can do is to remove themselves from the situation if it has already started and if unable, try to get a hold of a manager for support."

During recent Loblaws Great Food and Real Canadian Superstore contract negotiations, Local 1006A pressed the company and achieved new union contract language to further protect members from customer abuse. It reads as follows: *The Company will place visible signage reminding the customer of its "Zero Tolerance Policy."*

In the union's pre-negotiations survey, an astounding 40 per cent of members reported experiencing or witnessing customer abuse regularly – 13 per cent responded they were exposed to abuse "almost every shift." In an April survey of our members, 55 per cent reported having faced inappropriate customer abuse or behaviour in recent months.

"The reality is customer abuse continues to be a serious problem for members working on the frontlines – The abuse must stop. All workers deserve to be treated with respect and dignity."

– President Wayne Hanley



Mike Ness, Real Canadian Superstore, Ottawa

Implementing the new contract language has been challenging. The union has pressed Loblaw on this issue multiple times. 1006A is working with the company to ensure the signs are prominently placed at various service points as intended.

If the notices are posted in areas that are not visible to customers, it's the union's position that the company is in violation of the language. The union filed a grievance, referred it to arbitration and is pursuing all avenues to ensure our members are protected and the language in the contract is honoured.

UFCW 1006A is dedicated to raising awareness among the membership and the public about the struggles that frontline workers face.

"Customer abuse is a growing reality faced by too many of our members across all of our public facing industries and many employers are slow to respond," said Rick Young, 1006A Health and Safety Advocate. "Customer abuse can encompass verbal, emotional, or even physical misconduct directed at our members."

Young said workers have faced abuse, which has ranged from unwarranted yelling, profanity, manipulation, threats and online harassment. This, in turn, can lead to not only short term but long-term emotional stress.

"It won't come as a surprise to anyone that the pandemic, the rising cost of groceries, the cost of housing and the chronic under funding of social services has exacerbated the issue," said Young.

As for Ness, he wants to remind the public that workers are doing their best despite increasingly challenging work duties and responsibilities.

"I'd like to thank all the good customers – all the people who say nice things and show us respect," Ness said. "It's hard to work with the public and hard to be in the service industry – a little kindness goes way further than you think."



Natasha Grey, No Frills, Scarborough

How to Handle Customer Abuse at Work

When customer abuse occurs, you may experience feelings of shock and sadness. It's important to remember it's not your fault.

- 1) If you believe your safety is at risk, step away immediately and inform management that you are initiating your "right to refuse."
- 2) Remind yourself that you are doing your best and that you don't deserve to be treated this way. Customer abuse is never acceptable.
- 3) Follow your company's policies and programs for dealing with abusive customers. This may include letting the customer know you are contacting a manager or supervisor to resolve the situation and removing yourself from the situation.
- 4) Inform your union steward and the worker member of your Joint Health and Safety Committee so that they can discuss the matter with your employer. This will help determine the need for a new risk assessment or amendments to the workplace harassment and violence prevention policy and programs.
- 5) Practice self-care with breathing exercises, relaxing, meditating or exercising. Seek professional help or support if you feel overwhelmed, depressed, or traumatized. It may be helpful to talk about the experience with friends and co-workers.

Employer's Responsibility

Under Ontario law, your employer is responsible for a workplace harassment and violence prevention policy. They also must have an implementation program.

The policy can be created or modified through collaboration with the Joint Health and Safety Committee representatives.

Legally, risk assessments must be done annually or as often as required. Employers should identify potential areas or situations where employees may face abuse from customers and implement measures to mitigate these risks. Employers should also train members on managing difficult or abusive customers. If you feel your employer is not taking their responsibilities seriously, contact your Union Representative or Rick Young (ryoung@ufcw1006a.ca), 1006A's Health and Safety Advocate.

WOMEN RISING FOR CHANGE

Alicia Quan is proud to be among the strong tradition of 1006A women activists, who are transforming their workplaces and communities.

Quan, a steward from Baton Rouge in Ottawa, is a member of 1006A's Women's Issues Network (WIN), which empowers members within 1006A and gives a voice to issues faced by women at work and in our communities. The committee's key priorities include ending the gender wage gap and eliminating gender-based violence.

"It's inspiring to be a part of WIN and a community to help create change," said Quan.

The committee raises awareness through key annual events, including International Women's Day (March), Equal Pay Day (April) and the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence (December).

Quan is among a younger generation of activists, who are supporting the decades-old struggle to eliminate the gender wage gap at non-union workplaces. The Ontario Equal Pay Coalition, an independent group of labour, business and community allies, reports that Ontario women are making 32 per cent on average less than men – a gap, which the coalition notes, has been stagnant for almost three decades.

"Women in our society have been underappreciated and undervalued for so long – women do the same work as men and we deserve the same pay," Quan said. "Women and families cannot afford to be underpaid."

Dianne Wilmot, a steward from No Frills, is a long time activist who has been raising awareness for several years on this issue.

"Women are still considered less than men in society and are being paid less – and that has been happening for decades," she said.

Women, who are increasingly becoming the breadwinners in families, are being penalized through the gender wage gap as they deal with rising cost of living in today's economy.

A TD Economics report notes households with women as the primary or sole income earner have significantly increased since the 1990s, with 30 per cent of women being the breadwinners in their family. Around 17 per cent of all families with children are single-parent households.

"Equal Pay is so important because there are many single women with children who need more money to feed their families," said Penny Patterson, a steward from Heidi's Your Independent Grocer. "Not everyone is aware that women do not have equal rights or equal pay."

It's an issue that Maria Bocangel, a steward at a Toronto Real Canadian Superstore (RCSS), raised awareness about at her workplace.

"With high inflation, families can no longer afford their basic needs and women are suffering more," she said. "Paying women less due to their gender, knowingly or unknowingly, is first of all, discrimination, and we need our allies to take a lead in fighting this otherwise, everyone's daughters and granddaughters will be fighting this same battle in the next few decades."

Across UFCW Canada, members also observe the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence. The Canadian Women's Foundation reports that one woman or girl is killed every 48 hours. More than 40 per cent of women reported to have experienced intimate partner violence.

"Violence is escalating in our communities, threatening our lives and families and it needs to stop," said Nancy Prout,

a steward at an RCSS in Whitby. "Women deserve to be safe at home, at work and in our communities."

Prout is a proud WIN member.

"Collectively, we raise awareness and education about women's issues. "Everyone can play a part in creating a more equal and safe world."

"Across UFCW 1006A, women are helping transform members' lives as stewards, staff and leaders within our union. We are proud of the inspiring and empowering work they do in raising awareness and working for change. We are proud to stand as allies with our members, as we collectively work to build more equal, inclusive, and fairer workplaces and communities for all."

– President Wayne Hanley



1006A participated in the International Women’s Day (IWD) rally and march in Toronto, and through member-led initiatives at workplaces throughout Ontario. The theme for IWD 2024 was “Inspire Inclusion,” which means building understanding about the value of women’s inclusion.

As the IWD website states, “When women aren’t present, we must ask: ‘If not, why not?’ When women are discriminated against, we must call out poor practice. When the treatment of women is not equitable, we must take action. And we must do this each time, every time.”



1006A’s Women’s Issues Network (WIN) Committee meets at the union office.

Injured Worker Wins Case Thanks to Union's Support



For Thelma Blanchard, the physical and emotional toll of her workplace injury has been immense.

"There are a lot of things I can't do anymore – it has affected my life," Blanchard said.

In 2014, Blanchard began working as a general labourer at a Toronto meat packing factory. There, she packed and taped boxes, packaged products, lifted heavy boxes, and operated machinery. She lifted items weighing more than 60 pounds, pushed and pulled heavy metal racks and boxes multiple times during her work day. The "constant repetitive movements" took a toll on Blanchard.

"I worked through a lot of pain, but I couldn't take it anymore," she said. "I was in pain every day, but it got worse. I was in tears in the morning and tears in the afternoon and when I came home because I was in so much pain."

In October 2019, Blanchard reported the onset of shoulder pain. Two years earlier, she had also reported shoulder pain due to her work duties. Blanchard's injury prevented her from working. She knew she needed to take action to protect her health and filed with the WSIB to help cover lost earnings and physiotherapy expenses.

Initially, Blanchard was handling the WSIB case herself but the difficult bureaucracy and paperwork proved to be too much. The WSIB Eligibility Adjudicator denied her initial claim, and the Appeals Resolution Officer also upheld the decision. That's when Blanchard decided to turn to her union representative, who worked hard to assist her and connect her with Local 1006A's WSIB department.

"I reached out to the union – they helped me with the paperwork, went to the tribunal, and won my case," said Blanchard. "I would say, go to the union, they can help because they were able to help me with my case."

President Wayne Hanley commended the WSIB department for their hard work.

"UFCW 1006A is proud to have highly skilled union representatives who are experienced at helping injured workers navigate the WSIB process," Hanley said. "We have the expertise and resources to protect our members and ensure they get the compensation they are entitled to."

UFCW 1006A encourages members who are injured to reach out to their union representative for help and information right away, particularly if they receive any documentation from WSIB or if their claim is denied.

"Injured workers face a lot of stress and anxiety and it's important to remember you are not alone," said Martha Villeda, Local 1006A's WSIB Advocate. "Your union is there to help provide guidance and information and help you navigate through the often-difficult WSIB process."



Thelma discusses her case with WSIB Advocate Martha Villeda and Union Representative Diana O'Brien.



Tackling The Mental Health Crisis



Michelle Wilson is proud to be one of the first stewards trained as a mental health advocate at UFCW 1006A.

“The issue of mental health often gets neglected, and we should pay more attention because our mental health affects us in so many ways,” said Wilson, who works at Fru lact in Kingston. “Mental health is just as important as learning CPR and first aid. All three can save lives.”

Wilson took part in UFCW Canada’s Mental Health Advocate program through webCampus, a free online training portal for UFCW members and their families. The program is open to all members of 1006A. It includes three courses recognized by the Canadian Mental Health Association, which provides information on how to effectively offer mental health support and examines the mental health disconnect in our society and at work.

“Workplace issues can often have a direct impact on mental health and that is why this program is vital,” said Wilson, who recommended the program to members. “I think it would help dealing with different situations. At times, by just listening, we may find out that it is not a work problem but a cry for help or someone needing to talk.”

Approximately 450 million people around the world are living with a mental health illness, according to the World Health Organization. In Canada, 1 in 4 adults have a mental health challenge. People of all ages, cultures, education levels and income levels are affected by mental health challenges.

According to experts, mental health is a person’s psychological and emotional well-being. Just like we can take care of our physical health, it is important to take care of our mental health too.

Mental illness can affect day to day functioning and includes anxiety disorders, schizophrenia, and mood disorders, such as major depressive disorder and bipolar disorder. Nearly 500,000 working Canadians are unable to attend work each week due to mental illness, according to the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.

In 2022, Statistics Canada reported more than 5 million people in Canada experienced a mood, anxiety or substance use disorder, a substantial increase compared to the previous 10 years.

“Mental health is immensely important to understand, and the training helped with that,” said Valrie Francis, an executive board member who works at a Real Canadian Superstore. “The details, videos and information in the course challenges the stigma of mental health while providing awareness and resources.”

1006A encourages our members to participate in the Mental Health Advocate program. The program is available 24/7 and shouldn’t take more than a few months to complete, based on participants’ schedules.

“I want our members to know – if you are dealing with a mental health challenge, you are not alone and there is support and resources to help you navigate what you are facing,” said President Wayne Hanley. “This issue affects so many Canadians and it’s important to talk about it openly and break the silence to end the stigma so no one has to suffer alone.”

He congratulated members who have completed the program. “Our incredible steward base continues to make a profound impact on the lives of our membership,” said President Wayne Hanley. “We commend your hard work and commitment in gaining skills and knowledge through this program to support our members’ mental health and build healthier workplaces.”



As for Francis, she is ready to apply what she has learned and help others.

“The most important takeaway for me is how to be supportive and the approaches of how to offer support to someone,” said Francis.

UFCW 1006A is proud to provide this opportunity to our members to improve their skills and knowledge. Our commitment to supporting our members’ mental health is ongoing and essential to building healthier workplaces for all.



Resources

UFCW WebCampus Program – ufcw.ca/webcampus

Canadian Mental Health Association – cmha.ca

Harvinder Singh Barmi
Unico

Unions Make Workers Powerful

The passion to help members is a driving force in Rick Jordan's life. Since becoming a steward more than five years ago, Jordan continues to help members resolve a variety of issues, from scheduling to compensation to personal matters.

With the high cost of food and housing, many workers are facing pressure to make ends meet.

Listening and being there for co-workers is important to Jordan.

"I have been fortunate to help members with a lot of issues," said Jordan, who works at a Loblaws Great Food in Toronto. "It's about having conversations – sometimes, you don't have anyone to talk to and being that person for our members, that neutral ground, is an incredible feeling."

Jordan, who has worked in non-union and unionized workplaces, has experienced the stark difference.

"In a unionized environment, you have a lot more safety and a lot more rights," he said. "I can refuse work if it is deemed unsafe and even, at least, have that conversation with my boss. In a non-unionized setting, it's 'we need you to do this or you going to be in trouble.' That is a huge difference – in a union setting, you feel safer and I feel like I matter."

Jordan is among the more than 700 UFCW 1006A stewards across Ontario who volunteer their time, knowledge and expertise to help their co-workers.

"1006A is home to the best stewards in the labour movement. We are proud of our incredible stewards, who inspire us every day with their passion, skills and hard work. Thank you to all our stewards for the difference you make in building fairer workplaces and communities."

– President Wayne Hanley

The local union's steward base is active across all of 1006A's sectors. All stewards are members, who are frontline advocates for members in their workplace.

Harvinder Singh Barmi is proud to be a 1006A steward at Unico, a food processing plant in Toronto. He helps members by resolving issues involving compensation, discipline, and by just being there to listen and answer questions.

Barmi remembers a case when a member came to him, feeling sad and disappointed with concerns about being paid incorrectly. He helped resolve the issue by ensuring the company fixed his pay rate.



Vatisha Bernard-Brown
Home 2 Suites by Hilton

Rick Jordon
Loblaws Great Food

Union Reps meet with stewards at the workplace to help address member concerns.

“When I helped him out, I felt really proud and satisfied,” he said. “When I see a smile on my co-workers’ faces when an issue or concern is resolved, it makes me feel good.”

Barmi said the union has made a big difference in his life.

“As a steward, I have been able to learn a lot and it has helped me grow as a person.”

Having a union has been vital in the workplace, Barmi said.

“It has helped us bargain in a collective manner and when there is an issue, the union is always there to help us out and guide us in the best way possible,” he said. “I would definitely recommend a union for workplaces like ours.”

Vatisha Bernard-Brown, who works at Home 2 Suites by Hilton in Brampton, is proud to be a 1006A steward.

“As a steward, I try to be friendly, and helpful – answer any questions my co-workers have, they know they can come to me,” she said.

At the hotel, Bernard-Brown helped a member, who was feeling stressed that she had a heavier workload than her co-workers, as she had been assigned to clean more rooms.

Bernard-Brown spoke to management and helped fix the issue.

“When I am able to help my co-workers, I feel happy,” she said.

She said the union has made a big difference at the hotel, by ensuring workers have a voice.

“It is very important to have the union representation because they are always there to help us with what we need – the union has helped us achieve better wages, benefits and working conditions.”

UFCW 1006A members are encouraged to connect with union stewards to learn more about your rights as outlined in your union contract. Your full-time Union Representatives are also available if you have any questions or concerns at your workplace. Check your union board or visit your union website to find out how to connect with us.

Your Union Rep



Here to help, as always.

www.ufcw1006a.ca/unionrep

“You learn new things every time!”

1006A Proud to Offer Life-Changing Training for Stewards

Zoran Markovic is grateful for the difference that stewards' training has made in his workplace and his life.

Markovic, who has been a steward for five years, credits the local union's training program in helping him gain necessary knowledge to better serve his co-workers.

“I take my role as steward seriously and want to learn new skills and knowledge through different courses – I am motivated by the constant desire to learn something new,” said Markovic. “The training has helped me to better resolve issues at work.”

Markovic is among the hundreds of stewards who enrolled in the spring stewards training session. Our comprehensive training program empowers stewards with the necessary knowledge and skills to better help our members and resolve workplace issues. 1006A offers a variety of courses, including Human Rights, Public Speaking, and an introductory class for new stewards.

“I gained confidence in dealing with management and it is a chance to meet other stewards,” said Scott Champion, a steward at Parker's Your Independent Grocer. “The training has enabled me to more effectively help the membership at my store.”

Cecilia Marrelli, a steward at K-Bro Linen, said the training is never boring.

“You learn new things every time,” she said. “It has taught me how to solve issues and talk to members. It makes me feel good to be able to participate every time.”

For Jennifer Gillis, the training helped her become better at handling different situations at work.

“I have become more confident at answering questions, helping members with problems and guiding them to the right people,” said Gillis, a steward at Loblaws Great Food in Ottawa. “It has provided me with improved methods to handle tough issues and gave me more options to provide the right resources when needed.”

Jann Batugal, a steward at Loblaw Great Food in Toronto, was among those who participated in spring training and spoke highly of the experience.

“Being in a room with like-minded individuals is inspiring and relieving, knowing there are others who also want to help their co-workers and help them stand up for their rights.”

President Wayne Hanley commended stewards for participating in the training.

“UFCW 1006A is proud to offer one of the most comprehensive training programs in the province for union stewards,” said President Hanley. “We are proud of our steward base, who are dedicated to learning and improving skills and strategies to better help their co-workers. Our stewards' commitment to the membership and our great union is truly inspiring.”



Learn about our comprehensive Stewards Training program >>>





Thank you to all our stewards for taking training to help members at work!





UFCW 1006A Protects Unionized Security Guards' Rights

Unionized security guards' rights are under attack, as non-union security agencies increasingly win contract bids for worksites from unionized employers who then refuse to recognize existing union contracts. This process, known as contract-flipping, is often used to lower wages and undermine workers' rights.

"UFCW 1006A is working tirelessly to protect and uphold the rights of our members working as security guards across Ontario," said President Wayne Hanley. "Your union is holding employers accountable and ensuring our members continue to have the rights, protections and benefits they are entitled to under their union contract."

"It is vital for unionized security guards to know that they still have their rights and benefits as outlined in their union contract even if the employer at their work site changes," said Jeff Ketelaars, Executive Assistant to the President and Director of the Security Guard sector. "That is not up to the new employer — union members are protected under Ontario law."

Security guards are forced into a precarious situation when some security agencies violate the law by refusing to recognize the union contract and force unionized members to work as independent subcontractors. By agreeing to the company's demands, guards are put in a difficult position where they may be breaching the law and their licence could be jeopardized. As subcontractors, they are put further at risk because they are not eligible for WSIB (Workplace Safety Insurance Board) or liability insurance.

Local 1006A has a strong track record of helping members in the security sector. The local union recently won settlements with security agencies, including Diamond, Elite, Falcon, CPS, Probe and Condor. The settlements guaranteed our members retained their union contract rights and ensured our members had their benefits paid retroactively.

Local 1006A's legal team is currently working to protect the rights of our members working at security agencies, MI Security, Blackbird, and Pennine.

In addition, 1006A is advocating for our 300 union members who work for Star Security, the agency that was awarded the Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) contract. These members are unionized, previously working with Allied Universal until the City of Toronto awarded the TCHC contract to Star Security, a non-union company. Star Security is refusing to recognize the union.

Star Security attempted to force hundreds of security guards to work as subcontractors and take away their benefits and paid sick days. The union filed a complaint with Ontario's Ministry of the Solicitor General (Private Security and Investigative Services Branch) and the Ontario Labour Relations Board.

"We are urging the ministry to investigate Star Security's conduct immediately," said Ketelaars. The union has filed charges at the labour board to order Star Security to honour the collective agreement and reinstate all the union benefits to the TCHC guards.

If you are a security guard and are facing this issue at your workplace, please contact your union representative.

www.ufcw1006a.ca/unionrep



1006A's Security Sector:

1006A represents approximately 8,000 members in the security guard sector.

Members work as security guards throughout Ontario, from Toronto Pearson International Airport to Ottawa's Parliament buildings to Thunder Bay's Court House. They secure hospitals, banks, and embassies. Some work in executive protection positions, embassy security, and even jobs related to CSIS and US Homeland Security.

Our members work in uniform and in plain clothes jobs. Some carry batons and handcuffs and have specialized training in mental health, first aid, non-violent crisis intervention, and violence de-escalation training.

How Unionization Became the Pathway to Fairness for Retail and Service Workers

In the retail and service sector, unionization continues to grow, as workers across North America are seeking fairness, dignity and respect at work.

“Union representation strengthens workers, families and communities,” said President Wayne Hanley. “It empowers workers with a voice at work and an ability to collectively improve their wages, benefits and working conditions through negotiations. Unionization is the first, and an essential step in building a fairer workplace.”

Organizing Director Lesley Prince sat down with *1006Alive* to share what is inspiring workers to join the labour movement.

Why are workers in the retail and service sector turning to unionization?

These workers face issues such as low wages, unpredictable schedules, no benefits, and inadequate workplace safety measures. When workers bring their concerns to management, they are rarely addressed in any meaningful way.

These workers do not have a voice in any decision-making processes, leading them to turn to UFCW 1006A as a means of advocating for a union contract and improving their rights and livelihoods. Unionization means having support and representation when they do speak up, without fear of retaliation.

They are motivated because with unionization they will gain the ability to negotiate a union contract, which is a legally binding document. Their wage increases, benefits and scheduling are all negotiated and outlined in their contract. The employer can no longer arbitrarily change or alter the working conditions without the approval of the membership.

What are the challenges of helping workers win unionization in the retail and service sector?

Building power in these sectors is challenging. High turnover rates, lack of job security, resistance from management, fear of retaliation, and difficulty in mobilizing a diverse and often transient workforce are all challenges we help workers overcome.

Employers expend a lot of energy and money trying to convince workers to remain non-union. These desperate ploys made by employers and their high-priced union busting lawyers and consultants clearly show the fear they have of workers having a meaningful voice at work.



“Every organizing campaign won is not only a win for the labour movement. It is a win for all workers. It is a win for their families and a win for our communities. The gains these campaigns make ultimately raises the floor for all workers across the country.”

– Lesley Prince, Organizing Director

What happened to high-profile union organizing campaigns in the retail sector (like Starbucks, Indigo/Chapters)?

Union organizing campaigns such as those at Starbucks and Indigo/Chapters, have faced varying outcomes. Some locations have succeeded in unionizing, and achieving great first contracts, while others have encountered challenges due to opposition from management, legal hurdles, or employee apprehension.

What is your message to workers in the retail and service sector who are looking to unionize or seeking fairness in the workplace?

My message is to stay informed about their rights, educate themselves on the benefits of negotiating collectively, build solidarity with co-workers, reach out to UFCW 1006A or advocacy groups, and persevere despite obstacles to create positive change in their working conditions. For any workers with questions about how to start a union campaign in your workplace – please contact us. We are happy to give you confidential advice.

Negotiation Updates

"All across Ontario, UFCW 1006A is improving workers' lives by negotiating strong union contracts. Through the hard work of our negotiating committees and the support of our membership, we have a strong track record of helping our members in all sectors improve their rights and livelihoods. Member participation is critical in building strength at the negotiating table and achieving a fair union contract."



Wayne Hanley
President

Homewood Suites & Hampton Inn – Toronto Airport



UFCW 1006A members at Homewood Suites and Hampton Inn Toronto Airport continue to make significant gains as they ratified their new union contract. The term of the contract is from February 1, 2024, to January 31, 2028 and covers approximately 50 workers at two locations.

The negotiating committee includes members, Monica Arioli, Sonia Hinds, Drucila Joseph-Edgar, Taneisha Nembhard, Kevin Thompson and Union Representatives, Joe Blythe and Diana O'Brien.

"This was my first negotiations, and it was an eye-opening experience for me," said Drucila Joseph-Edgar, a union steward at the hotel. "Our committee worked hard and did our best to represent the workers."

Highlights include wage increases of 18.5 per cent over 4 years, additional week of vacation for members working full-time with 10 or more years of service and improved bereavement leave language.

Superette – Ottawa



Unionized cannabis workers continue to make gains, with UFCW 1006A members at Superette in Ottawa becoming the latest group to recently achieve a new union contract.

The term of the contract is from March 29, 2024 to March 28, 2027 and covers six workers at the store.

"There were definitely some improvements to the current agreement," said Liam Thompson, a member of the negotiating committee. He said the new contract has gone over positively with members.

The negotiating committee includes member, Liam Thompson, Regional Director Gord Albert and Union Representative, John Conway.

Highlights include wage increases, minimum wage increase protection, improved bereavement leave, improved layoff language and stronger scheduling and overtime language.

Canadian Linen – Toronto



UFCW 1006A members working at Canadian Linen (Norfinch and Atomic locations) have ratified a new union contract with gains.

The term of the contract is from January 1, 2024 to December 31, 2027 and covers 160 members.

"What we got in the first year of the contract was great," said Isabel Rodrigues, a member of the negotiating committee and a steward. "Our negotiating committee pushed the company as hard as we could – there was room for more improvements, but we can't always get everything we want."

Members of the negotiating committee include Maria Rosa Cardoso, Pubalan Ramiah, Isabel Rodrigues and Francesca Sesti and Union Representatives, Jonathan Lobo and Joshua Robichaud.

Highlights include wage increases of 14.75 per cent over the term of the union contract, increase to safety shoe allowance, increase to health & welfare benefits and an additional statutory holiday/floater day for National Day for Truth & Reconciliation.



Members at Loblaws Great Food and Real Canadian Superstore Achieve Historic Union Contract

UFCW 1006A members at Loblaws Great Food and Real Canadian Superstore voted to ratify a historic industry-leading agreement with Loblaw.

The vote took place over four days in late December 2023. The new union contract covers approximately 13,000 grocery workers at 60 stores across Ontario.

“This is the best agreement reached in the grocery retail sector in decades,” said President Wayne Hanley. “We faced intense and difficult negotiations, but with the strong support and participation of our membership, we achieved an unprecedented level of improvements for our members.”

The union negotiating committee, which included 14 rank and file members and local union executive board members who work full-time and part-time at Loblaws Great Food and Real Canadian Superstore, pushed the company to its limit over 10 days of bargaining.

“UFCW Local 1006A continues to set the standard for grocery workers across Ontario, with an agreement that includes significant gains for full-time and part-time,” said President Hanley. “Our union negotiating committee was relentless in ensuring the voices and concerns of our members were heard.”

Membership participation was integral to achieving a strong contract, with members submitting proposals, attending proposal meetings, joining the telephone town halls, and voting on this contract.

The agreement includes the best wage increases achieved in decades for full-time and part-time, gains that surpass all recent negotiated contracts in the industry. Highlights:

- \$4.60/Hour for full-time at top rate over the term of agreement
- \$4.95/Hour for full-time department managers at top rate over the term of agreement
- \$3.70/Hour for long-service part-time at top rate (hired before July 9, 2015) over the term of agreement.

- Lump sums for all workers working full-time and part-time at date of ratification. This includes \$1000 for all full-time, \$500 for part-time at top rate, \$200 for part-time (with more than 2000 hours) and \$100 for part-time (with less than 2000 hours).
- A \$2.15/Hour increase in the first seven months of the contract for full-time at end rate. There will be a \$1.50 increase for part-time at top rate (hired before July 9, 2015) during the same time frame, leading to more money immediately in members’ pockets.
- Full-time workers are now included in our industry leading minimum wage gap language, which protects members’ historic wage gains when minimum wage is increased. This language had previously only applied to part-time workers.
- Zero Tolerance Policy of Customers Abusing our Members – signs will be visibly placed in the workplace providing members with enhanced protection.
- Significant improvements to full-time benefits providing greater coverage (i.e. chiropractor, osteopath, chiropract/podiatrist, naturopath, speech therapist and massage therapist) and increased compensation (\$70 a visit to a maximum of \$700 every calendar year). Vision care goes up to \$300 from \$200 previously.
- Bereavement leave for full-time and part-time (5 days for immediate family members instead of 3).
- Increased safety shoe reimbursement for both full-time (\$150 per year from \$75 previously) and part-time (\$100 every two years, up from \$50 previously)
- Significant reduction to part-time scheduling availability requirements.
- Improved part-time vacation pay language.
- Job security for full-time and part-time for the term of the contract.



UFCW CANADA
Equity Grant



Scan the QR Code for more information and to apply today.



The **UFCW Canada Equity Grant** program is now open awarding three grants of **\$1,000 each** to community based endeavours.

The **Equity Grant** Program aims to support newcomer programs, human rights initiatives, and community action projects.

Applications will be accepted until September 30, 2024 under the following three streams:

Human Rights, Community Action, and Newcomer/Immigration

UFCW members and/or community allies are encouraged to apply!

For more details, visit ufcw.ca/equitygrant



YOUR UNION IS CALLING

Thursday, August 15 at 7 pm

General Membership Meeting



Join us for the latest news and information.

+ Members can enter our contest to win a Tablet Computer or Blue Jays Tickets

Members will have the opportunity to hear about initiatives of the local union and ask questions. We will call members' home and/or cell phone numbers to connect you to the meeting. **Our call will come from "UFCW Your Union" 1.800.637.5936. – simply pick up to participate.** If you miss the call, dial in — 1.877.229.8493 and enter ID Code 118307.

Update your contact info
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UNIONS HELP ACHIEVE LIFE-CHANGING PROGRAMS FOR WORKING FAMILIES



Kevin Benn (he/him)

Secretary-Treasurer,
UFCW Canada Local 1006A

It's exciting to finally see the rollout of Canada's dental care program – one of the many programs that labour and community allies have long advocated for and now achieved.

This program will provide much-needed dental care to eligible families and seniors across Canada. As many workers know, accessing dental care comes with a financial cost that many families and seniors can not afford. For seniors and families with children, they were too often forced to make a difficult choice between putting food on the table or paying for much needed dental care. Dental care is health care – period. Now, in a major victory for eligible working families earning less than \$90,000 a year, the financial burden has been eased.

This landmark victory is a result of the federal NDP, and their leader, Jagmeet Singh who have been relentless in pushing Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's minority government for programs that benefit working families.

The dental program is among the many life-changing initiatives, spurred on and achieved through long-term advocacy from unions, labour and community allies.

Another major win is the federal childcare funding. Previously, families across Canada were paying up to \$1,800 in childcare fees. Despite the Doug Ford government's attempts to delay and water down the federal program, Ontario parents have seen costs plummet. Overall, the Globe and Mail reports day care costs have gone down by 50 per cent across Canada.

For families, an extra \$600 to \$900 a month is life-changing and is essential at a time when housing and living costs continue to escalate. It's a great source of pride that UFCW Canada and our allies are at the forefront of this fight, as long-term advocates for a universal childcare program to help women and working families across Canada.

Next on the horizon is Canada's national pharmacare plan, brought forth through cooperation between the NDP and the Liberals. This universal drug program will cover much needed medication costs, starting with diabetes and contraception before expanding to cover more types of medication.

Currently, many Canadians with limited or no drug insurance, cannot afford the necessary medication they are prescribed. This includes insulin, for which, many must pay for out of pocket. At times of major illnesses, those without insurance often struggle to find a way to pay for life-saving medication, or simply go without.

The Ontario Conservatives are continuing to delay, as usual, in signing on to the pharmacare program. However, Ontario NDP Leader Marit Stiles is pressing Doug Ford to act. She said the program will make a difference for those living with chronic illnesses and/or disabilities.

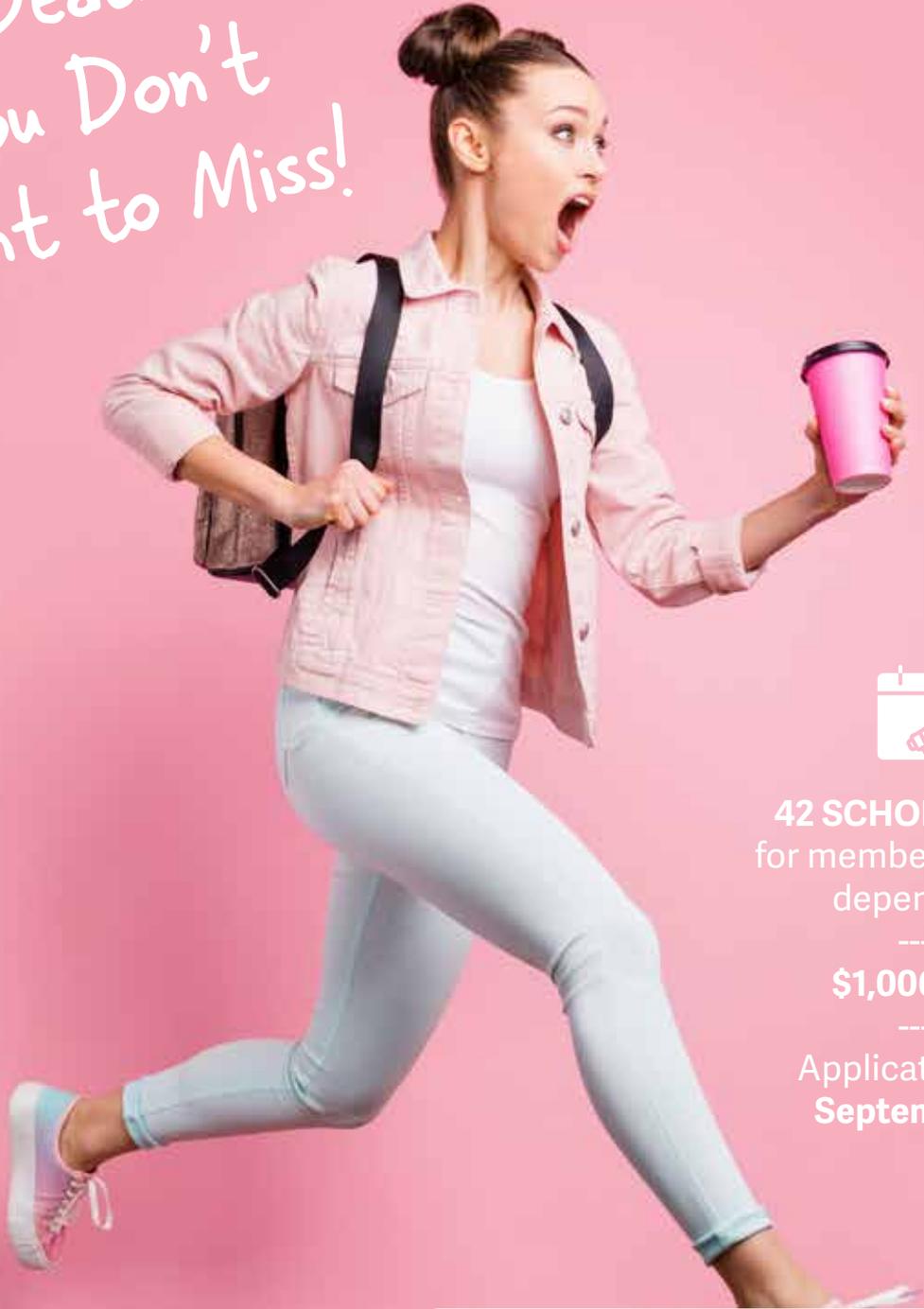
It is truly inspiring to see the positive changes our union movement and progressive allies have achieved by working together. It did not happen overnight, and it took decades of advocacy work by members like yourself. But as a result, we have collectively made a difference, and alleviated the financial costs that so many families struggle with.

Together, we have improved the quality of life for many families across Ontario and Canada and these gains were achieved despite the best efforts of Conservatives and their lobbyist friends.

While a great deal of progress has been made, many battles remain to be fought, including the high costs of rent, housing and food. As always, labour and your union will be resolute, ensuring the concerns and voices of working families are heard.



A Deadline
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42 SCHOLARSHIPS
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