

# CAW CONTACT

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## ***CAW President Urges Doubling of CPP***

Opening CAW Council in Toronto on December 4, CAW President Ken Lewenza urged the nearly 700 delegates from across the country to renew their fight for pension security. This means doubling the Canada Pension Plan, so that all citizens can live in dignity, regardless of whether they have an employer paid pension plan or RRSPs, said Lewenza.

"People are now talking about pensions and we're reading about pensions each day in the newspaper because workers are hitting the streets," said Lewenza.

"Our ability to preserve employer-sponsored pension plans in collective bargaining will depend on us bringing every Canadian along with us. If we don't do this, we won't succeed. This fight for fair pensions will be a defining moment for the labour movement."

Lewenza said that up to 75 per cent of private sector workers do not have pensions and only 30 per cent of Canadians have RRSPs, many of whom lost thousands of dollars with the global financial crisis and collapsing stock values last fall.

"If we can double the CPP, people then won't be scared to retire," said Lewenza. "Our government has it backwards, seeking regulatory changes to allow people to stay at work until 70 or 75."

Along with the doubling of CPP, Lewenza also said the union must continue to fight for a number of other legislative changes, particularly around severance, workplace closures and bankruptcies.

Lewenza highlighted the case of Nortel Networks. An Ontario court recently ruled the company has no financial responsibility for people who retired or who were on long term disability leave prior to the company going into bankruptcy protection in January 2009. Around the same time, media reports revealed that Nortel is still paying massive executive bonuses.

"It is unlawful in this country when executives can get rich on the backs of pensioners," Lewenza said to a huge round of applause.

### **Collective Bargaining**

The Council meeting wraps up a tumultuous year in collective bargaining and politics. Lewenza outlined the last two sets of auto negotiations - with CAMI Automotive in Ingersoll, Ontario, which ended in September and Ford Motor Company, completed at the end of October. Lewenza commended both bargaining committees for their efforts in reaching the agreements that were ratified by members.

He said the auto industry gets a great deal of public attention, attention that should also go towards smaller workplaces where people are losing their jobs. "The auto parts sector in particular has been devastated over the last few years, as a result of constant restructuring and downward pressure by the auto companies to cut costs," said Lewenza.

Just as the auto industry has faced severe challenges over the last year, so too has the airline industry, particularly Air Canada which Lewenza called very vulnerable. "We can't protect the long term survival of Air Canada from constant negotiations," said Lewenza. Government has a role to play in supporting our national air carrier and linking communities across the country from east to west, he said.

Lewenza also congratulated technicians at Jazz Air for ratifying a new collective agreement. The customer service agents at Jazz Air have rejected two collective agreements and will vote on a new one next week.

The economic downturn has had a terrible impact on the retail, gaming, and hospitality sectors as well, where employers have attempted to exploit workers' fears to drive down working conditions, roll back wages and cut hours.

Lewenza highlighted the pending closure of the longtime Dominion store in Marystown, Newfoundland. He commended the CAW bargaining committee who were successful in negotiating an excellent closure agreement.

Lewenza urged CAW members to do their shopping in unionized stores. Lewenza also called on members to continue fighting for increases to the minimum wage to make gains for both organized and non-union workers.

Workers in the gaming sector are also suffering layoffs and seeing their hours cut as their employers grapple with fewer tourists. In the hospitality sector, a number of hotels in B.C. will be entering bargaining this coming year.

The union also opened bargaining with VIA Rail in October. The current agreement expires December 31.

## **Domestic Politics**

Lewenza recalled that only a year ago, there were high hopes the NDP-Liberal coalition, supported by the Bloc Quebecois, would take over government and bump out the Harper Conservative government. Not only did this not happen, said Lewenza, but Harper has strengthened the party's hold on power with the Liberal party currently sinking in the polls.

Lewenza urged CAW members at election time, to actively work to ensure the Harper Conservatives do not return to government. He said the Conservatives are a party that despise unions and despise public services.

The union organized the first of what will be a number of cross-country leadership meetings, in Halifax, Nova Scotia last week where recently elected NDP Nova Scotia Premier Darrell Dexter addressed the group. Lewenza had an important message for Dexter.

"You have to be different than the Liberals and Tory governments and stand up in defense of labour legislation and public services."

"We can't let Dexter off the hook," Lewenza told delegates.

### **Support for Public Services and Public Sector Workers**

Lewenza urged the vigilant protection of public services as municipal, provincial and federal governments seek to pay down debts accumulated in the recession on the backs of workers.

Increasingly, health care workers are under attack as hospitals are made to meet stringent budgets, regardless of its impact on care.

Lewenza also encouraged delegates not to fall into the trap of "tax rage," fostered by the unlikely coalition of the Ontario NDP and the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party, surrounding the Harmonized Sales Tax (HST). "We want a strong civil society and that must be supported by taxes," said Lewenza.

### **Defending the National Gun Registry and Remembering the Montreal Massacre**

Nearing the 20th Anniversary of the Montreal Massacre, Lewenza reflected that the event was a catalyst for action to end violence against women.

Women in the union in particular moved this agenda forward, creating equity programs and the Women's Advocate program, bargained into collective agreements across the country. Part of this activism also involved more stringent legislation on gun control.

"I ask members to recommit ourselves to maintaining gun control in this country, including urging all Liberal and NDP MPs to vote against Bill C-391, which would destroy the national gun registry."

### ***Oppose Harper Free Trade Agenda, Delegates Urged***

CAW Council delegates voted unanimously in support of a recommendation opposing new free trade agreements being proposed by the Harper government, including a deal with the European Union (Canada-EU Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement) that would restrict the ability of governments to adopt Canadian-content requirements in public purchases.

CAW Local 1075 President Paul Pugh said the issue at stake has to do with government skirting their responsibility for managing the economy. CAW Local 1075 represents workers in the Bombardier Thunder Bay plant, a facility that has received substantial new investments in part because of Canadian-content rules included in Toronto streetcars and subway cars.

"Municipalities and provinces must have power to create jobs for Canadians," Pugh said. "We can't allow the Harper government to take that away."

Opposition to the Conservative government's free trade agenda also includes a proposed deal with South Korea as well as a hotly-contested deal with Colombia, a country that has a notorious track record on human rights abuses and is openly hostile to the rights and freedoms of trade unionists.

## ***Council Delegates Call for Stronger Severance Protections***

Council delegates supported a resolution calling for the establishment of provincial and federal funds to pay outstanding monies owed to workers in the case of an employer bankruptcy, including severance and termination pay.

With hundreds of thousands of Canadians having lost their jobs over the past years, there is a growing uneasiness among workers that government will not step in to enforce laws protecting workers right to severance pay, said Jerry Dias, Assistant to CAW President Ken Lewenza.

"Unless governments take a principled stand to protect the unpaid wages workers are entitled to under law, more and more Canadians will face the double shock of unemployment and no financial safety net," Dias said.

CAW Local 195 President Gerry Farnham, who represents former Aradco and Aramco auto parts workers in Windsor, Ontario, stressed the important role the union has played in ensuring workers receive at least some of the outstanding monies they are owed in the face of employer insolvencies.

"At the end of the day, without unions fighting on behalf of these workers and demonstrating for their rights in the workplace, they most certainly would be left with nothing," Farnham said. "Our fight is far from over."

Aradco and Aramco workers in Windsor, are still owed \$2.5 million in unpaid severance, termination and unpaid wages from employer Catalina Precision Products.

## ***CAW Commended for Activism on Canadian Content Rules***

Toronto City Councillor Adam Giambrone stressed the importance of the CAW's activism and partnership with the Toronto Transit Commission in building a green and sustainable economy.

Giambrone, who is also chair of the TTC, told Council delegates that the union's leadership and membership played an important role in ensuring Toronto city council selected Bombardier as the manufacturer for the TTC's new light rail transit vehicles, which will be built in Canada at the company's Thunder Bay, Ontario plant.

The \$1.2 billion streetcar contract means greater job security and hundreds of new jobs at the Thunder Bay plant. CAW Local 1075 represents workers at the Bombardier plant.

Giambrone outlined the importance of government establishing strong Canadian content requirements when they set out to purchase new mass transit vehicles.

## ***Compensation for Workplace Stress***

Delegate after delegate outlined the adverse health effects of workplace stress including mental stress and physical affects that result in illness, injuries, accidents and undue hardship for the membership.

Workplace stress is generally an unseen hazard whether it's acute (sudden onset) or chronic (long term gradual onset) that affects workers in all sectors.

They heard that workers across Canada don't receive or are not entitled to fair compensation for workplace induced stress illnesses.

In response delegates voted to ensure the CAW makes it a priority to bargain with all employers to include workplace stress in contract language as a recognized work-related illness.

The resolution calls on the CAW to campaign to have governments at all levels accept workplace stress as a health hazard and illness. It also urges the expansion of workers' compensation coverage to fully compensate for all forms of work-related stress.

## ***Canadian Built Marine Atlantic Ferries Needed***

The federal government must provide adequate funding to federal crown corporation Marine Atlantic so that a made in Canada replacement program for its aging fleet of ferries is immediately launched.

An emergency resolution was approved by Council delegates stressing that shipyards such as the Marystown Shipyard in Newfoundland and Labrador and the Halifax Shipyard in Nova Scotia build ferries for this vital service.

CAW Locals 4285 and 4286 represent approximately 700 workers at Marine Atlantic, which provides year round ferry service between Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador. Marine Atlantic is constitutionally mandated to provide passenger and commercial marine transportation between the two provinces.

Any attempt by Transport Canada and the federal government to lease or purchase vessels from outside Canada to replace the present fleet of ferries must be stopped.

CAW Atlantic Canada director Les Holloway urged delegates to go back to their locals and highlight the importance of building ships in Canada, which means jobs for Canadians and a stronger economy.

Wayne Butler, President of CAW/Marine Workers Federation Local 20, in Marystown, Newfoundland, said the shipbuilding industry is a crucial part of the local economy. He said the current fleet of Marine Atlantic ferries should have been replaced 10 years ago.

"There is a need for the federal government to build these ships in Canada," Butler said.

Mavis Grist, President of CAW Local 4285, stressed the importance of the CAW's campaign and the need build these vessels in Canada.

## ***Climate Deal in Copenhagen a Must, CAW Says***

CAW President Ken Lewenza called on the federal government to enter UN climate talks in Copenhagen on December 7 with a clear mandate to reach a new international climate deal, that includes aggressive emission reduction targets and language that protects workers negatively impacted by job loss.

"Canada must now show leadership, both at home and internationally, to ensure the international community can collectively make the successful transformation toward sustainability," Lewenza said in a December 3 letter to federal Environment Minister Jim Prentice.

The Canadian government has received a wave of international criticism in recent weeks, including from UN Secretary Ban-ki Moon, on its poor performance in dealing with climate change.

Lewenza said that the Canadian experience during the recent period of global economic and environmental transformation has so far been dismal, with over half a million jobs lost and growing insecurity, instability and precariousness in the labour market.

CAW Council delegates unanimously endorsed a recommendation to support ongoing efforts of labour unions, environmental and indigenous organizations and civil society groups calling on world leaders to negotiate a strong climate treaty in Copenhagen this year, including language that supports just transition programs for impacted workers.

"The global economic crisis has provided the federal government the opportunity to advance an agenda that both tackles our environmental crisis and rebuilds our economy on the basis of sustainability. But this opportunity clearly has not been seized, and to the detriment of all Canadians."

A copy of Ken Lewenza's letter to Ken Prentice can be viewed on the CAW website at: <http://www.caw.ca/en/8121.htm>

## *Ending Male Violence Against Women*

White Ribbon Campaign Executive Director Todd Minerson finds hope in the everyday struggle to end violence against women. On the eve of the 20th anniversary of the Montreal Massacre, Minerson said that he's optimistic about men, particularly young men, understanding the necessity of changing their own behaviour to take on violence, even challenging those "good guys" who would never resort to violence or abuse to speak up.

"Good guys need to make violence against women their problem," said Minerson during his speech to CAW Council, encouraging all men to actively work to end violence against women by speaking to other men and boys about it and working in solidarity with women's groups to promote gender equality.

The White Ribbon Campaign is an international effort to encourage men to take the initiative to end violence against women.

In the lead up to Minerson's address Julie White, CAW Director of Women's Programs reflected back on the Montreal Massacre and the sentiments that accompanied what is now known as the worst killing spree in Canadian history.

"On December 6, 1989, our country would change forever," said White. How we saw ourselves as a nation, would change as we began to confront the issue of male violence against women, she said.

During the emotionally-charged discussion, a number of delegates got up to the microphones. Among them was CAW Local 4003 member Denise Hampden, the founder of the Handkerchief Project.

The Handkerchief Project is an initiative which invited cloth submissions from across the country on the issue of violence against women, to commemorate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Montreal Massacre. The handkerchiefs were displayed in the foyer at Council.

Closely linked to the discussion was that of the gun registry, which is currently under threat by a private members bill (Bill C-391), which would see it abolished.

CAW/FFAW President Earle McCurdy challenged the MPs who voted in favour of abolishing the registry.

"Have you ever seen such a display of insensitivity as those Members of Parliament who voted in favour of abolishing the gun registry, on the eve of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Montreal Massacre?" asked McCurdy.

Peggy Nash, Assistant to CAW National President, was unequivocal on the position of maintaining the registry. "Every politician needs to be accountable, especially those who say

they are our friends,” said Nash. “We need to make sure what we have achieved is not undermined.”

For more information about the White Ribbon Campaign, please visit: <http://www.whiteribbon.ca/>

For more information on the Handkerchief Project, please visit: <http://thehandkerchiefproject.ca/>

## ***Reform and Strengthen Public Pensions***

With Canadians facing a growing pension crisis, council delegates called for reform to the Canada Pension Plan and Quebec Pension Plan.

They outlined the importance of strengthening the CPP/QPP for current and future retirees and ensuring there is a strong legacy of public pensions for the next generation.

"Private plans have failed to provide benefit security, broad coverage and adequate retirement income, while savings schemes such as RRSPs have been a dismal failure, except for high income earners," a CAW leaflet states. Instead, public pensions have significantly reduced poverty among elderly Canadians. Still public pension reform remains crucial.

Delegates unanimously endorsed the Canadian Labour Congress campaign developed to confront the pension crisis. These initiatives include:

- doubling CPP and QPP benefits through a gradual increase in contributions over a seven year period;
- reducing the impact of a contribution increase on low-income workers through a proposal to double the Year's Basic Exemption;
- increasing the Guaranteed Income Supplement of Old Age Security by increasing the GIS by 15 per cent;
- introducing a Canada-Wide Pension Insurance Program;
- creating a national Pension Benefit Guarantee Fund, that provides protection for private sector-defined benefit plans in the event an employer becomes bankrupt and insolvent.

Ontario is the only jurisdiction in Canada with such a fund currently.

## ***CAW Council Supports Striking Vale Inco Workers***

CAW Council delegates voted unanimously to provide \$20,000 in financial support to striking Vale Inco workers in Sudbury, Ontario.

John Fera, President of United Steelworkers Local 6500 representing the over 3000 striking miners, delivered an impassioned address to council delegates, highlighting the challenges his members face in trying to negotiate a new collective agreement.

Fera said the company has been relentless in its demand for workers to abandon their defined benefit pension plan, weaken seniority provisions and transfer rights and increase the use of contract workers, among other concessionary demands.

The Brazil-based mining giant Vale purchased Canadian mining company Inco in 2006, one of the largest foreign takeovers in Canadian history. Fera said the change in ownership has resulted in an increasingly hostile workplace environment, a shift he attributes to cutthroat and profit-driven globalization in the mining industry.

"The way this company has treated our community and our members has so far been despicable," Fera said.

Despite historic tensions between the Steelworkers and CAW/Mine, Mill and Smelter workers unions in Sudbury, Fera said the support his local has received from CAW leadership in the community is commendable. Vale Inco workers have been on strike since July 2009.

## ***Commit to Union Education***

CAW Council delegates renewed a commitment to fully utilize the educational opportunities available to members through programs and workshops delivered at the CAW's Port Elgin, Ontario Family Education Centre.

In recent years, with the steady decline of manufacturing jobs in Canada, the CAW has lost over 25,000 members – many in the auto sector – which has put added strain on various education funds offered by the union.

"As local union leadership we're not supporting our union education programs as we should," said CAW/MWF Local 20 President Wayne Butler. "Port Elgin is the heart of our union and is the base upon which our union must build for the future."

## ***Public Sector Jobs are Not For Sale***

Delegates to CAW Council, many representing public sector workers across the country, urged support for good public service jobs in every region and community in the country.

"Mounting government deficits caused by a decline in good paying jobs have resulted in an increased demand for public services but with few funds to pay for them," said CAW Local 2301 President Gary Warren. "As the threat of privatization looms we must remind our elected leaders that public services are not for sale."

Delegates from British Columbia highlighted the challenging bargaining environment public sector workers face as the province posts major public financial deficits and gears up for the Olympic Games in February.

CAW Local 2200 President Joe Elworthy criticized the Campbell government in B.C. for suggesting there are few funds available to workers, while opening their pockets to fund major building and promotional projects for the Olympics. Local 2200, represents workers at the Coast Mountain Bus company in the Metro Vancouver Area.

### ***Bud Jimmerfield Award: Gord Piper CAW Local 114***

CAW Local 114 Vice President Gord Piper is the winner of the annual Bud Jimmerfield Award for health, safety, environment and workers' compensation activism.

The award is made each year at the CAW Council meeting in December.

Gord Piper is a driver at FastFrate in Vancouver, British Columbia and has been actively involved with his local union for the last 29 years, taking on health and safety issues and workers' compensation issues.

CAW Health and Safety and Environment Director Sari Sairanen said Gord Piper is a selfless advocate on behalf of workers.

"There is not a local in British Columbia untouched by Gord's work on health and safety and workers compensation," Sairanen said.

Piper told CAW Council delegates it is a great honour to receive the award, thanking those who nominated him.

He said he worked briefly with Bud Jimmerfield in the early 1990s and was greatly impressed with Bud's dedication to the cause of workers health and safety.

Piper said it was a tremendous honour to work on behalf of CAW members who seek help, adding that these members always teach so much more than he could ever learn from any course.

At the CAW Council meeting in December of 1997 a moving address by CAW Local 89 President Bud Jimmerfield was given. Bud had only a couple of months to live. He had contracted cancer of the esophagus from exposure to metalworking fluids during 30 years of work at an automotive parts plant. He asked all to do their best to prevent future occupational diseases, death and injuries.

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