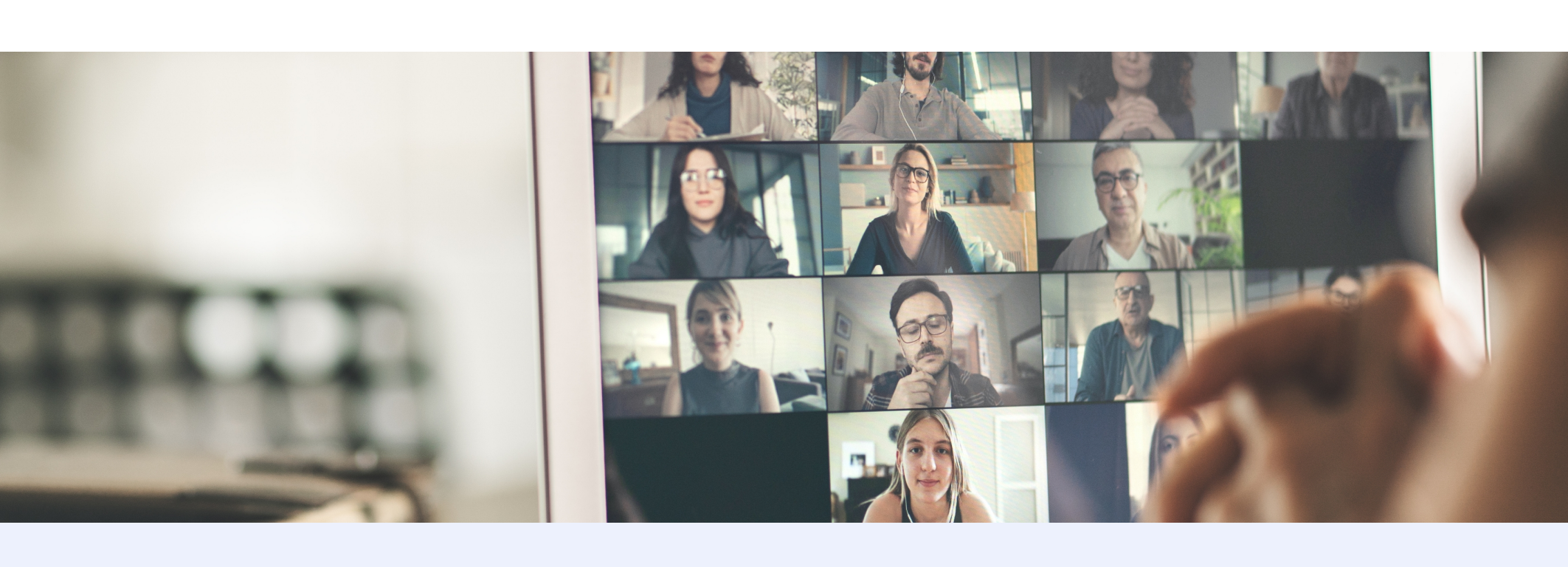
ISSUE #31

February 2026

CUPE38 connection

CUPE38 Connection brings you the latest updates, collaborative events, and resources to strengthen our community.

Join Our Next Meeting



Tuesday, February 24, 2026
Time: 7:00 p.m. MST
Location : Virtual via Zoom
Agenda : Regular business
RSVP : office@cupe38.org or call 403-233-2700

An Open Letter to the Mayor and Members of Calgary City Council

Dear Mayor and Councillors,

On behalf of the union representing City of Calgary employees, I am writing to express our strong objections to the proposed Employee Compensation Transparency Notice of Motion brought forward in the February 3, 2026, meeting of the Executive Committee. While we support transparency and accountability in public institutions, this proposal raises significant concerns related to privacy, fairness, labour relations, and the potential for unintended harm to the City's workforce and its ability to recruit and retain skilled employees.

It is important to note that Council has already taken meaningful steps toward compensation transparency. In 2014, City Council approved a full compensation disclosure list that is published annually. This report provides comprehensive information about compensation across the organization while appropriately protecting employee privacy by excluding personal or identifying details. The existing model strikes a responsible balance between transparency and the safety and dignity of employees. The new proposal, however, moves beyond that balance and risks exposing workers to unnecessary harm without offering any additional public value.

The motion as drafted poses serious risks to employee privacy. Publicly disclosing individual compensation – even in ranges or categories – can expose workers to targeted harassment, discrimination, and undue scrutiny. Many City employees work in publicfacing, safetysensitive, or politically charged environments. Making their compensation identifiable, directly or indirectly, compromises their personal security and undermines their right to a safe workplace.

Furthermore, the proposal fails to recognize the fundamental difference between elected officials, senior executives, and frontline workers. Transparency legislation in other jurisdictions focuses on highincome earners or decisionmakers with significant authority over public funds. Applying similar disclosure expectations to thousands of municipal employees – many of whom earn modest wages – is neither standard practice nor justified. It risks stigmatizing workers rather than illuminating systemic issues.

This proposal also undermines the collective bargaining process. Employee compensation at the City is not arbitrary; it is the product of negotiated agreements, market comparisons, and established jobevaluation systems. Publicly isolating compensation data outside of this context invites misinterpretation and fuels misinformation about the value of publicsector work. It also risks politicizing wages and benefits that have been fairly negotiated at the bargaining table.

Finally, we are concerned that the Notice of Motion was brought forward without meaningful consultation with the unions representing City employees. Decisions that affect workers' rights, privacy, and workplace conditions must be informed by those who understand the realities of the workforce. We urge Council to pause this process and engage in proper dialogue before considering any changes of this magnitude.

For these reasons, we respectfully request that the Council reject the Employee Compensation Transparency Notice of Motion. Transparency is important, but it must be balanced with privacy, fairness, and respect for the collective bargaining process. The existing 2014 disclosure model already achieves this balance. We remain committed to working collaboratively with the City to strengthen public trust while protecting the rights and dignity of the employees who keep Calgary running every day.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We welcome the opportunity to discuss these concerns further.

What the Employee Survey Really Tells Us – and Why It Matters

The City of Calgary's latest employee survey offers an important snapshot of how workers are feeling – not just about their day-to-day work, but about the systems, supports, and leadership structures that shape their experience on the job. From a union perspective, these surveys are more than a data collection exercise. They are a window into the realities our members face and a reminder of the work still needed to ensure every City employee is respected, supported, and valued.

The results show what many of us already know: City workers are deeply committed to serving Calgarians. They take pride in their work, care about their communities, and consistently go above and beyond to keep this city running. That dedication is the backbone of public service, and it deserves to be recognized.

But the survey also highlights areas where the City must do better. Concerns about workload, staffing levels, communication, and psychological safety continue to surface year after year. When workers report feeling stretched thin, unheard, or unsupported, it's not a reflection of their commitment. It's a reflection of systemic issues that require meaningful action.

From the union's standpoint, these results reinforce what we've been raising at the bargaining table and through labour management discussions:

- Chronic understaffing is taking a toll. When vacancies go unfilled or departments are expected to "do more with less," workers feel the strain and service quality suffers.
- Respectful workplaces must be a priority. Every employee deserves a safe, inclusive environment free from harassment, discrimination, and retaliation.
- Communication needs to improve. Workers want transparency, clarity, and genuine engagement, not top-down directives that ignore frontline realities.
- Well-being cannot be an afterthought. Mental health, workload balance, and psychological safety are essential to a healthy workplace, not optional addons.

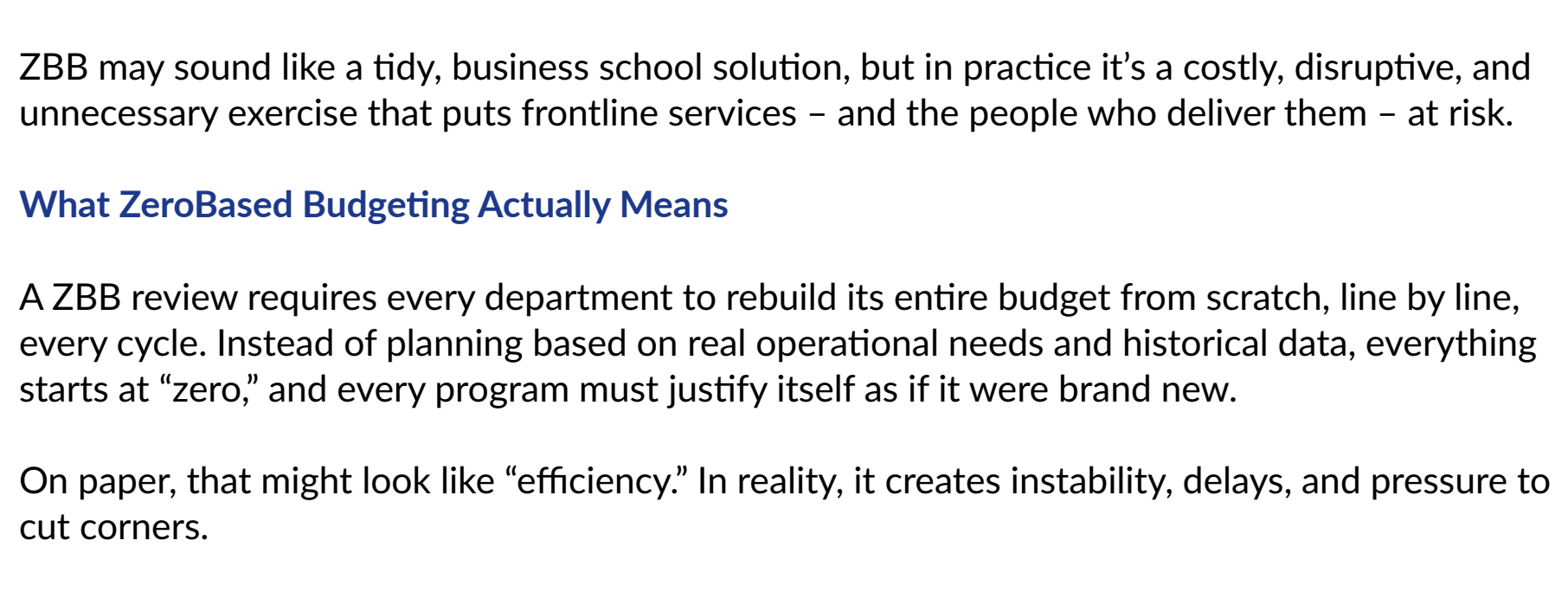
The survey results are not a criticism of employees. They are a call to action for the employer. Listening is only the first step. What matters now is how the City responds.

As your union, we will continue to push for concrete improvements, not just promises. We will use this data to strengthen our advocacy, support members who raise concerns, and hold the employer accountable for creating the conditions where workers can thrive. When employees speak up – whether through surveys, conversations, or grievances – their voices must lead to real change.

City workers keep Calgary moving. You deserve workplaces that recognize your expertise, respect your contributions, and provide the resources you need to do your jobs safely and effectively.

The survey has spoken. Now it's time for the City to act – and your union will be there every step of the way to ensure that happens.

Why a ZeroBased Budget Review is a Bad Idea for Calgary Municipal Workers



Calgary's municipal workers know better than most how much it takes to keep a city running. Every day, thousands of CUPE members deliver the services that make Calgary livable, safe, and resilient. That's why proposals for a ZeroBased budget review (ZBB) should raise serious concerns for anyone who cares about stable public services and fair working conditions.

ZBB may sound like a tidy, business school solution, but in practice it's a costly, disruptive, and unnecessary exercise that puts frontline services – and the people who deliver them – at risk.

What ZeroBased Budgeting Actually Means

A ZBB review requires every department to rebuild its entire budget from scratch, line by line, every cycle. Instead of planning based on real operational needs and historical data, everything starts at "zero," and every program must justify itself as if it were brand new.

On paper, that might look like "efficiency." In reality, it creates instability, delays, and pressure to cut corners.

Why It's a Bad Fit for a Complex City Like Calgary

1. It treats essential services like optional addons

Snow clearing, water treatment, transit operations, emergency response, parks maintenance – these aren't "nice to haves." They're core services that depend on predictable funding and long-term planning. ZBB forces departments to defend the existence of these services every cycle, opening the door to arbitrary cuts and political interference.

2. It drains time and resources away from actual service delivery

A full ZBB process can take thousands of staff hours, pulling subject matter experts away from the work they're supposed to be doing. Calgary is already stretched thin after years of austerity. Diverting staff to paperwork instead of public service only makes things worse.

3. It ignores the reality of long-term infrastructure and workforce planning

Cities operate on multiyear cycles. You can't rebuild a water plant, maintain a transit fleet, or plan for population growth on a budget that resets to zero every year. ZBB undermines the long-term planning that keeps Calgary's infrastructure safe and reliable.

5. It's expensive, and the savings rarely materialize

Jurisdictions that have tried ZBB often abandon it because the administrative cost outweighs any theoretical savings. Calgary has already been through multiple budget cutting cycles. There's no evidence that another round of "start from zero" reviews will uncover anything new.

What Calgary Actually Needs

Instead of disruptive budget experiments, Calgary needs:

Stable, predictable funding for essential services

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- Evidence-based planning grounded in real operational needs
- Investment in frontline staff, not more layers of review
- Longterm strategies that support a growing, changing city

Municipal workers have already delivered millions in efficiencies over the past decade. The issue isn't waste – it's chronic underfunding and political pressure to do more with less.

Standing Up for Public Services

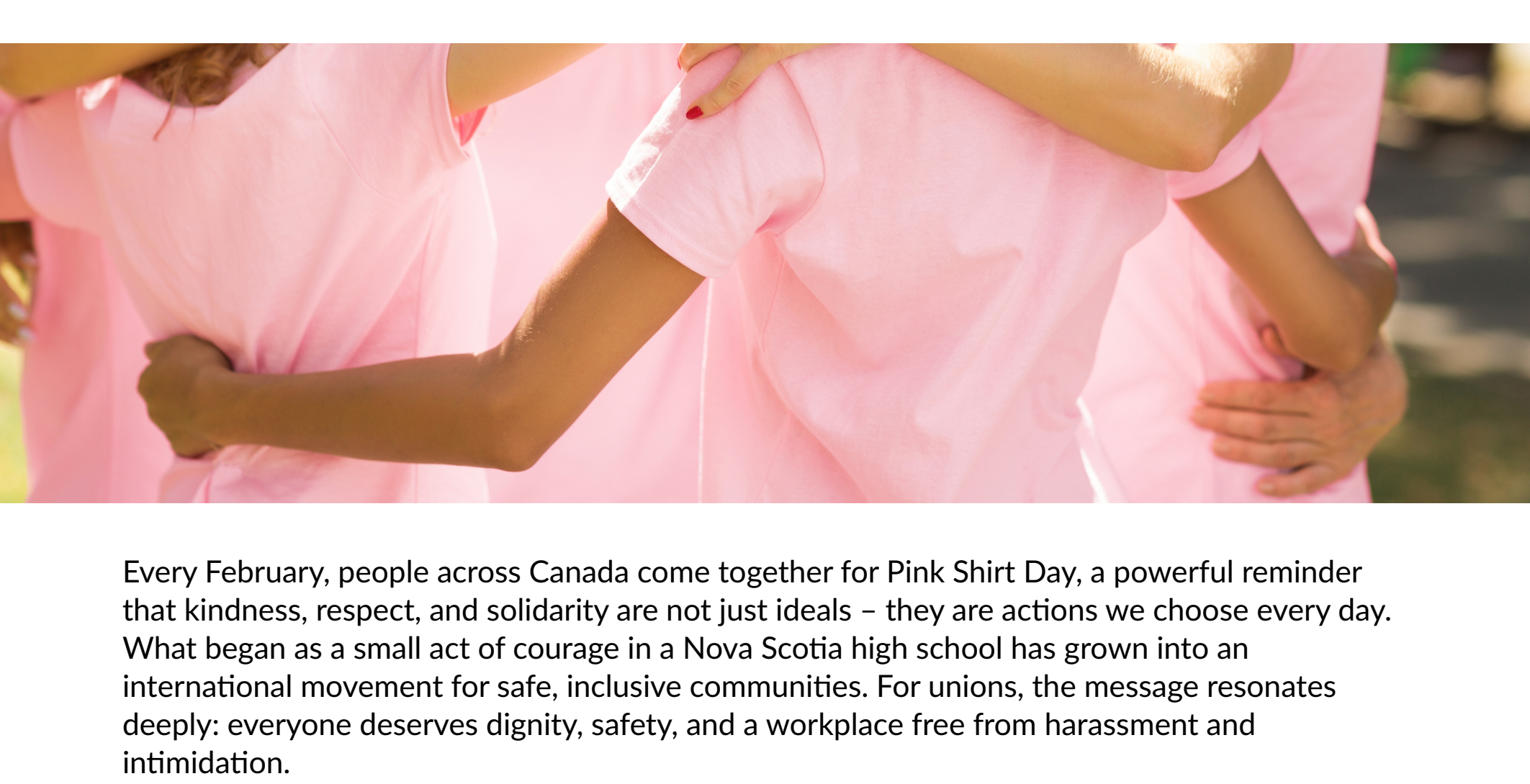
A ZBB review may be framed as "responsible fiscal management," but for municipal workers and the residents who rely on them, it's a step backward. Calgary deserves a budgeting approach that strengthens public services, not one that destabilizes them.

CUPE Local 38 members know what it takes to keep this city running. We need a budget process that respects that expertise, supports the workforce, and invests in the services Calgarians count on every day.

Family Day – Monday, February 16

Family Day has been a recognized statutory holiday in Alberta since 1990. It was introduced to give employees time to spend with their families and loved ones – very important for mental health and well-being, particularly in February when the long nights and (typically) cold weather can be draining. We encourage you to enjoy your day off, connecting with those closest to you!

Pink Shirt Day: Standing Together Against Bullying



Every February, people across Canada come together for Pink Shirt Day, a powerful reminder that kindness, respect, and solidarity are not just ideals – they are actions we choose every day. What began as a small act of courage in a Nova Scotia high school has grown into an international movement for safe, inclusive communities. For unions, the message resonates deeply: everyone deserves dignity, safety, and a workplace free from harassment and intimidation.

Pink Shirt Day traces its origins to 2007, when two students organized a show of support for a classmate who had been bullied for wearing a pink shirt. Their simple act – encouraging others to wear pink in solidarity – sparked a wave of compassion that continues to inspire millions. Today, Pink Shirt Day is an opportunity to reflect on how we can challenge bullying in all its forms, whether it appears in schools, workplaces, or online.

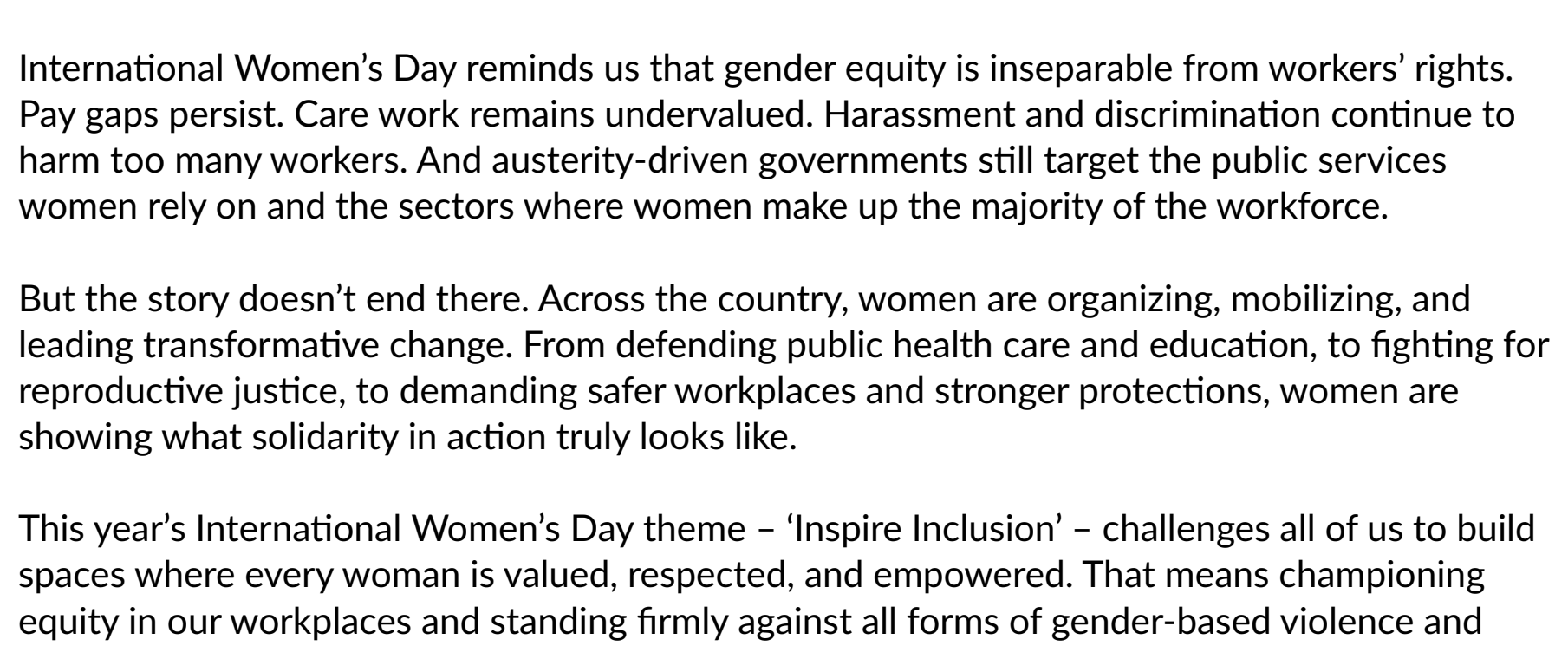
For CUPE members and all workers, bullying is not just a social issue. It's a labour issue. Harassment and intimidation undermine psychological safety, erode trust, and weaken the collective strength that unions depend on. When workers feel unsafe or targeted, it affects their health, their families, and their ability to participate fully in their workplaces and communities. That's why our collective agreements, our advocacy, and our solidarity all play a role in creating environments where everyone can thrive.

This year's Pink Shirt Day theme emphasizes lifting each other up – a message that aligns perfectly with the values of the labour movement. Lifting each other up means calling out harmful behaviour, supporting colleagues who are struggling, and fostering workplaces where respect is the norm, not the exception. It means recognizing that bullying and discrimination disproportionately affect marginalized groups, and committing ourselves to equity and inclusion in everything we do.

On Pink Shirt Day, **February 25**, we encourage all members to wear pink, participate in awareness activities, and take a moment to reflect on how each of us can contribute to safer, more supportive spaces. Whether it's checking in on a coworker, challenging harmful comments, or advocating for stronger anti-harassment protections, every action matters.

Together, we can build workplaces and communities where kindness is powerful, solidarity is visible, and bullying has no place. Let's lift each other up, today and every day.

International Women's Day: Celebrating Strength, Advancing Justice



Every year on March 8, International Women's Day invites us to reflect on the achievements of women, the barriers that remain, and the collective power we hold to build a more just and equitable world. For those of us in the labour movement, this day is more than a commemoration – it's a call to action.

Women have always been at the heart of our unions. They are frontline workers, organizers, stewards, activists, and leaders who push our movement forward with courage and conviction. Their advocacy has shaped safer workplaces, fairer wages, stronger benefits, and more inclusive policies. Yet despite these gains, women – especially racialized, Indigenous, 2SLGBTQIA+ women, and women with disabilities – continue to face disproportionate barriers on the job and in their communities.

International Women's Day reminds us that gender equity is inseparable from workers' rights. Pay gaps persist. Care work remains undervalued. Harassment and discrimination continue to harm too many workers. And austerity-driven governments still target the public services women rely on and the sectors where women make up the majority of the workforce.

But the story doesn't end there. Across the country, women are organizing, mobilizing, and leading transformative change. From defending public health care and education, to fighting for reproductive justice, to demanding safer workplaces and stronger protections, women are showing what solidarity in action truly looks like.

This year's International Women's Day theme – 'Inspire Inclusion' – challenges all of us to build spaces where every woman is valued, respected, and empowered. That means championing equity in our workplaces and standing firmly against all forms of gender-based violence and discrimination.

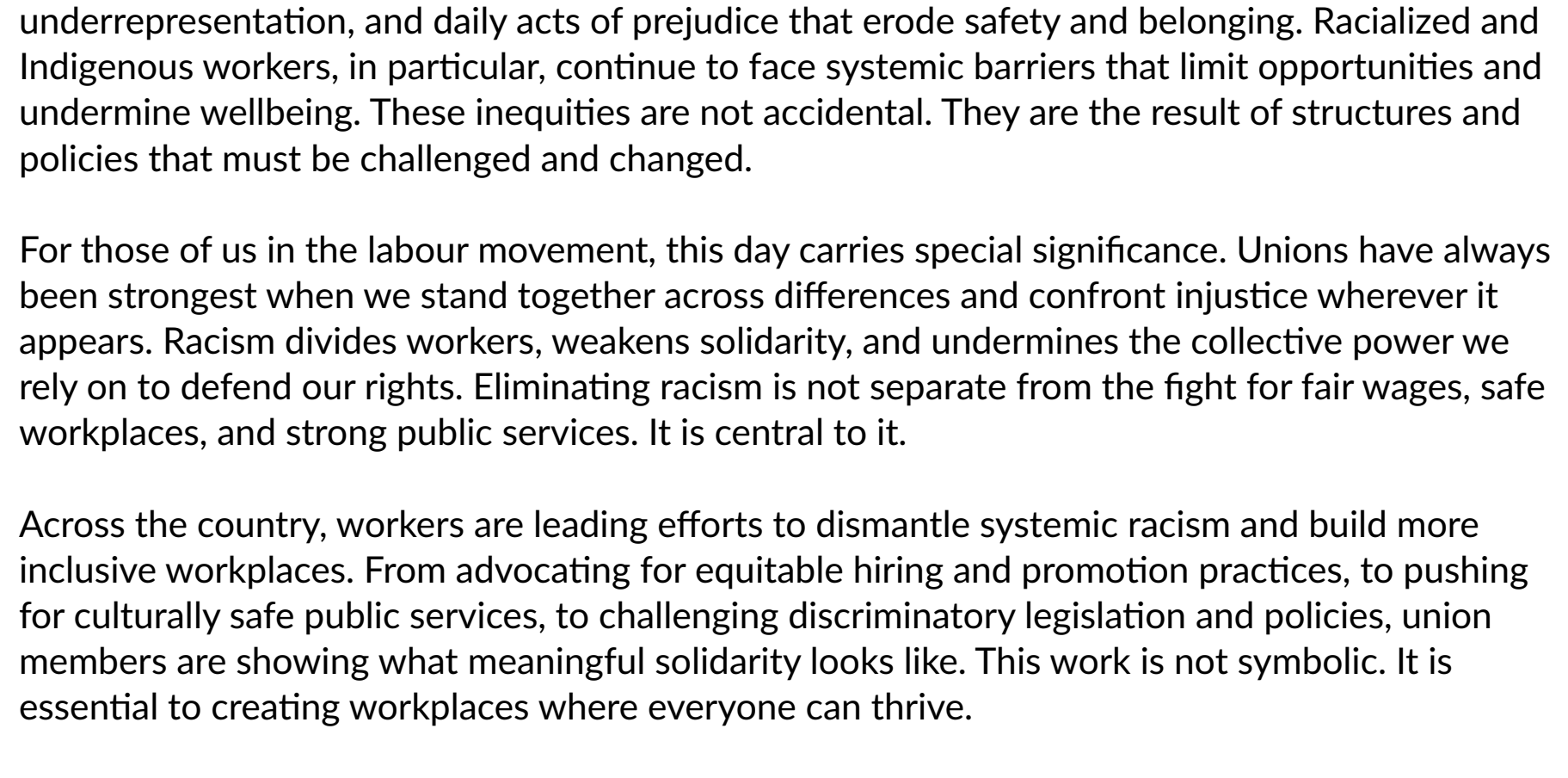
CUPE has a proud history of supporting women throughout our union. Grace Hartman holds a historic place in Canada's labour movement as the first woman to lead a major Canadian union. Beginning her activism in the National Union of Public Employees in the 1950s, she rose through local, provincial, and national roles, becoming a key architect of CUPE after its formation in 1963. Hartman championed full collective bargaining rights for municipal and school board workers and was a tireless advocate for women's rights both inside and outside the labour movement. Her commitment to justice was unwavering, even leading to her jailing in 1981 for supporting hospital workers' right to strike. Elected CUPE National President in 1975 and later a vice-president of the Canadian Labour Congress, she continued her advocacy after retirement, including serving as president of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women.

As a union, we recommit to this work every day. We honour the women who paved the way, we uplift the women leading today, and we invest in the next generation who will carry the movement forward. Progress doesn't happen by accident. It happens because workers stand together and refuse to accept inequality as inevitable.

On March 8, and every day, let's celebrate women's achievements, confront the challenges that remain, and strengthen our resolve to build a world where gender justice is not an aspiration but a reality.

Learn More About International Women's Day

International Day for the Elimination of Racism: A Call to Action for Justice and Solidarity



Every year on March 21, the International Day for the Elimination of Racism calls on us to confront one of the most persistent and harmful injustices in our society. It is a day to honour the courage of those who have fought – and continue to fight – against racism, and to recommit ourselves to building communities, workplaces, and institutions where every person is treated with dignity and respect.

Racism is not a relic of the past. It continues to shape people's lives in profound ways: through inequitable access to services, discriminatory hiring practices, wage gaps, over-policing, underrepresentation, and daily acts of prejudice that erode safety and belonging. Racialized and Indigenous workers, in particular, continue to face systemic barriers that limit opportunities and undermine wellbeing. These inequities are not accidental. They are the result of structures and policies that must be challenged and changed.

For those of us in the labour movement, this day carries special significance. Unions have always been strongest when we stand together across differences and confront injustice wherever it appears. Racism divides workers, weakens solidarity, and undermines the collective power we rely on to defend our rights. Eliminating racism is not separate from the fight for fair wages, safe workplaces, and strong public services. It is central to it.

Across the country, workers are leading efforts to dismantle systemic racism and build more inclusive workplaces. From advocating for equitable hiring and promotion practices, to pushing for culturally safe public services, to challenging discriminatory legislation and policies, union members are showing what meaningful solidarity looks like. This work is not symbolic. It is essential to creating workplaces where everyone can thrive.

The International Day for the Elimination of Racism also reminds us that education and awareness are only the starting point. Real change requires action: listening to racialized and Indigenous workers, addressing inequities in our own structures, and using our collective voice to push for policies that advance justice. It means standing firmly against hate in all its forms, whether it appears in our communities, online, or in our workplaces.

As a union, we recommit to this work every day. We honour the workers who have led the struggle for racial justice, we support those who continue to face discrimination, and we commit to building a movement where every member feels safe, valued, and empowered. Eliminating racism is not a one-day effort – it is a long-term commitment that strengthens our solidarity and our collective power.

On March 21, and every day, let's stand together against racism and work toward a future where equity, justice, and human rights are not aspirations, but realities for all.

Learn More About the International Day for the Elimination of Racism

Stay Strong and See You Next Month!

Sincerely,

Your Executive Team

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