

STEELDRUM

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Inside the SteelDrum:

Unmasking the University: Standing Against Genocide and Hypocrisy at U of T

Steel Drum wins prestigious Katie FitzRandolph Award for Best Publication at 2024 CALM Conference

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



USW versus Victoria University's Attendance Awareness Program

Among the numerous issues the Union has recently worked to address on behalf of, and with, individual members, one of the most prominent has been Victoria University's Attendance Awareness Program, otherwise known as the Sickness Spreading Program. The fightback against the program reached a successful conclusion in the second week of October when the University announced that they were ending it.

The structure of the University's attendance program provided for Vic employees who are USW members to be placed into it when they went on sick leave for four or more days in a three-month period. An employee who met that criterion without being placed on what the University referred to as short term disability, would be placed into stage 1 of the program. The University's written document explaining the attendance program stated that an employee who provided medical documentation that substantiated being placed on short term disability on the eighth day of illness would not be placed into the attendance program. Although our collective agreement with Victoria University does not include a short-term disability provision, it is the Union's understanding that what the University was referring to is the collective agreement provision that states that, on the eighth day of sickness, an employee must provide medical documentation to

substantiate continuation on paid sick leave. It is the Union's understanding that an employee who was off sick for eight or more days who provided medical documentation that substantiated their continuation on paid sick leave would not be placed into the attendance program.

After an employee was placed into the program, their continued stay in it would be determined as follows:

- If an employee in the program was off sick for four or more days in a three-month period, they would be moved up one stage.
- An employee in the program who was away from work sick three days or less in each of two consecutive three-month periods would be moved down one stage.
- When the employee was placed in stage 2, they would receive a verbal warning with written documentation.
- If the employee was moved into stage 3, they would be issued a written warning and would have their placement into the program considered as a negative aspect of their employment record when they applied for another Victoria University job.

The attendance program was leading employees to come to work ill

- When the employee was moved into stage 4, they would receive a second written warning and their placement into the program would continue to be considered as a negative aspect of their employment record when they applied for another Victoria university job.
- Placement into stage 5 of the program was grounds for the termination of an employee.
- If an employee was not terminated because of their attendance record, all documentation that they had received while they were in the attendance program would stay in their personnel file for one year after they left the program.

One of the worst aspects of the University's attendance program was that it did not take into consideration an employee's past attendance

record. A member with a perfect attendance record for several years who hit a streak of bad luck with their health would be placed into the program. The University did not need their attendance program to address their concerns that individual employees might be abusing sick leave. They had, and still have, the management tools to do that without implementing their draconian program.

The attendance program was leading employees to come to work ill to avoid being placed into it and being disciplined up to and including termination. This was increasing the risk of viruses being spread among staff, faculty and students.

The policy grievance that the Union filed against the University's attendance program was dismissed by the University at step 2 of the grievance procedure and it was subsequently advanced to arbitration by the Local 1998 Executive. In addition to the grievance, the members of the Victoria University Unit collectively fought back against the attendance program by participating in a social media campaign, poster on the Vic campus and its surrounding streets, and by signing a petition that called for the program to be scrapped. Eighty-six members of the two hundred strong bargaining unit signed the petition within

Victoria University's decision to scrap their attendance management program is an example of what can be accomplished when a strong union position within the grievance procedure is coupled with a grassroots union membership fightback.





three hours at a union event. Many more signatures would have been added and the fightback would have been ramped up in other ways if the University had not listened to and heeded the legitimate criticisms of the program.

Victoria University's decision to scrap their attendance management program is an example of what can be accomplished when a strong union position within the grievance procedure is coupled with a grassroots union membership fightback.

John Ankenman, USW 1998 President

Cover images and other photos taken of VIC members at Victoria University Unit AAP Campaign pop-up. Images by Meredith Rappaport.

Steel Drum wins prestigious Katie FitzRandolph Award for Best Publication at 2024 CALM Conference in Edmonton



Delegates at the 2024 CALM Conference (L-R): Liesl Joson, Scott Eldridge, Meredith Rappaport, Margaret Bucknam and Richard Waters. Photo courtesy Lindsey Tran, CALM.

Steel Drum won the prestigious Katie FitzRandolph Award for Best Overall Print Publication in the Volunteer Produced category at the 2024 Canadian Association of Labour Media (CALM) Conference held in Edmonton from June 6-8, 2024.

Steel Drum Editor, Kristy Bard, was ecstatic with the win. "When I took over the Editor role from P.C. Choo after he retired, I had some big shoes to fill! But working with Margaret (Bucknam) and Richard (Waters) and the rest of the Communications Committee has made the process a real pleasure. It's always gratifying to have your hard work recognized, but the greatest reward for me is seeing the first layout proof from Richard for each issue and holding the final hardcopy in my hands. Seeing it in the hands of other members at our big release time meetings in June and December, and hearing feedback from members who actually read, enjoy and engage with it, have been other highlights of this volunteer gig! I look forward to working with a co-editor over the next year to prepare the way to fill this role when I leave U of T. Although the time commitment can be challenging at times, of all the positions I've held in the union over the years, this has been my favourite."

Margaret Bucknam, Co-Chair of the Communications Committee at USW Local 1998, was equally delighted with the win. "What an incredible honour that Steel Drum has received the Katie Randolph Award for Best Publication in the Volunteer Produced category. This is the highest recognition that a union publication can receive at the CALM annual awards. It is a testament to the dedication to design of our copy editors and members who submit such compelling articles that continue to inform and inspire our readers." In particular, she credited Richard Waters for the win. "Richard took over the design, layout and production of Steel Drum last year and within that short period of time, he managed to produce a winning publication."

Congratulations, *Steel Drum*!

P. C. Choo, Special Correspondent

What time is it? IT'S UNION TIME!

And with a thunderous roar from our USW members in attendance, the annual USW Health, Safety, and Environment (HSE) Conference kicked off with the same energy as a Pittsburgh Steelers NFL game.

Over the span of five days, the David L. Lawrence Convention Centre and Westin Hotel in Downtown Pittsburgh would be host to over 1,700 union members from across all 12 USW districts in Canada and the United States.

The conference, which ran from August 18-23, 2024, provided an opportunity for both union and management members to network and take part in over 120 health and safety workshops. The workshops offered covered a diverse range of topics including mental health, industrial hygiene, chemicals and electrical hazards, personal protective equipment, workplace inspections, workplace violence, bargaining for health and safety language, mobile equipment, and many more. Regardless of the industry or sector that a member came from, there was something for everyone.



Steve Sallman, Director of USW Health, Safety and Environment providing his opening remarks to members at the Union-only plenary on August 19, 2024. All photos by Ronald Ng.



Members of USW Emergency Response Team at the ERT booth (left: Bonnie Reese; right: Sharif Ali).



Members of the NextGen Committee from the Pittsburgh Headquarters (left: Charleeka Thompson; right: Alyssa Scott).

Members from the NextGen, Communications, Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR), Emergency Response Team, Women of Steel, and Political Action committees, based out of the Pittsburgh office, were in attendance to promote their committees' work. Also in attendance were representatives from the United States Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA), National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), and the National Fire Prevention Agency (NFPA), all of whom were readily available to share resources and answer questions from attendees.

As noted during the opening remarks by Marty Warren, National Director of Canada, the timing of this year's conference is particularly significant as it coincided with the 50th anniversary of the Elliot Lake Miners' Strike (1974) as well as the 20th anniversary of the passage of the Westray Law (2004). These two pivotal events in Canadian history brought about changes to workplace safety regulations that continue to have a lasting impact on Ontario workers today.

For our colleagues in the United States, this year's conference also took place during the same week as the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, Illinois. Julie Su, US Secretary of Labour, made a guest appearance to rally the support of USW members behind the US Democratic Party and Vice-President Kamala Harris. Later in that week, Vice-President Harris would formally accept the party's presidential nomination to face former Republican President Donald Trump in the upcoming 2024 election.

David McCall, International President of USW, would go on to later emphasize the importance of having a union-friendly, pro-worker government in the State House or Congress. He explained that government policies establish the minimum standards that employers are not permitted to fall below, which is important to USW members. Having the right government in place at the right time can significantly strengthen our union's bargaining position as it relates to wages, benefits, and workplace health and safety.

Fallen Worker Memorial



Memorial scroll of fallen USW workers and contractors during the Union-Management Plenary on August 20, 2024.

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As part of an annual tradition of the Health, Safety and Environment Conference, a memorial scroll was held during the Union-Management Plenary on the second day of the conference (August 20, 2024). The memorial scroll served to honour our union members who have lost their lives in the workplace since the previous year's conference.

During the ceremony, each person in attendance stood as the large screens on stage scrolled through the names of fallen USW members and contractors, along with their age, date of death, and the local and company they belonged to. A total of 36 names were shown, with their ages ranging from 21 to 67 years old. The ceremony was followed by a moment of silence as the two Workers' Memorial Bells were rung on stage. The ceremony was closed out with a beautiful rendition of "Amazing Grace" and reading of a remembrance poem by two union sisters.



As explained by the various USW speakers, the memorial scroll is not only a way for us to remember our fallen brothers and sisters, but also serves as a reminder that our union's fight to improve workplace health and safety can never end. Health and safety should never be compromised, and no worker should ever have to sacrifice their health or lives for their job. The memorial scroll was one of the most somber moments of the conference and one that deeply impacted everyone in attendance. It also made me appreciate how fortunate we are as members of Local 1998, as we are not exposed to the high-risk environments that some of our fellow USW members from other locals

Images of the original (top) and new (bottom) Workers' Memorial Bells. The bells are dedicated to our union brothers and sisters who have suffered a workplace fatality.

Health and safety should never be compromised, and no worker should ever have to sacrifice their health or life for their job.

face. The gravity of the situation became even more apparent as I later crossed paths with the colleagues of the fallen workers during the conference. When asked if there was ever a year when the memorial scroll did not have any names listed and the Workers' Memorial Bell remained silent, those that I spoke to gave a brief pause before replying with a simple "no".

Ronald Ng, Environmental Health and Safety

Margaret Bucknam, USW Outreach and Communications Coordinator Wins the Labour Community Advocate Award



Margaret Bucknam is the 2024 recipient of the Labour Community Advocate Award, presented "in special recognition of their dedication to advancing the Labour Community Advocate Training Program with their Union by encouraging others to learn, grow and become stronger leaders in their workplaces."

In the 15 years since the Award was inaugurated in 2013, there have only been five recipients, so it is indeed a rare honour for Margaret to join this select League of Champions. "Often, when you find something good, many people keep it for themselves. But Margaret is ready and willing to share the benefits of the program and empower union members," says Najib Soufian of the Labour Community Advocate Training Program.

As a long-standing member of USW Local 1998, having worked at the University of Toronto for over 30 years in the Faculty of Medicine, Margaret is herself a graduate of the Labour Community Advocate Program and enjoys fostering a positive workplace culture and building strong teams.

In 2016, Margaret was tasked with building member engagement as the Local 1998 Outreach and Communications Officer. The challenges of decentralized campuses and building capacity among members was a huge undertaking. At various outreach events, Margaret realized that many members had several of the same issues: workload, work-life balance or workplace bullying and harassment concerns. She would always refer members to their steward. However, when the Labour Community Advocate (LCA) Training Program flyer came across her desk, she knew that she wanted to get more involved by taking the course.

The LCA Training Program stands as a beacon of support and solidarity within union locals that foster a culture of empathy, assistance, and collaboration amongst members. At its core, the program is a referral service for members helping other members in their work environment. The classes are interactive and teach how to interview members, the importance of active listening, conflict resolution and de-escalation skills, all of which are crucial in advocacy work. Margaret enjoyed the opportunity to connect with a wide variety of members from other unions and learned from different perspectives and challenges other locals face. "It was like learning something new every day," she recounts.

Whether a member is coping with a family crisis, financial strain, addiction, or other life obstacles, you can make members feel comfortable by offering a safe space for them to share their concerns. The course provides information needed to make members aware of appropriate community service organizations that can provide support. One of Margaret's first ideas was to implement a lunch and learn session on credit counselling, and a couple of years later, a six-week financial assistance program.

Margaret enjoys discovering issues that have an impact on members and identifying ways the union can play a role in assisting everyone. Members want to feel heard and supported

It's an incredible feeling helping others and knowing you have made a positive difference in a colleague's life.

and know that they don't have to struggle alone whether they are facing a work-related challenge or a personal issue affecting their work. This is where the LCA Training Program comes in. It's a wealth of information on various topics that is easily shared. Margaret is passionate about her work, noting "it's an incredible feeling helping others and knowing you have made a positive difference in a colleague's life."

Mark Austin, Health & Safety Officer





The Story of Us

It began with a poem. A poem that I imagined reading to my own little one if I had a little one. So, when I heard my dear friend and his husband were expecting a baby with the help of a surrogate, my heart was delighted for them. Yet, a part of me recalled the loss of my own dream. It was then I decided what my debut book would be about.

I always wanted to write a book but could not find the time to properly devote to it. In 2020, COVID-19 changed that. While some people turned to home renos and Netflix binge watching during the pandemic lockdowns, I turned to writing and teaching myself how to illustrate a children's picture book. One CANVA subscription after another, one very late night after another, I worked eagerly for weeks. I was focussed, determined and hungry to hold the final published product in my hand.

I knew nothing about getting a book to market, so Google became my co-pilot as I navigated web pages and chat forums with my treasured bestie curled up at my feet. Her tail sprawled across my toes, she would nap as I typed, raising her head each time I huffed at confusing or

incomplete information. I was relentless, like a dog with a bone on a deadline to get the book to market before the lockdowns were over and busy living resumed. It was a race against the clock in the same way my fertility journey was.

In my mind, I already had an idea for the look and feel of the book, the layout and design and lastly, my audience. From one printer to the next, from one publisher to the next, the process proved to be both frustrating and insurmountable. The challenges were mainly around quality control and local supply chain challenges. When it seemed as though my manuscript would never see the light of day, I decided to self-publish with the help of a printer based in China.

There I was, back and forth on email during the wee hours of the morning corresponding with the printer. When it was night here, it was day there. Draft after draft, the final touches were never quite final. There was a tweak here and a twine there and occasionally details would get lost in translation. At one point, I became concerned that I might have been entering into a hoax, one that would cost me a good chunk of change.

I dipped my toe into the pool of trust slowly, ordering only one book sample at first and then two and then a bit more and then several boxes. When I tore open the last delivery and the smell of freshly printed picture books reached my nose, I was truly overjoyed. There they were, the fruits of my labour, packaged safely and securely in thick cardboard boxes and bubble wrap. The printer whose validity I initially questioned, included extra copies of the book at no additional cost.

One by one, I lifted the books from the box and gave them a look over. A sense of relief and pride came over me. I did it. I actually did it! I authored a children's book and one I'm so in love with, if one can say that about the birth of a book. Leslie Webberley phrased it best when she said: "The writing of a book parallels a pregnancy, at least in my mind it does. In both, a fully developed entity is created from nothing. This is a slow process, beginning with a spark of life, then building tiny piece by tiny piece, until the end result is nothing short of a miracle."



*Rosa Leo's treasured bestie Bella.
Photo by Rosa Leo.*

The Story of Us was inspired by my personal journey and that of hopeful parents-to-be who I met along the way. This passion project, about love and family, celebrates the fertility journey experienced by heterosexual and LGBTQ2S+ couples, choice moms and choice dads. The rhythmic poem is an expression of love to little souls who were born with the help of assisted reproduction, a donor or a surrogate. The poem is a heart-warming discussion starter for curious littles wanting to know how their non-typical family was grown.

Although my story ended differently than I had hoped, I set out to write a book for parents whose journeys had a successful outcome. In doing so, I made peace with the feelings of loss that accompanies the termination of a dream. The book was a gift to myself which has now become a gift to others. That friend I was telling you about, he and his husband were thrilled to receive the book. They read it to their young daughter at bedtime.

As for me, my miracle arrived on February 14th, Valentine's day, four years ago. Although she has four legs and not two, her presence has changed my life in ways I could not have conceived.

*Rose Leo, School of Continuing Studies,
University of Toronto*

www.roseleoauthor.com



Get To Know USW's Emergency Response Team



Allan McDougall (left of chart), Duronda Pope (2nd from right), and members of the USW Emergency Response Team. Photo by Ronald Ng.

For many of us, work has become a familiar routine. We wake up each morning, head to work, and return home at the end of the day. We repeat this routine daily without ever giving much thought to the possibility that a tragic event could occur while we are at work. We simply assume that we will return home safely. But what if the unthinkable happens—a life-changing injury, or even worse, a fatal accident? Who would be there to help and support our spouse, children, and parents in such a situation?

Experiencing a workplace tragedy is something no one ever wishes to go through, but for some of our USW members and their families, this has become an unfortunate reality. “About every 9 days, there is a fatality within the United Steelworkers, and about every 7 days, there is a critical injury”, said

“About every 9 days, there is a fatality within the United Steelworkers, and about every 7 days, there is a critical injury”

Duronda Pope, the Director of USW's Emergency Response Team (ERT).

As a relatively new union member, I frankly admit that I was not aware of the USW Emergency Response Team prior to attending the Health, Safety and Environment Conference in Pittsburgh from August 18-23, 2024. However, seeing their booth at the conference gave me an opportunity to speak with some of the ERT coordinators to learn more about their committee and the work that they perform.

As Bonnie Reese, an ERT Coordinator explained, “the ERT is dedicated to helping brothers and sisters in times of need. The ERT responds to fatalities, injuries, and any situations that affect the membership. Their role is to help members

and their families by providing resources and psychological support". In addition to responding to workplace fatalities, ERT volunteers also provide support to USW members and their families in response to suicides, drug overdoses, house fires, and even vehicle accidents. Sherif Ali, an ERT coordinator based in Toronto, highlighted that, in addition to responding to emergency crises, the ERT also provides mental health support and resources to members.

The USW's Emergency Response Team's Involvement with Mental Health

During the conference, I attended a workshop hosted by the Emergency Response Team entitled "The USW's Emergency Response Team's Involvement with Mental Health". During the session, attendees had the opportunity to hear first-hand accounts from ERT coordinators about recent emergency crises that they have handled. Below is one of the stories shared by two ERT coordinators, Stephaun Gonsalves and Shaena Christophe, who responded to a crisis call following the death of a USW brother, Roderick Jackson, in Waltham, Massachusetts.

On December 6, 2023, Roderick Jackson, a 36-year-old National Grid employee and member of Local 12003, was working on a construction site along the side of Totten Pond Road in Waltham. Jackson was a gas operations technician whose job was to install gas mains and repair gas leaks. At about 4 p.m. on that fateful day, a vehicle driven by Peter Simon plowed into the worksite, striking Jackson and a 58-year-old Waltham police officer, Paul Stacey, who was providing security detail at the time. Both brother Jackson and officer Stacey died of their injuries. Three other USW employees were also injured. The pickup truck driven by Simon was later reported to have been stolen and he was being pursued by local police enforcement at the time of the incident.

Following the tragedy, the USW ERT team got in touch with both Jackson's family and the local union and deployed two ERT coordinators to meet the Jackson family at their home. The two ERT coordinators provided emotional support to the family and assisted with whatever needs the family had, including searching local stores for candles to assist with the vigil that was being held. The ERT coordinators also helped the family access resources, including connecting the family with National Grid's Employment Assistance Program, health and safety department, and workers compensation.

The emergency response team continues to keep in touch with the family to this day. Stephaun Gonsalves, one of the ERT coordinators, described bringing pizza for Jackson's mother from her favourite local store every time he visited. The volunteers have also been invited to other family events as well.

The ERT Team

As Duranda Pope, Director of ERT described, the ERT has come a long way since its inception. What originally began as a team of just three people has now grown to include 62 member volunteers across USA and Canada, with an ERT coordinator assigned to each district.

As described by several of the ERT volunteers, responding to an emergency crisis can be an emotionally overwhelming experience. The work itself

What originally began as a team of just three people has now grown to include 62 member volunteers across USA and Canada, with an ERT coordinator assigned to each district.



USW Emergency Response Team delivering their workshop, "The USW's Emergency Response Team's Involvement with Mental Health" at the annual USW Health, Safety and Environment conference, August 21, 2024. Photo by Ronald Ng

can be intensive and requires a lot of travel. Usually when they get the call from the Director, they gather as much information as they can, pack their stuff, and head out as soon as possible. Although the work is challenging, all the volunteers agree that it continues to be a tremendously rewarding experience.

Mental Health Issues in the Workplace

The second half of the training session was led by Allan McDougall, a retired USW ERT Coordinator and also founder of the All Labor Movement (ALM) Foundation. Allan spent the majority of his career working underground as a miner in Sudbury, Ontario. He led the USW Emergency Response Team for 15 years until his retirement in 2020. He now dedicates his time educating union members on mental health, addiction, substance abuse, and PTSD situations.

During his segment of the workshop, Allan shared stories about the physical and mental struggles that he and his fellow miners faced while working underground, along with his personal journey overcoming alcohol addiction and even contemplating suicide. As a class, we participated in an exercise where we discussed the signs and symptoms of workers experiencing mental health challenges, as well as strategies for supporting colleagues who are going through these struggles. Allan's workshop will be remembered for his openness, humour, and ability to foster genuine discussion amongst the participants.

Note from author: I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the USW Emergency Response Team and Allan McDougall for granting me permission to write about their personal stories and hard life lessons. In addition, I want to sincerely thank all current and former USW ERT volunteers for taking time out of their lives to support fellow union members and their families in their most difficult

Allan shared stories about the physical and mental struggles that he and his fellow miners faced while working underground, along with his personal journey overcoming alcohol addiction and even contemplating suicide.

moments. Your dedication, sacrifice, and selflessness are commendable and exemplify the true spirit of solidarity.

Ronald Ng, Environmental Health and Safety

Resources:

USW Emergency Response Team: <https://m.usw.org/act/activism/emergency-response-team>

All Labor Movement Foundation: <https://foundation-alm.org/>



SALUT TOASTMASTERS CLUB HELPS U OF T STAFF DEVELOP LEADERSHIP AND PUBLIC SPEAKING SKILLS



Ezra Liu, SALUT's incoming president. Photo courtesy of School of Continuing Studies.

A New President

On June 26, 2024, SALUT-Speech and Leadership U of T Toastmasters club held its Club Officer elections. One of the new roles up for grabs was that of president. Introducing Ezra Liu, SALUT's new incoming president, who joined the club back in January 2023. Ezra is a USW 1998 member who works at the School of Continuing Studies as a Learning Design and Development Specialist, and has worked in various institutions in both Canada and Japan. When asked why she joined SALUT, Ezra replies:

"I've always been interested in the Toastmasters' approach to public speaking and leadership, so when I found out UofT had their own chapter I jumped at the opportunity, and I'm so glad I did! Our club meetings are something I always look forward to every two weeks and it's always a good time."

As developing leadership skills is one of the many benefits of joining Toastmasters, having Ezra as the new president of SALUT, a young USW member, supports the invaluable leadership as well as public speaking experience offered by this role.

A bit about SALUT Toastmasters Club

SALUT is the University of Toronto Toastmasters club for Staff-Appointed employees. SALUT has been around since July 8, 2010. The club offers a supportive environment to develop your public speaking and leadership skills. Bi-weekly club meetings are filled with opportunities to practice, learn, and grow, all while having fun and making new friends and connections.

When asked 'how would you summarise the benefits of joining SALUT', Ezra notes:

"Whether you want to overcome your fear of public speaking, enhance your communication skills, or simply connect with other U of T colleagues, our club is the perfect place. We always have diverse and interesting Table Topics and useful speaking exercises that get everyone talking and laughing".

SALUT is the University of Toronto Toastmasters club for Staff-Appointed employees. SALUT has been around since July 8, 2010. The club offers a supportive environment to develop your public speaking and leadership skills.

Here's a few testimonials from current and past SALUT members:

"The encouraging and helpful environment at SALUT Toastmasters has helped me to become comfortable with speaking in public, I have even presented at conferences, something I thought I would never be able to do." Andy Allen, Manager, Academic Scheduling (Retired).

"With the Toastmasters education program, I was able to practice speaking in front of others at my own pace. The program's thoughtful yet challenging speech exercises have improved my speaking abilities." Annie Mao, Manager, Faculty Financial Administration.

"With Toastmaster volunteer work, I have felt like part of a team and contributed to the club's success. Taking on an executive club role has been a safe training ground to exercise my leadership skills, because Toastmasters International provides clear and supportive training to practice these skills out." Ash Arokiaswamy, Cloud Solutions Developer.

Contact SALUT Toastmasters

If you are thinking of taking the first step towards becoming a more confident and effective communicator and leader, feel free to drop in to one of SALUT's bi-weekly club meetings as a guest. Either email salut.toastmasters@utoronto.ca or visit us on LinkedIn at [SALUT Toastmasters](#).

Yvonne Kenny, Department of Geography & Planning

MEMBER

Spotlight

JUDY BRUNTON

Fundraising to Support Youth Mental Health



Judy Brunton holding a Keep Calm and Support Canadian Mental Health water bottle (left) and on her bicycle at a previous Mental Health in Motion event - with her prized crown (right). Photos courtesy of Judy Brunton.

I have worked for the University of Toronto for 26 years, spending five years at St. George and 21 years at UTSC. I am an Administrative Assistant in the Centre for Teaching and Learning.

Outside of my full-time job, my passion is fundraising for Youth Mental Health. Over the past 10 years, I have raised over \$160,000 for the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) - York Region and South Simcoe (YRSS) to support youth in need.

Most of the funds I raise support the youth bus provided by the Mobile Youth Walk-in Clinic (MOBYSS), CMHA and YRSS. This bus travels to locations in York Region and South Simcoe where youth frequent, including high schools, community centers, libraries, and shelters. It provides free and confidential appointments with a nurse practitioner, youth mental health worker, and peer support specialist. Youth do



Judy Brunton with the MOBYSS bus, a youth mobility bus that provides free and confidential mental health support to youth in the York Region and South Simcoe. Photo courtesy of Judy Brunton.

not need a health card or referral to access these services and can discuss mental, physical, or sexual health concerns. There have been instances where youth who are in acute suicidal states have received immediate help through this service.

Each time a youth aged 12 - 25 visits MOBYSS, it costs CMHA \$250; therefore, any assistance is greatly appreciated to make sure we can help as many young people as possible.

My fundraising journey began in honor of my sister, who was diagnosed with her first mental illness as a youth and received excellent care through Sunnybrook's Adolescent Psychiatric program. Inspired by her experience, I am dedicated to ensuring that all youth receive the support they need when they need it.

I have added two other family members who we have lost to why I do what I do. My brother Dave passed away six years ago. Dave didn't pass away from a mental illness; he did though thoroughly support what I did and he was always so proud of me. My cousin Geoff passed away from depression 11 years ago, sadly leaving his wife and two boys behind.

I organize a variety of events and actively seek donations from anyone willing to contribute.

My main event that I hold every year consists of around 50-60 vendors that guests can shop from, a pampering area which includes hair cutting, manicures, makeup sessions and massages (all these service people donate their time) for a fee and a silent auction. This event usually brings in around \$6,000 which is a great help towards my annual \$20,000 goal.

In the past, I have participated in the CMHA Canada wide event called Ride Don't Hide. A few years ago, the York Region and South Simcoe chapter changed it to Mental Health in Motion and added a running/walking option since not everyone is a bike rider, and we wanted to include more people in our awesome event.

Sadly, June 2024 was the last Mental Health in Motion event. I am though, continuing to raise funds for youth mental health since it is such a passion of mine - I will simply be doing a walk on a beautiful trail in Newmarket in June 2025 with whoever wants to join me.

If you would like to learn more about my efforts with CMHA York and South Simcoe, please visit my website at www.judybrunton.ca.

Judy Brunton, UTSC Centre for Teaching & Learning

My fundraising journey began in honor of my sister, who was diagnosed with her first mental illness as a youth and received excellent care through Sunnybrook's Adolescent Psychiatric program. Inspired by her experience, I am dedicated to ensuring that all youth receive the support they need when they need it.

SOAR Members Enjoyed Outing to Wasaga Casino and Collingwood Cruise

About 60 SOAR members from the Toronto and Mississauga Chapters went on a trip to Playtime Casino Wasaga Beach and from there, embarked on a 1.5 hour narrated boat cruise aboard the *Huronic* on beautiful Georgian Bay on July 31, 2024.

Upon arrival at the Playtime Casino Wasaga Beach, some members made a beeline to the casino to try their fortune on over 230 slot machines and electronic table games. Others headed to the pub at MATCH Eatery and Public House to enjoy their delectable cuisine.

The highlight of the trip was the cruise around Georgian Bay on board the *Huronic*, a 65 foot steel hull boat that can accommodate up to 70 passengers. Departing from the historic Collingwood Harbour, members got to see the Terminal up close before heading out on to the vast expanse of water on Georgian Bay. Because it was a narrated cruise, members also got to learn about the history of the Nottawasaga lighthouse and the town of Collingwood.

After the cruise, members had the opportunity to explore the town of Collingwood, with its many quaint shops and tourist attractions.

Many thanks to Alice Briggs for organizing the trip. A good time was had by all.

P. C. Choo
Special Correspondent



Toni Eyre at the helm of the Huronic under the watchful eye of Captain Stephen of Collingwood Charters



Some of the U of T SOAR members on the trip. (Back row, L-R): Mr. & Mrs. Wei Hua, P. C. Choo, Monica Chong, Marilyn De Los, Rey De Los Reyes and David Thorn. (Front row: L-R): Toni Eyre and Marietta Maicong

Unmasking the University: Standing Against Genocide and Hypocrisy at U of T



Free Palestine flag draped over a tent at the encampment over the spring of 2024. Photo by Joshua Best.

As a staff member from USW 1998, I feel compelled to share my experience as part of the student encampment at the University of Toronto—a peaceful protest that took place in response to the university’s stance on human rights violations. I write anonymously due to fear of reprisal and bullying, as the environment has become increasingly hostile for those who dare to challenge the institution’s oppressive tactics or point out discrimination.

Many people we work with every day believe they would stand up for others—that they would speak out against human rights violations, would have joined the civil rights movement, or would stand against genocide. We are all familiar with the banality of evil—how horrific acts happen not only from overt malice but also from mundane compliance with authority and systems devoid of moral reflection. At the University of Toronto, this phenomenon has played out in real-time, exposing a profound hypocrisy in the institution’s publicly stated values.

On the surface, the university proclaims its commitment to academic freedom, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI), and fostering a safe environment for all students. But this façade crumbles under scrutiny. Over the past year, human rights defenders on campus have been vilified, censored, and punished for standing up against oppressive systems. The administration's behavior reflects an alarming complicity in perpetuating injustice, particularly when it comes to the ongoing genocide in Palestine. This is not just my view—Amnesty International Canada and the Canadian Lawyers for International Human Rights (CLAHR) intervened in court to support the students' encampment, condemning the university's treatment of the protesters.

By aligning with policies and actions that perpetuate injustice, the university has sent an unambiguous message: some lives are not worth defending, and some injustices are not

worth acknowledging. This political calculation, masquerading as neutrality, sacrifices not only the university's moral leadership but also the safety and dignity of its community members, particularly those already marginalized by systemic oppression. Recognizing this hypocrisy and moral failure is what compelled me to join the encampment.

The Encampment: A Space of Solidarity and Healing

The encampment was a place of radical inclusivity and solidarity, arguably the most

inclusive space on campus. It was a place where generations of U of T community members and people from different backgrounds and faiths came together, united in their shared commitment to justice. It was also a sacred space—multi-faith in nature, with Muslim students holding prayer sessions, Jewish students hosting Shabbat dinners, and Indigenous caretakers tending to a sacred fire. This environment of mutual respect fostered deep interfaith dialogues, which stood in stark contrast to the university's divisive rhetoric.

Every participant who entered the encampment committed to the rules of zero tolerance for hate. This wasn't just a symbolic gesture—it was a lived commitment to empathy, understanding, and collective healing. For students and community members grieving the deaths of family members in Palestine, the encampment became a safe haven, a space to process their pain, to share their grief, and to demand justice. It was also a hub for learning, where knowledge about social justice, human rights, and systemic oppression was exchanged freely. The encampment wasn't just a protest—it was an act of resistance that challenged the university's complicity in systems of oppression.

Facing Danger and Harassment

One of the most eye-opening aspects of my time at the encampment was witnessing how hostile and dangerous the university could be to those who dared to speak out. We were under constant threat from counter-protesters, some of whom were openly violent. I witnessed firsthand the escalating levels of hate, targeted harassment, and even physical threats, including one counter-protester wielding a knife. Muslim students, staff and alumni were called terrorists. Jewish students, staff and alumni who supported the encampment were derided as "not real Jews." Black students, staff and alumni were called the N word. Indigenous students, staff and alumni were told to get out of this country and were called savages. Everyone faced a barrage of verbal abuse. Anti-LGBTQ rhetoric was rampant as well, and wishes of sexual violence.

For students and community members grieving the deaths of family members in Palestine, the encampment became a safe haven, a space to process their pain, to share their grief, and to demand justice.

These acts of hate were not random; they were emboldened by the university's criminalizing language about the encampment and its refusal to condemn the actions of those who sought to intimidate us. Even professors—people students are supposed to look to for guidance—were among those harassing and threatening students. The university never once issued a statement denouncing the harassment and violence against marginalized students, standing in solidarity with Palestine. This silence was not accidental. It paved the way for vigilantism, which continues to plague the campus to this day.

It is telling that even the Israeli newspaper Haaretz reported on far-right groups patrolling the University of Toronto this September, waving Kahane Chai flags and chanting slogans like "Let's make Gaza a parking lot." Despite this blatant show of far-right extremism, the university has remained silent.

A Legacy of Bravery and Resistance

Reflecting on how the encampment ended, I am filled with admiration for the students who, despite facing incredible pressure and violence, remained steadfast and non-violent. Their cause was grounded in justice, and their resilience in the face of adversity was nothing

short of extraordinary. The judge's ruling—that the encampment was neither antisemitic nor hateful—vindicated the students' struggle and exposed the university's moral failures for all to see.

In their final statement, the students declared, "We have torn away the mask of neutrality and revealed the ugly truth: the face of the University of Toronto is the face of genocide." This haunting declaration resonates deeply with me. It is now undeniable that the university prioritizes its financial and political relationships over the well-being of its students, staff, and the broader community. It has chosen to maintain appearances rather than confront the realities of oppression on its campus.

What I witnessed at the encampment was the power of people coming together in the face of injustice. I saw a community built on care, mutual aid, and radical empathy.

Photo caption from left to right 1) Occupy for Palestine members holding a flag that reads Occupation is Not My Judaism. Photo by Joshua Best. 2) Naomi Klein speaking at an event in front of Simcoe Hall to mark Shabbat in the Liberated Zone. Photo by Joshua Best.



Yet, in the face of this moral bankruptcy, a new community has emerged—a community where every individual’s rights, safety, and human dignity are respected. This is the legacy of the encampment. We may no longer physically occupy that space, but the values and solidarity forged there continue to shape our collective struggle for justice.

What I witnessed at the encampment was the power of people coming together in the face of injustice. I saw a community built on care, mutual aid, and radical empathy. This is the kind of world we should all be striving to create, a world where we stand for each other, where we resist the systems that seek to divide us, and where we fight for a future that is just, equitable, and free from oppression.

The university may continue to uphold its façade of neutrality, but for those of us who were part of the encampment and many others on campus who are supportive but too afraid to speak out, we know the truth. We will continue to fight for justice, both within the institution and beyond, because the struggle for human rights does not end with the dismantling of a physical encampment. It continues in our classrooms, our workplaces, and our communities. We will not be silenced.

Anonymous Staff Member

Editor’s note: The USW Local 1998 Executive issued [a statement](#), available on the local’s website, denouncing all attacks on innocent civilians and forms of racism, calling for a safe return of Israeli hostages, and an immediate ceasefire.

Throughout the encampment, the University issued several [community updates](#) about the encampment, affirming it would not act as an arbiter among competing positions on complex global issues, but rather work to create the conditions in which a diversity of viewpoints can be elaborated and expressed as part of civil discourse. It is in the spirit of promoting civil discourse on this and other difficult issues that Steel Drum publishes this article. We welcome submissions promoting alternate views.

This fall, the University’s Working Group on Civil Discourse is conducting consultations staff are encouraged to participate in. The Institutional Equity Offices have been conducting community check-ins and compiling resources to support staff impacted by the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, and elsewhere. Visit the [EDI in a Global Context](#) website to learn more.

3) Birds eye view of the U of T student encampment on May 28, 2024. Photo by Kristy Bard. 4) Occupy for Palestine members address the media as the U of T student encampment faces a forced conclusion. Photo by Jay Geerts



Victoria University Unit Report

Autumn 2024

In addition to fighting back against the University's attendance awareness program, the Union has been busy representing members in other situations, both outside and inside of the grievance procedure. The Union has also filed a number of policy grievances. Please see this issue's President's Report for a detailed report on the attendance program issue. Below is an update on active grievances.

Grievances Update

VC 2024-1 (Individual – failure to hire) This grievance was filed after the University interviewed a member who applied for a position in response to a job posting but deemed the applicant to be unqualified. Another element of this grievance is the decision of management to change one of the key terms of the job posting after interviews had been held. The University dismissed the grievance at step 2 of the grievance procedure. The Union has advanced the grievance to mediation/arbitration.

VC 2024-3 (Individual – improper implementation of management rights) This grievance was withdrawn at the request of the grievor.

VC 2024-4 (Individual – improper implementation of management rights) This grievance was filed when the University improperly demanded medical documentation. The University dismissed the grievance at step 2 of the grievance procedure. The Union has advanced the grievance to mediation/arbitration.

VC 2024-5 (Individual – failure to accommodate) This grievance was filed when the University refused to accommodate a member's medical situation. The University dismissed the grievance at step 2 of the grievance procedure. The Union has advanced the grievance to mediation/arbitration.

VC 2024-6 (Individual – failure to implement overtime) The grievance process was initiated at the informal step when the University directed a member to flex their hours so that the member was not eligible for overtime pay. The situation was resolved at the informal step, so the grievance was not filed.

VC 2024-7 (Policy – improper implementation of hours of work and overtime) This grievance was filed because management was directing members to flex their start or end times so that the members were not eligible for overtime pay. The Union presented its arguments at step 2. Later, the University made a preliminary settlement proposal for which they are due to provide more details.

VC 24-8 (Individual - Improper indefinite layoff) When a member's job was eliminated by management and they were issued an indefinite layoff letter, they filed this grievance.

VC 2024-9 (Policy – Improper implementation of management rights-absenteeism awareness program) Grievance VC 24-9 was filed in response to the University decision to implement their attendance awareness program. The grievance was withdrawn after the University officially ended the program.

VC 24-10 (Individual - Improper implementation of overtime) The informal step of the grievance procedure was implemented when management did not pay overtime wages to a member who worked extra hours in a shift that was split between two departments. The Union was successful in arguing that the determination of whether overtime wages are due depends on the total number of hours worked in a shift. When the University agreed to pay overtime, there was no need to file the grievance.

24-11 (Policy-Improper removal of duties from the bargaining unit) Grievance VC 24-11 was filed in response to information the Union learned during the grievance meetings that were held in relation to grievance.

24-12 (Individual - Improper removal of member from the bargaining unit duties from the bargaining unit) Grievance VC 24-11 was filed when the University changed the employment status of a member so that the member was no longer in the bargaining unit. The grievance was settled when management agreed to reinstate the member in the Union.

John Ankenman, Victoria University Unit President

THE KIDS ARE ALRIGHT: A LOOK AT CLIMATE JUSTICE U OF T



The effects of climate change are felt throughout the world and are becoming more intense as time wears on. In Canada alone, we're seeing whole swaths of land get destroyed by rampant wildfires and rainfall threatening to flood our cities. From ocean acidification and a potential gulf stream collapse to glaciers melting and tropical storms increasing in intensity, the fossil fuel industry's callous disregard for the environment is hard to ignore.

The big question being asked by many is what can be done to prevent a human caused extinction event. Solutions range from personal lifestyle changes to a worldwide mobilization against oil and gas companies, mining companies, and the meat industry. There are many ways to at least minimize the damage caused by climate change, and some are being pursued by the University of Toronto's own students.

Climate Justice UofT (CJUofT) is a new-and-improved version of an older student-run organization called LEAP, which successfully pressured UofT to divest from the fossil fuel industry. CJUofT emerged out of LEAP's shadow when it realized that UofT's federated universities - Victoria, Trinity, and St. Michael's - had separate finances from the rest of the main campus. Because of this technicality, they were not beholden to the U of T commitment to divest.

I spoke with CJUofT member Lilah about their activities and stated goals. CJUofT didn't stop at a sit-in at Victoria University and pressuring the other federated universities, but also pressured UofT to cut ties with

RBC, one of the Big Five Banks that support the fossil fuel industry. Pressure is also mounting from CJUofT's side to have the campus stop receiving research funding from oil and gas companies, as part of an initiative called Fossil Free Research.

"Broadly, our goal is just to get UofT to cut all of its ties with the fossil fuel industry," Lilah explained in a Zoom call. "Universities as institutions are



Climate Justice U of T students at a Banks Off Campus action, one of their current campaigns. Photo courtesy of CJUofT website.

pretty highly regarded in society, and produce a lot of research that shape the direction of our society and the decisions that are made in policy. By having ties with the [fossil fuel] industry, UofT and other universities are essentially legitimizing this industry and ignoring the harm that it causes.

“By getting UofT to publicly commit to disassociating from this industry in different ways, that removes social credit and legitimacy from this industry,” said Lilah.

The legitimacy of divesting as a strategy is often hotly-debated, even in UofT’s own periodicals like *The Varsity*. However, it has netted positive results in the past. UofT’s divestment from companies operating out of South Africa in the 1980s, for example, helped end apartheid in that country.

It’s not just the rally for divestment itself that matters to people, although CJUofT has grown significantly since its founding in 2021 – from a group of four to well over 200 members, including representatives from five faculties and seven colleges.

Lilah believes CJUofT’s public disruptions to be one of the reasons it has grown in size: “I think the biggest thing that makes people want to join CJUofT is seeing the actions that we do either in-person or on social media and being, like: ‘That’s cool. I want to do that as well.’ But also, post-2019, with the Climate Strikes, there is just a lot of energy around climate work. I think that was taken away a little bit with COVID, but it is now having a bit of a resurgence.”

It also matters that CJUofT is a student-run organization. Trying to change an institution’s ways from the inside can be taxing, as any union rep will tell you. Many old systems and structures and the individuals who prop them up can prevent or stifle meaningful change. Being a student organization, it relies on outside pressure to make the campus greener. If universities are a business, their students are essentially customers, and their voices will be louder than ours.

This isn’t to say that staff or instructors are exempt from the fight. A faculty, staff and student coalition called *Divestment and Beyond* is pushing to have the University Pension Plan cut ties with the

fossil fuel industry, and several of its members have been assisting CJUofT in their efforts. As this pension plan includes members from Queens, University of Guelph, and Trent, the fight includes representatives from those institutions as well.

As for what’s next, Lilah explained that further preventing the banks’ influence on the campus is on the horizon. “RBC does a lot of recruiting within Rotman and generally they run a lot of collaborative events and have a lot of ties to RBC. The Banks Off Campus campaign is dedicated to cutting those ties.”

And from there, Lilah fully expects CJUofT to keep growing. “Climate change is really a top-of-mind issue for young people and folks who are here who want to have a career doing climate action work or are studying climate change in various ways. A lot of people want to not only learn about it in a classroom but also do something in the real world to contribute to climate action.”

To learn more about Climate Justice UofT, visit their website at: <https://www.cjuoft.com/>

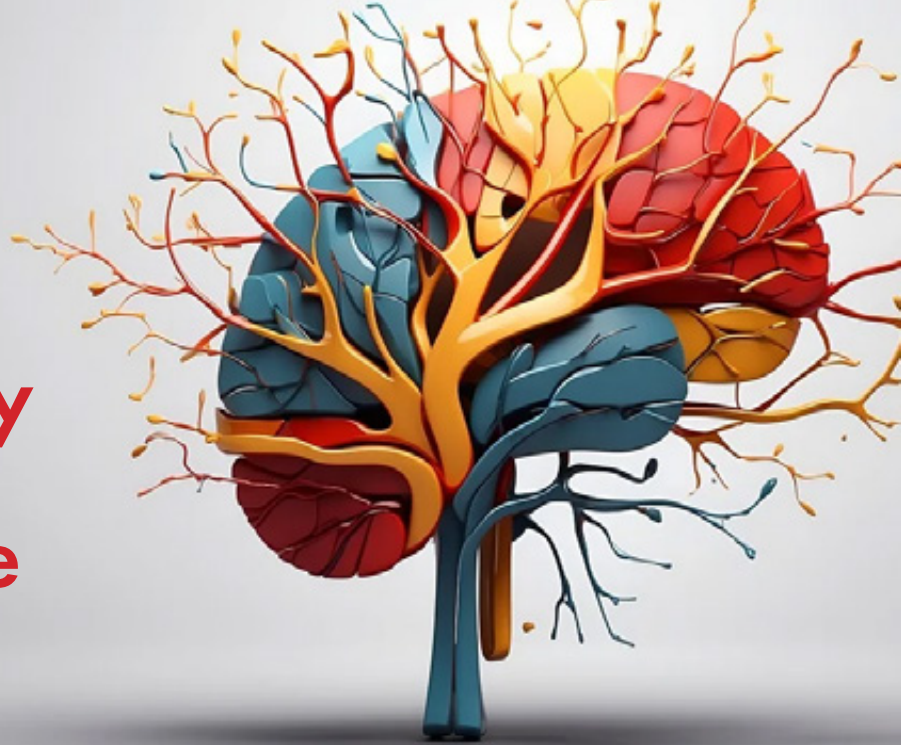
You can also learn more about *Divestment & Beyond* at <https://divestmentandbeyonduoft.wordpress.com/> and through *United Troublemakers Against Mendacity*: <https://utam.ca/>

Robert Iveniuk, School of Continuing Studies

By getting UofT to publicly commit to disassociating from this industry in different ways, that removes social credit and legitimacy from this industry



Enhancing Neurodiversity Initiatives in the Workplace



In pursuit of self-actualization, individuals seek purpose and fulfillment in their vocation. Employment is integral in shaping our identity by fostering financial independence, competency development, enhancement of self-esteem, and a sense of belonging through relationship building.

Unfortunately, many neurodivergent people encounter barriers to employment, despite research indicating its positive influence on their well-being and quality of life (Davies et al., 2023). Of the millions of Canadians with one or more limiting disabilities (Government of Canada, 2023), a significant percentage have neurocognitive differences categorized under autism spectrum disorder (ASD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), dyslexia, Tourette syndrome, dyspraxia, and other neurological conditions or learning disabilities. The emerging social model of neurodiversity raises awareness of neurominorities, who are often unemployed, underemployed, and underrepresented in the labour market. Only 33% of adults with ASD were employed, compared to 79% of their neurotypical peers (PHAC, 2020). A survey by auticon Canada and Deloitte revealed that 41.7% of autistic adults were employed part-time, in contrast to 18.4% of all employed Canadians, while also experiencing higher employment turnover (Deloitte Canada, 2022). These figures reflect the limited understanding and

misperception of neurodivergence, along with a lack of adequate accessibility accommodations in the workplace. To mitigate bias, explicit or unconscious, employers can provide opportunities to develop understanding and build empathy for neurodiversity. The more we know about the associated strengths and potential challenges, the better we can promote equity and inclusion among individuals who are neurodivergent.

Using knowledge as a guiding tool, organizations optimize recruitment through equitable job postings that include an accommodation statement, direct language, less emphasis on social-emotional skills, and information on the work environment. Postings that reflect representation in company branding, and insight into their diverse culture and inclusive practices, resonate with neurodivergent candidates. Highlighting shared values will cultivate a sense of belonging, demonstrating the company's willingness to support neurodivergent employees and leverage their strengths within a mutually beneficial framework. To encourage applications, companies could develop a streamlined application process with simple steps, varied formats, and multiple submission methods to reduce cognitive load and enhance accessibility.

Providing interview accommodations demonstrates commitment to equity by enabling neurodivergent candidates to showcase their knowledge and skills. Accommodations include flexible scheduling, alternative interview methods, assistive technology, written questions, different types of questions, and opportunities for feedback. Effective communication enables employers to identify accommodation needs and conduct comprehensive interviews that emphasize candidate qualifications.

Onboarding a neurodivergent employee may require teams to tailor their communication and adopt accommodating learning styles that enhance employee engagement. During orientation, supervisors can review initiatives aimed at supporting neurodivergent staff, share relevant resources, facilitate peer mentoring, and implement specialized training. The employee may request work arrangements related to scheduling, environmental adjustments, task modification, sensory-friendly practices, and regular communication with clarity. Working closely with employees and neurodiversity consultants, companies can establish optimal work conditions. These open feedback channels, along with ongoing mentoring and inclusive team-building activities, support social integration and improve retention rates. Companies ensure employees feel valued when acknowledging diverse perspectives and skills, while supervisors determine how individual strengths promote self-growth and elevate company performance.

Employing neurodivergent individuals offers numerous benefits. Their distinct viewpoints and diverse range of abilities are conducive to quality output that results in increased productivity. As employers advocate for neurodiversity, it is important to be mindful that neurodivergence comes in many forms and can be non-apparent. Furthermore, employees may not disclose their neurodivergence or request accommodation. Fostering a nurturing environment that prioritizes comfort and openness empowers neurodivergent employees to take the lead on meaningful approaches that have a lasting impact.

*Mikael Ahmad - EDIA & Employment
Coordinator, UTSC Arts & Science Co-op*

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Bill 190 – How proposed changes affect USW Local 1998 members



On May 6, 2024, the Ontario government introduced Bill 190, Working for Workers Five Act, which is the latest in a series of bills designed to help Ontario workers enter the skilled trades, remove barriers to employment, improve health and safety for frontline workers, support women at work, and increase fairness for job seekers and employees. The previous four Working for Workers Acts received royal assent between 2021 and 2024.

Bill 190 received Royal Assent on October 29, 2024 and is now in effect in Ontario. It amends several Ontario statutes including the Employment Standards Act (ESA) and the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA). These changes may have varied impacts on workers covered by existing collective agreements.

Some highlights of Bill 190 that may be relevant to USW Local 1998 members include:

- Enabling alternative pathways for Ontario workers to enter the skilled trades, such as through prior professional experience. Previously, workers seeking to register as an apprentice had to meet certain academic entry requirements.
- Allowing for the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) and other required health and safety documents to be posted in readily accessible electronic format. Previously, only hard copies of documents were accepted.
- Officially recognizing that joint health and safety committee meetings can be held virtually.
- Incorporating asbestos-related data into the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development's (MLITSD) upcoming occupational exposure registry in an effort to prevent future asbestos-related illnesses.

- Updating the definition of harassment to include protection against virtual harassment, including virtual sexual harassment.
- Prohibiting employers from requiring a worker to provide a sick note issued by a medical professional for a worker's job-protected unpaid sick leave due to personal illness, injury, or medical emergency under the Employment Standards Act (e.g., the three unpaid sick days Ontario workers are now entitled to each year). However, employers can still request another form of evidence that is reasonable in the circumstances, such as an attestation. This aspect of the Bill does not apply to the sick leave provisions of our local's Staff Appointed, Casual, Victoria University, St. Michael's College and University of Toronto Schools units. That is because those sick leave provisions provide a greater benefit than the three unpaid sick days provided for in the Employment Standards Act. If a Casual Unit member takes an unpaid sick shift after using up their three paid sick shifts, this aspect of Bill 190 might apply to the unpaid sick shift. The Union will seek legal advice on this question.
- Employers who advertise a publicly listed job posting must disclose whether the position is for an existing vacancy or not, and must provide a response to applicants that they have interviewed for the job.
- Starting October 1, 2024, the minimum wage in Ontario will increase from \$16.55 per hour to \$17.20 per hour.

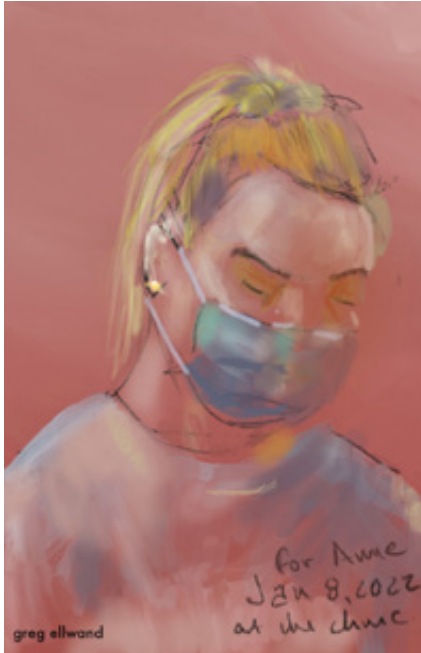
To review the full list of Bill 190 amendments: https://www.ola.org/sites/default/files/node-files/bill/document/pdf/2024/2024-05/b190_e.pdf

For a summary of the proposed amendments in Bill 190: <https://news.ontario.ca/en/backgrounder/1004537/working-for-workers-five-act-2024>

Ronald Ng, Environmental Health and Safety



Standardized Patients Supporting VACCINATION EFFORTS DURING THE PANDEMIC



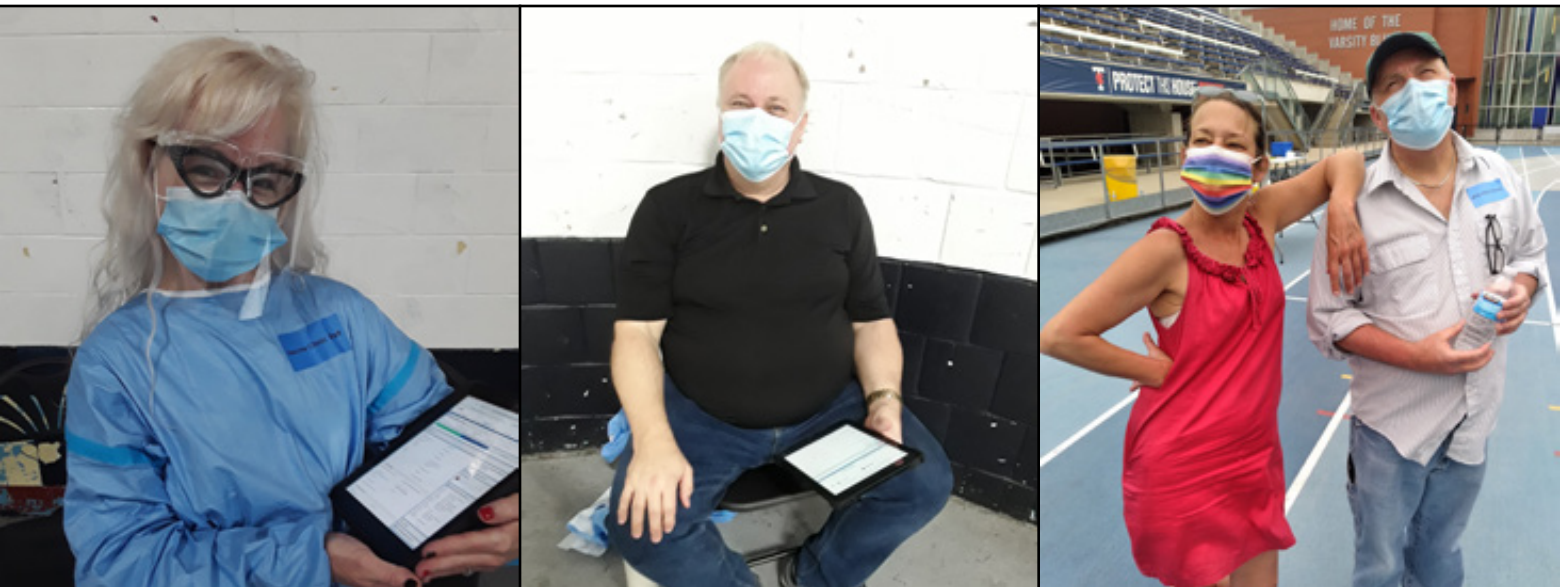
Sketches by Greg Ellwand of Barb Sybal (right) and Anne Noble (left), SPs working at the vaccination clinic.

In March of 2021, at the height of the COVID 19 pandemic scourge, the government started to ramp up vaccinations for the population across the country. The University of Toronto's Temerty Faculty of Medicine joined this endeavour in partnership with the University Health Network, transforming the 255 McCaul Street Exam Center into a COVID 19 Vaccination Centre. The McCaul Street Vaccination Centre was staffed by doctors, nurses, pharmacists and standardized patients (SPs) who served as support staff. All standardized patients (SPs) are members of the USW Local 1998 Casual Unit. They work for the Standardized Patient Program (SPP), a division of the Temerty Faculty of Medicine.

SPs perform simulations of medical illnesses for the training of medical and pharmacy students. At the vaccination centre, the pharmacist administered and allocated the strictly controlled vaccines for dosing. While the doctors and the nurses performed the actual vaccinations, SPs contributed in a support staff capacity, screening

all clients who entered for their scheduled vaccination appointments. This included confirming clients registered with their ID for the vaccine appointments. SPs also oversaw the check in of clients by utilizing the COVAVIN system with an iPad. This health care software portal was able to accurately track everyone's vaccination history.

At the McCaul Street Vaccination Centre, when everyone arrived for work in the morning, the head doctor and head nurse would hold a "huddle" where the vaccination team would assemble to receive important vaccination information in a daily briefing. This included how many people had registered that day to receive a vaccine, how many vaccines were available, if there would be any "Add On's", and how many based on available supply. "Add On's" were individuals that were not registered for a vaccine that day, but still allowed one in the event there were surplus vaccines available. This meant that no left-over supplies of the tightly controlled



From right to left: SPs Bonny Giroux-Hornick, Ron Allain, Jennifer Shultz and John Warwick assisting with U of T's vaccination efforts. Photos by Scott Eldridge

vaccines would be wasted. Also discussed at the "huddle" would be the type of COVID 19 vaccines that would be administered that day, at the time either /or both Moderna or Pfizer, and what time the last dosing would be scheduled. After the staff huddle, everyone would file off to their assigned workstation for that day.

Some of the interesting aspects of the vaccination clinic was how well everyone worked together along with the tremendous esprit de corps. The vaccination centre was a very effective operation and made every effort to vaccinate everyone that walked through the door. Illustrating this point was the way new Canadian refugee claimants would be registered to be vaccinated. The SPs would perform the "Check In" on iPads, via COVAXIN. The only identification that the refugee claimants had was their Canadian government issued refugee status certificate and number. This was one of the ways that the vaccination clinic performed that always impressed the SPs. No matter what the individual's status was on registration at the clinic, every effort was made by the vaccination staff to ensure that this individual was able to receive a COVID 19 vaccination.

Wednesday, July 22, 2021, was a very special day at the vaccination clinic. On this date the 25,000th person was vaccinated at the clinic - a monumental achievement for everyone working there.

In addition to working out of the McCaul Street location, the SPs were involved as support staff at several satellite pop up vaccination clinics organized by the Temerty Faculty of Medicine and the University Health Network. The SPs operated at Albion Arena for several pop clinics, Varsity Arena and at two high school auditorium pop up clinics.

60 SPs were employed at the McCaul Street Vaccination Centre from March to September 2021 and December 2021 to February 2022. The McCaul Street Vaccination Centre closed on Wednesday, February 2nd, 2022, with the building's space returned to its former glory as the U of T Exam Centre. USW 1998 is proud of the contributions of our SP members during the pandemic.

On July 7, 2022, many of the SPs returned to 255 McCaul Street for a special reception held for the unveiling of SP Greg Ellwand's sketches of the health care workers he created during his time as a front-line worker there. Many of Greg's sketches are displayed on the exam centres walls, offering an indelible visual reminder to the essential effort that was carried out there by the healthcare workers and SP's during the pandemic.

*Gary Horenkamp and Scott Eldridge,
Standardized Patient Program*

USW 1998 Happenings

Photos by: USW Local 1998



St. Michael's College Unit members show their union solidarity at a Local 1998 ice cream pop-up event at USMC in Toronto on June 4, 2024.



Brando Paris of USW SOAR District 6 and Mary-Marta Briones-Bird, USW Local 1998's Job Evaluation Coordinator, greet members at Local 1998's annual luncheon for retirees at United Steelworkers Hall in Toronto on June 18, 2024.



Tamara Vickery, USW Local 1998's Vice-President congratulates member Marlyn De Los Reyes at Local 1998's annual luncheon for retirees on June 18, 2024.



A raffle winner shows off their prize at Local 1998's annual Summer Social at United Steelworkers Hall in Toronto on June 12, 2024.



Margaret Bucknam, USW Local 1998's Outreach and Communication Coordinator, poses with member Victoria Simpson at Local 1998's annual luncheon for retirees on June 18, 2024.



Colleen Burke, USW Staff Representative, poses with member Halyna Sydorenko at Local 1998's annual luncheon for retirees on June 18, 2024.



Members from U of T's Faculty of Applied Science and Engineering enjoy soft serve cones at a Local 1998 ice cream pop-up event on U of T's St. George Campus in Toronto on August 14, 2024.



Members from UTSC enjoy a barbecue lunch at Local 1998's annual Summer Social in Scarborough on June 26, 2024.



John Ankenman, USW Local 1998's President shares a laugh with members from UTIAS at Local 1998's annual Summer Social at U of T's Institute for Aerospace Studies in North York on September 26, 2024.



Members from UTM pose with their union solidarity items at Local 1998's annual Summer Social in Mississauga on September 13, 2024.



Members enjoy a cold treat on a hot day at a Local 1998 ice cream pop-up event on U of T's St. George Campus in Toronto on August 8, 2024.



Members from UTM enjoy a barbecue lunch at Local 1998's annual Summer Social in Mississauga on September 13, 2024.



Scott Eldridge, USW Local 1998's Casual Unit President, and Meredith Rappaport, USW Local 1998's Events Coordinator, participate in a session at the Canadian Association of Labour Media Conference in Edmonton on June 6, 2024.



Mark Austin, USW Local 1998's Health and Safety Coordinator and Executive Committee Recording Secretary, presents at the USW Justice Conference in Gatineau on October 4, 2024.



Richard Waters, USW Local 1998's Technical Coordinator and Treasurer, accepts the "Best Publication" award on behalf of the Local's Communication Committee at the Canadian Association of Labour Media conference in Edmonton on June 8, 2024.



Member Lanny Soenaryo and their guest attend Local 1998's annual luncheon for retirees on June 18, 2024.



Members from UTM pose with frozen treats at a Local 1998 ice cream pop-up event in Mississauga on July 30, 2024.



A raffle winner shows off their prize at Local 1998's annual Summer Social at United Steelworkers Hall in Toronto on June 12, 2024.



Members from UTSC pose with their union solidarity items at Local 1998's annual Summer Social in Mississauga on June 26, 2024.



A member from UTIAS enjoys the barbecue at Local 1998's annual Summer Social at U of T's Institute for Aerospace Studies in North York on September 26, 2024.



Member Sonia Hopwood and their guests pose for a photo at Local 1998's annual luncheon for retirees on June 18, 2024.



Victoria University Unit members gather at a Local 1998 ice cream pop-up event on the Victoria University campus in Toronto on September 27, 2024



Jake Pereira, USW Local 1998's Residence Dons Unit President, and Dons Unit members show their union solidarity at a Local 1998 ice cream pop-up event on U of T's St. George Campus in Toronto on August 14, 2024. (Way to represent, Innis College!)



Tamara Vickery, USW Local 1998's Vice-President and, John Ankenman, USW Local 1998's President enjoy Local 1998's annual Summer Social at United Steelworkers Hall in Toronto on June 12, 2024.



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If you want to contribute to the next issue, please
email submissions to kbard@usw1998.ca by
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