



## The success

of our health and safety activists will ultimately be measured by their ability to utilize our traditional tools of organizing and mobilizing for improvement in the health and safety conditions in Canadian workplaces. These improvements can only be achieved by union health and safety activists who are dedicated to organizing and mobi-

lizing members around campaigns for stronger legislation, effective enforcement and increased authority to workers to ensure their workplaces are free from all occupational illness, disease and hazards.

**PRODUCED BY THE  
Working Group of  
Component Health and Safety Activists  
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Saskatchewan Government and  
General Employees' Union

Manitoba Government and  
General Employees' Union

Ontario Public Service  
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Canadian Union of Brewery  
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New Brunswick Union of Public  
and Private Employees

Nova Scotia Government and  
General Employees Union

P.E.I. Union of Public  
Sector Employees

Newfoundland & Labrador  
Association of Public Employees



# LET'S FINISH THE JOB!

**ORGANIZING  
FOR ACTION  
ON HEALTH  
AND SAFETY**



**WE WON**

OUR STRUGGLE TO CREATE  
OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND  
SAFETY LAWS AND REGULATIONS.

**WE HAVE NOT YET WON**

THE STRUGGLE TO MAKE  
THOSE LAWS WORK FOR US ALL.

**IT'S TIME**

WE FINISHED THE JOB.

# In every

single jurisdiction in Canada, workers are now protected by a workplace health and safety legislative framework developed in the late 70s and early 80s. As a result of the hard work and determination of health and safety activists throughout Canada, legislation in every jurisdiction now gives working people three basic rights to help obtain safe and healthy workplaces:

- the right to know;
- the right to participate; and
- the right to refuse unsafe work.

These three basic rights, however, are far from enough to ensure that workers are no longer killed or injured on the job. We have a 1000 work related deaths every year and a million workers are injured each year.

What's needed is a comprehensive approach to workplace health and safety, which includes:

- expanded health and safety legislation;
- a much stronger enforcement mechanism in health and safety legislation; and
- a joint workplace health and safety committee system which sees enforcement and organizing of workers around health and safety issues as their dual priorities.

## EXPANDED

Health and safety legislation must be expanded beyond the three basic health and safety rights.

We need up-to-date legislation to include:

- decision making powers for joint workplace health and safety committees;
- the right of health and safety workers' representatives to shut down unsafe work without loss of pay to affected workers; and
- regulations that address new and growing employment sectors — updated regulations to control exposure to toxic substances, regulations which address workplace stress, violence in the workplace, repetitive strain injuries and other musculoskeletal injuries.

## EFFECTIVE

Working people must have a clear and more effective enforcement mechanism within the current health and safety legislation. The basic principles for an improved legislative enforcement are:

- It must be designed and operated to give a clear message that violations of our health and safety laws and endangerment of workers will not be tolerated. The system must be based on two operating principles: violators will be caught and penalized and the cost of violating the law will be greater than the cost of compliance;

- There must be an expansion of government's inspection role — this will require that the inspectorate be staffed to full complement and more;
- Inspectors must be highly

- visible, be given a clear role and mandate, not be subject to political interference;
- Enforcement tools must provide inspectors with the means to have an immediate impact;
- The penalty system must be instituted and implemented that is speedy and not easily circumvented; and
- Employer gross negligence that leads to injury and death must be dealt with under criminal law.

## COMMITTED

We need a workplace committee system committed to organizing.

There's no question that Joint Workplace Health and Safety Committees (JWHSC) have been effective in educating management and workers about occupational health and safety hazards. Many JWHSC's have had success at identifying occupational hazards and developed policies and procedures aimed at preventing workplace injuries and sickness.

But, the JWHSC process alone, will not solve health and safety problems.

This will only happen when workers who participate on JWHSC's have equal influence and equal authority with employers to demand health and safety changes and to shut down unsafe workplaces.

Joint Committees are no substitute for vigorous government enforcement. JWHSC's must be seen by workers as a forum for negotiation and education around health and safety issues, while the union remains the workers' key instrument for solving problems.

