

STEELDRUM

USW1998 NEWSMAGAZINE

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CASUAL UNIT

Inside the SteelDrum:

*Casual Unit bargaining results
(see President's Message)*

*2023 International Women of
Steel Conference Report*

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Our Local's collective bargaining schedule continues to unfold. In February, our Casual Unit members ratified a new collective agreement that provides for substantial increases to the minimum wage, historically high across-the-board wage increases over three years and other significant improvements. For the first time the Unit's minimum wage is above the provincial rate. In the first year of the new contract, the hourly minimum wage rate is \$18 and will increase to \$19 on July 1, and then to \$20 on July 1, 2025. Members whose pay is above the minimum hourly rate but not tied to the Staff-Appointed pay grid will receive wage increases of 9% in the first year of the contract, 2% in the second year and 1.8% in the third year. Other improvements include an additional paid sick shift each year, the August Civic Holiday added to the list of paid holidays, a total of \$150,000 paid into the Unit's Casual Benefit Fund and expanded steward and negotiating committee representation.

Negotiations for a new contract for our members in the University of Toronto Schools (UTS) Unit have also wrapped up. The fact that UTS is a private school that is not funded by U of T or the provincial government creates a unique context

in which the union negotiating team collectively bargains compared to our Local's other units. Our UTS members ratified a tentative agreement that provides for a three-year contract with wage increases of 9% retroactive to July 1, 2023, 2.5% on July 1, 2024 and 2.5% on July 1, 2025. Other monetary improvements include an extra personal day to be used for faith or heritage celebrations and improvements to health care benefits. Non-monetary improvements include language that strengthens job security, the request process for alternative work arrangements and the process for addressing workload concerns. There is also new language that clarifies and codifies the membership's right to not volunteer for unpaid co-curricular activities.


UTM Dons and Community Assistants are now officially a part of the Dons bargaining unit. The tentative agreement the UTM Dons and Community Assistants ratified in April includes a \$500 per month stipend for Dons, a \$450 per month stipend for Community Assistants, \$500 for the August training session and \$500 for the Community Assistants' June training session. The taxable housing benefit structure negotiated for USW Dons on the St. George campus will now be used at UTM. This will lead to income tax and other compulsory deductions that are incurred by UTM Dons and Community Assistants because of the taxable housing benefit to be more predictable and transparent. There are several non-monetary improvements in the contract, including language that allows Dons to be anywhere on campus while they are on call. We will have another opportunity to be back at the bargaining table when negotiations for the full Dons unit take place in late 2024 and early 2025.

The University of St. Michael's College unit rounds out our 2024 negotiating schedule. We have given written notice to the University of our intention to negotiate a renewal contract to

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replace the current collective agreement which expires on July 1. The USW negotiating team of Steven Craig, Eugenio De Torres and Astrida Ezergailis; our Staff Representative, Colleen Burke; and I will lead bargaining priorities consultations with the membership so that we can prepare our bargaining proposals during the next few months and be ready to negotiate with the administration. The Union will also meet with the St. Mike's administration to negotiate the terms under which the University's pension plan would move into the University Pension Plan (UPP) if that action is ratified by the St. Mike's employee community.

As we move into warmer weather, the staff working in the Local 1998 office are gearing up for the union social events that are a staple of the summer months. In June we will once again be hosting a luncheon for our members who have retired during the past year. June, July and August will see opportunities for members to gather for solidarity meals and ice cream events. Our Vice-President, Tamara Vickery, and I look forward to welcoming you to these and other events.



John Ankenman, USW 1998 President

Cover images taken of casual members at Casual Unit bargaining pop-ups across campus. Images by Margaret Bucknam and Scott Eldridge

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Know Your Power: 2023 USW International Women of Steel Conference



WoS delegates at University of Pittsburgh rally. Front row, left to right: Katrina Marshall, Andria Lewis -Alexander, Sarah Stiller, Fatima Ijaz. Back row, left to right: Liesl Joson, Adonica Huggins, Megan Janssen, Rabia Nasir, Rutendo Mukwekwezeke, Ruxandra Pop. Missing from photo: Nawesa Bollers, Andrea Burton, Malisa Zhou. Photo by U of Pitt staff member.

“Know Your Power” was the theme of the October 23-26, 2023, USW International Women of Steel (WoS) Conference that took place in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Thirteen USW 1998 women had an amazing opportunity to attend this conference where many skill-building workshops were offered relating to issues faced by the women of USW. Together, in solidarity, we were encouraged to use the power of being ourselves and honing our skills, while using

our voice to help fellow union members. This article will reflect the experiences of some of the delegates as they attended workshops covering topics such as murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls, difficult conversations, and building solidarity.

Katrina Marshall, Faculty of Dentistry

Epidemic of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

This session brought people from all walks of life and all over Turtle Island together to learn about the ongoing crisis. Since the 1980's, thousands of Indigenous people have gone missing or have been murdered. The number of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada is disproportionately high; Indigenous women are 12% more likely to go missing or murdered than white women, and while they represent 4% of all women, they make up 16% of all homicide victims. Victims go underreported and their circumstances are poorly investigated - if investigated at all - because these women are undervalued or ignored due to stereotyping. Our governments have repeatedly failed Indigenous communities on issues like this.

One of our USW sisters in this session shared that just three weeks earlier, a 14-year-old in their community had disappeared. It is clear this is an ongoing problem, causing extraordinary harm. USW is involved in lobbying for Indigenous rights and supporting the Native Women's Association of Canada with the goal of improving the lives of Indigenous Peoples. While there is space for hope, there is so much work to do to end this horrific violence - and every one of us must play a role in making change.

Actions we can take:

1. Wear a [red dress](#) pin every day and talk about this crisis with family, friends and colleagues.
2. Take the ["Unionism on Turtle Island"](#) course.
3. Learn more with the [Native Women's Association of Canada Fact Sheet](#).
4. Read the Executive Summary of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, titled [Reclaiming Power and Place](#).
5. Celebrate the strength of Indigenous life and joy. Support Indigenous businesses, experiences, and programs in your community.

Megan Janssen, UTM English and Drama

Indigenous women are 12% more likely to go missing or murdered than white women, and while they represent 4% of all women, they make up 16% of all homicide victims.

Recognizing our Privilege

It is not common for a Black woman to speak of her privilege but, while at the WoS Conference, I could not help but feel a duality between myself and most of my sisters who work in various fields. I was initially met with the discomfort of this "privilege" when International WoS Director, Randie Pearson, gave her opening speech. She shared the story of her beginning to work at age 23 in the same refinery her father and grandfather had worked in. She shared some of the challenges she had to face but I was particularly struck when she shared that she had to fight for her and the other women to have

WoS delegates at a rally in support of University of Pittsburgh staff. Photo by Liesl Joson.





USW1998 WoS delegates. Left to right: Sarah Stiller, Liesl Josen, Andrea Burton. Photo by Sarah Stiller.

their own bathrooms and change rooms. This experience was completely unfathomable to me. I also met and talked with another “Andrea” who works in a plant in Saskatoon, making potash. Admittedly, I had never heard of potash before and asked her to explain it to me. She then shared some of the workplace challenges that she and her colleagues have to deal with and why the union is so important to them. Again, I was uncomfortable. As I went through the conference and sat in the sessions, or had lunch

My discomfort was a great learning opportunity for me.

with women, or while walking down the street in conversation with my union sisters, I sat in the space of feeling the very stark difference between those of us who work in university/corporate spaces and those who work in plants, factories, and mills.

My main takeaway was how privileged I am to work at the University of Toronto. I have been able to serve the U of T community in various ways that have positively shaped me professionally and personally. Conversely, I have also often experienced painful instances of racism and misogyny in the same space that has been so positive. That is not to say that we do not deal with challenges in white-collar settings. We do. I, however, felt the tension of having to triage my emotions among women talking about what I thought were basic and universal provisions. My discomfort was a great learning opportunity for me. I had conversations with some of the women from our Local about how we could support our USW sisters. There is much work to be done, but this may be the first step.

Andrea Burton, USW Local 1998 Grievance Officer



USW 1998 delegates at the USW WoS Conference in Pittsburgh, PA on October 25, 2023. Left to right: Fatima Ijaz, Nawesa Bollers, Adonica Huggins. Photo contributed by Adonica Huggins.

The Problem with US-focused Content at an International Conference

After attending *Working for More Racial Justice*, I was left thinking about the importance for workshop facilitators to recognize the differences in their audience, not just in terms of race but also where one comes from. The Canadian and American lenses are very different and when choosing facilitators, it is important to have representation from both regions. In this session, the facilitators apologized for their privilege the whole time. This did not leave me feeling empowered because the apologies only triggered emotions for me in terms of the lack of knowledge in presenting subject matter on race, geography, and equity in the workspace.

These workshops allowed me to meet other members from different locals and connecting on that level was fantastic. However, as a Canadian member, the majority of workshops were focused on US content. One workshop on pay equity left

the US members feeling frustrated because the two Canadian facilitators could answer nothing pertaining to the US context on measures that could be taken to achieve equity. Frustrations arose because lived experiences in the workplace came into discussion and facilitators focused on excuses and apologies for their white privilege. While Canadian and American experiences in the workspace are somewhat different, they are unfortunately the same for marginalized employees, and this includes issues around pay equity.

To put things into perspective, hearing members' views helped me recognize that our experiences are quite different, and globally, our conversations are also different. Overall, my takeaway is there are gaps to be filled for us as members, but I am also thankful for the many wins that we have had as a Local.

Andria Lewis-Alexander, Scarborough Student Life

Pressuring Management Through Solidarity

In the pursuit of wins, I attended this workshop, and I was not at all disappointed! It was facilitated by a USW Strategic Campaigns Staff who was extremely experienced in developing and participating in direct action to build workplace solidarity in the face of labour disputes. It also had the impact of greatly irritating management, powerless to stop the activities. Some of the many great ideas she shared with the large, packed room included:

- "Solidarity Tuesdays", opportunities for members to wear coordinated USW clothing, accessories, stickers – or pyjamas (!) – to outwardly support a grieving member with a hearing that day;

- Community advocacy, in which members approach neighbouring businesses to ask to put USW signs in their windows – especially but not limited to when we're in bargaining;
- And the more escalated action was outdoor projection activism – what message would YOU like to see projected onto Simcoe Hall 24 / 7???

Adonica Huggins, Student Engagement

**Outdoor projection activism –
what message would YOU like
to see projected onto Simcoe
Hall 24 / 7???**



USW1998 WoS delegates Rutendo Mukwekweze and Andria Lewis-Alexander at University of Pittsburgh rally. Photo by Liesl Joson.

Having Difficult Conversations

A part of life that is very difficult but often unavoidable is having a conversation with the people in our lives about a sensitive topic. When we come to the table to talk to management, those conversations can be uncomfortable. I was therefore very happy to attend one of the workshops that sought to address this issue by imparting tools to attendees on how to have these difficult conversations and identify the best time to engage. Workshop attendees were asked to identify some difficult conversations, provide some examples of how people typically reacted to the difficult conversation and finally, after engaging, identify times when it was best to politely end the conversation.

Some examples of difficult conversations shared by attendees included addressing performance issues, inappropriate behaviour, personal hygiene in the workplace, and conversations around death and bereavement. The steps shared are simple but effective tools that left me feeling more empowered to initiate a difficult conversation. They also allowed me to be open-minded when on the receiving end of the difficult conversation by recognizing that it's not easy for either party to address a sensitive issue.

Rutendo Mukwekweze, Faculty of Arts & Science

Persuasive Storytelling

In a similar vein, it's also important to know how to structure conversations. In my experience, the workplace can be difficult and intimidating to navigate as a NextGen member (aged 35 and under). It is hard not to give into the voice of doubt when surrounded by many colleagues who hold many more years of experience than you. Young adults such as myself often feel overlooked, discredited, and not taken seriously due to their age. For these reasons, the Persuasive Storytelling workshop was especially important as it taught the skills to transform regular speech into a powerful tool to convey information, persuade others, and to establish your own brand and identity. Storytelling as a tool, when used effectively, can create space for individuals to express themselves and validate their own opinions and experiences. Not only is persuasive storytelling a highly transferable skill, it also allows young adults in the workplace to find their voices and build the confidence to engage in productive and meaningful conversations with their colleagues.

Malisa Zhou, UTM Institute for the Study of University Pedagogy



Storytelling as a tool, when used effectively, can create space for individuals to express themselves and validate their own opinions and experiences

Closing Plenary

Randie Pearson brought enthusiasm and authenticity to her emcee duties as she led attendees through a two-hour online closing plenary session where delegates from Districts 5, 6, 9, 11 and 12 shared incredible stories of victory that garnered support, while reminding us of all the work that lies ahead. We heard from sisters who spoke proudly of the initiatives their WoS committees are undertaking to improve their local communities; sisters who are engaging in WoS leadership training while ensuring that their union sisters rise with them; and sisters who are winning necessary health and safety protections in their workplaces, such as proper fitting PPE, separate women's change rooms, and private lactation spaces.

Adriane Paavo, Head of the Education & Equality Department (Canadian National Office), reminded us about the [*Raising the Bar on Women's Health and Safety campaign*](#) which arose out of the USW 2019 National Policy Conference, where a resolution about this issue was passed unanimously. While some of us may be familiar with Raising the Bar, we need to ensure that our Steelworker sisters across Canada, the U.S., Latin America and beyond have access to education and resources to continue to secure health and safety provisions.

It was heartening to hear from USW leadership, namely Marty Warren, National Director for Canada, and Dave McCall, International President. McCall spoke of achieving important

gains, such as domestic violence protections and parental leave in the U.S. He stated that excluding or not promoting women within our union is like fighting with one hand tied behind one's back. Warren reminded us to fight back against the persistent, harmful attacks on the 2SLGBTQIA+ community and reproductive rights. He reiterated that closing the [*gender pay gap*](#)—which is greater for members of the BIPOC/2SLGBTQIA+ communities—remains an important priority. Warren expressed his solidarity when he stated, "I want to be the best ally for Women of Steel."

Chelsea Olar, a Métis sister from Local 2251 in Sault Ste. Marie, courageously recounted her painful experience of being sexually assaulted in the workplace at the age of 25, and her journey to regaining her confidence and self-worth. Olar facilitated two conference workshops on the Epidemic of Missing and Murdered Women



Now that we know our individual power, it is time to harness our collective power to make change for working women in our Local, in our communities and around the globe.



USW District 6 International Women's Conference 2023 delegates. Photo courtesy of United Steelworkers Flickr album.

and Girls, but overwhelming interest meant that many delegates were not able to participate. The wrap-up provided an opportunity to listen to Olar speak powerfully about our individual and collective responsibilities to help end the epidemic of MMIWG2S+.

Overall, the closing plenary reflected the wide range of issues we face as women in the workplace. As other WoS delegates have described, there was a certain hyperawareness throughout the conference of the striking differences among the physical, racial, geographical, political, and social environments in which Canadian, American and Latin American USW sisters work. While most of our Local's work in the education sector could not be more

different than work in industrial settings, WoS share much common ground. The many victories are a testament to women and our unique ability to build bridges by setting aside differences and rolling up our sleeves when there is work to do. Now that we know our individual power, it is time to harness our collective power to make change for working women in our Local, in our communities and around the globe.

Liesl Joson, USW Local 1998 Job Evaluation & Pay Equity Analyst



U of T students participating in the Winter 2023 Climate Strike. Photo by Mika Logue

University Pension Plan (UPP) Still Refusing to Commit to Fossil Fuel Divestment

Editor's note: The following [op-ed was published](#) in The Varsity after both the U of T Faculty Association (UTFA) and the United Steelworkers (USW) Local 1998 passed motions calling for UPP management to implement an immediate screen on any new investments in oil and gas and announce a rapid timeline for complete divestment. See sidebar for the text of the USW motion

On February 14, [Climate Justice U of T \(CJ UofT\)](#) launched a campaign to push the University Pension Plan (UPP) to stop investing staff and faculty retirement savings in fossil fuels. Concerned faculty and staff have been advocating for divestment since the inception of the UPP, and we stand in solidarity with this student UPP divestment campaign. Students should care about this issue, because it's their tuition fees that partially fund the UPP. Students should not be bankrolling the destruction of their own futures, and it is abhorrent to us that our compensation packages are complicit in the continued financing of oil and gas.

When [U of T faculty and staff](#) voted in 2019 to roll the old U of T pension plan into the new UPP with Queen's University and the University of Guelph, many of us did so with the understanding that the UPP would allow us to have a say in how our money is invested. We hoped the UPP would be more sustainable – both in terms of financial security in retirement and with respect to how our money was being used to exacerbate the climate crisis.

The [University of Guelph](#) divested their endowment from fossil fuel companies in 2020, followed by U of T in 2021 and all of its federated colleges by 2023. Many large

institutions across the world have done the same, not simply because there is a moral imperative to do so, but because [evidence](#) shows that fossil-free portfolios outperform those that continue to hold positions in oil and gas. A [University of Waterloo](#) study found US pension plans would be \$21 billion richer if they had divested a decade ago. So why is UPP dragging its feet?

The UPP is relatively more progressive than other Canadian pension plans, having released a [Climate Stewardship Plan](#), a [Climate Transition Investment Framework](#), and an updated [Proxy Voting Policy](#) clarifying expectations on climate oversight and support for Indigenous rights and reconciliation. We applaud the plan's managers for these efforts and for its decision to focus on the fossil fuel finance provided by banks as part of its broader engagement strategy to motivate companies to become better climate actors while remaining invested. But we demand better, faster. To begin with, we call on the UPP to provide full transparency and progress reports with respect to the 27 companies identified for engagement activities (in recent meetings with plan members, UPP management has explicitly refused to name these companies).

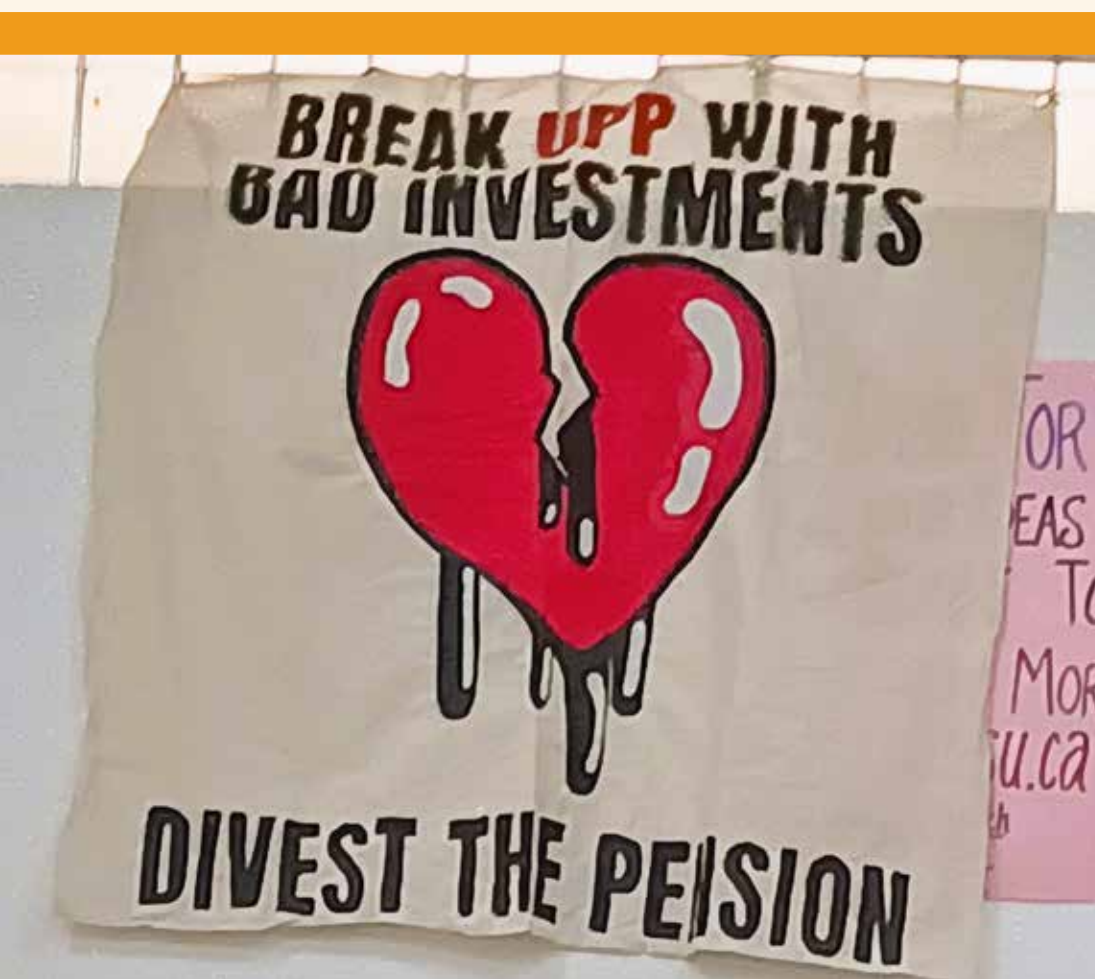
The Climate Stewardship Plan lacks details on what the UPP will do when its so-called engagement efforts inevitably fail to result in credible plans that align with UPP's net zero commitment. And we know they will fail, because there is no pathway for oil and gas companies to reach net zero emissions without entirely phasing out production of fossil fuels. This is why major academic institutions like the [University of California](#) and giant public investors like [PFZW \(the Netherlands' second largest pension fund with 238 billion euros under management\)](#) have decided to replace fossil industry engagement with divestment.

One of the ways that fossil fuel advocates push back against divestment is by promoting [distract and delay technologies like carbon capture](#). But these initiatives are incredibly expensive and do nothing to stop the industry's scope three emissions (indirect emissions, such as the CO₂ released when oil and gas are eventually burned in your car's gas tank or your home's furnace) – which make up about 85 per cent of lifecycle oil and gas emissions. Even negotiators at COP28 – UN Climate Change Conference – managed

to agree in December 2023 [that transitioning away from fossil fuels](#) is essential if we are to have any hope of eventually achieving the Paris Agreement goal of limiting global warming to 1.5°C.

In their Climate Transition Investment Framework and updated

Break UPP with Bad Investments – Divest the Pension banner drop conducted by Climate Justice U of T at Sidney Smith Hall on February 14, 2024.



*Both the Faculty Association
and the United Steelworkers
at the University of Toronto
are calling for the UPP to
divest from oil and gas.*

Proxy Voting Policy, the UPP lumps oil and gas together with other “high emitting sectors” and fails to acknowledge the need to phase out fossil fuel investments entirely. In fact, the Framework reads like a confusing and complicated justification to continue investing in fossil fuels.

Humanity and the stable climate we depend on doesn’t have time for this. While the UPP does at least have a coal exclusion policy, there is growing scientific evidence that gas is just as emissions-intensive as coal. Further, [new research published in Science](#) has found that harmful emissions from Canada’s oil sands are up to 64 times higher than what’s been previously reported by the industry.

Both the Faculty Association and the United Steelworkers at the University of Toronto are calling for the UPP to divest from oil and gas. Students, faculty and staff at Queens, Guelph and Trent are also reaching out to members of the Sponsor Board and the Board of Trustees at the UPP, demanding divestment now. There is scientific consensus that a safe climate future requires a rapid phase-out of fossil fuels. Now is the time for our pension fund to stop investing in the industry that threatens our collective future. There can be no more excuses.

If you agree, join us by [signing CJ UofT’s Open Letter: Divest the UPP](#).

*Kristy Bard, Committee for the Environment,
Climate Change & Sustainability (CECCS)*

*Paul Downes, UTFA Pension Committee Chair
and Professor, Department of English*

MOTION 2024-43, passed at the March 13, 2024 USW 1998 General Membership Meeting:

WHEREAS, given that the most recent United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 28) ended with a call for the world to transition away from fossil fuels;

AND WHEREAS, given that the University of Toronto has joined many other universities in divesting its endowment fund from the fossil fuel industry;

AND WHEREAS, given that the University Pension Plan (UPP) has already divested from the coal industry;

AND WHEREAS, given that the UPP claims to engage in “responsible investing,”;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT USW Local 1998 calls for the UPP management to implement an immediate screen on any new investments in oil and gas and to announce a rapid timeline for complete divestment from the oil and gas industry.



Matrix Cares Launches Bold Initiative to Address Housing, Supply Chain, and Skilled Trades Challenges

Matrix Cares, a leading community organization, is embarking on an ambitious endeavour aimed at addressing pressing issues in housing affordability, supply chain sustainability, and skilled trades development. The groundbreaking project, dubbed the Affordable Housing Summit, Supply Chain Expo, and Skilled Trades Career event, is set to take place at the University of Toronto and George Brown College.

The initiative, slated to unfold between May 23 and 26, represents a concerted effort to tackle multifaceted challenges facing communities across Toronto and beyond. By bringing together stakeholders from diverse sectors, including government, industry, academia, and the community, Matrix Cares aims to foster collaboration and drive meaningful change.

The Affordable Housing Summit component of the initiative will serve as a platform for discussing strategies to increase housing accessibility and affordability. With housing affordability reaching critical levels in urban centres like Toronto, this summit aims to explore innovative solutions and advocate for inclusive housing policies.

Parallel to the summit, the Supply Chain Expo will spotlight sustainable practices within the supply chain industry. From reducing carbon footprint to promoting ethical sourcing, the expo will showcase initiatives and technologies driving positive change in supply chain management.

Additionally, the Skilled Trades Career segment of the event seeks to address the growing demand for skilled workers in trades professions. By promoting vocational training and apprenticeships, this component aims to empower individuals to pursue rewarding careers in the skilled trades while meeting the needs of a rapidly evolving workforce.

The choice of venues, the University of Toronto and George Brown College, reflects Matrix Cares' commitment to academic excellence and community engagement. These institutions will provide the ideal settings for fruitful dialogue, knowledge exchange, and collaborative problem-solving.

As the Community Director of Matrix Cares and a USW member, I would like to emphasize the urgency of the initiative and issue a call to action to all stakeholders. The Affordable Housing Summit, Supply Chain Expo, and Skilled Trades Career event represents a pivotal moment for our community. We urge all stakeholders to join us in this transformative journey towards a more equitable, sustainable future.

As momentum builds for the upcoming event, Matrix Cares extends an invitation to individuals and organizations to participate in various ways. This includes attending the event, presenting innovations at the trade expo, backing initiatives tackling housing, supply chain, and skilled trades challenges, or stepping up as a sponsor.

For more information about the Affordable Housing Summit, Supply Chain Expo, and Skilled Trades Career event, and to learn how you can contribute to this transformative community initiative, visit the Affordable Housing Summit website at <https://theaffordablehousingsummit.ca/>.

As the Community Director of Matrix Cares and a USW member, I would like to emphasize the urgency of the initiative and issue a call to action to all stakeholders. The Affordable Housing Summit, Supply Chain Expo, and Skilled Trades Career event represents a pivotal moment for our community.

Together, we can build stronger, more resilient communities and pave the way for a brighter future for all.

Sarah Somer, USW Political Action Committee, UTSC Departments of Anthropology, Sociology, and Health Studies



2024 Chinese Workers Network Lunar New Year Dinner



Top left photo: USW members who attended this year's Lunar New Year Dinner posing with Toronto Mayor, Olivia Chow. Bottom right photo: Danny Fee with Toronto Mayor, Olivia Chow, at the February 25, 2024 Lunar New Year Dinner. Photo courtesy of Danny Fee.

On February 25th, 2024, I had the great opportunity to attend the Lunar New Year Dinner hosted by the Chinese Workers Network at Grandeur Palace in Scarborough. It was an amazing event with over 400 guests in attendance – probably the largest attendance of a Lunar New Year Dinner event to date.

Everything was great, from the food to the entertainment and the speakers. It was a fun-filled evening of good food and good company.

There were many special guests in attendance, in addition to various union leaders. Some of the special guests included Marit Stiles, leader of the Ontario New Democratic Party (NDP) and Leader of the Official Opposition; and her Worship, Olivia Chow, Mayor of Toronto.

Olivia Chow took the time to go around greeting and taking pictures with everyone. We had a great opportunity to meet and chat with her. In addition, the two tables that represented USW 1998 at the dinner were able to pose for a big group picture with her. I was able to get a one-on-one photo-op with her too! It's great to have different levels of government supporting the work of unions in the greater community.

I am always appreciative of the work that the union does, especially considering what the staff-appointed bargaining team achieved with our most recent collective agreement. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, I was fairly involved in the union and was able to attend many different events and meetings. In 2019, I had the opportunity to attend the Next Gen Conference in Pittsburgh. I loved going out there to meet new people and learn more about what the union and other locals do.

At the Lunar New Year Dinner, I was able to chat with other members about ways they can show support at union events and meetings, and how attending these functions is a great way to meet new members, have fun and show solidarity within the union.

Danny Fee, School of Continuing Studies





USW 1998 Member Roza Roozbehan Attends European Parliament

Casual Unit member Roza Roozbehan (centre) with Cornelia Ernst, Chair of Delegations of the European Parliament for relations with Iran (left), and her assistant Karen Schuttpels (right) on April 27, 2023. Photo courtesy of Roza Roozbehan.

Challenges and Prospects for Iran's Democratic Movement

Editor's note: In the Spring 2023 issue of Steel Drum, we reprinted a speech Roza Roozbehan gave at a Local 1998 Human Rights Committee social on the situation in Iran. Since then, she has participated in two sessions with the European Parliament on the aftermath of the Woman, Life, Freedom movement. The first was on April 27, 2023, when she attended a session of the European Parliament in Brussels, Belgium. The second was during an online meeting held September 6, 2023. She is scheduled to attend the EU Parliament once again on April 8, 2024 to participate in a panel discussion on Solidarity for Human Rights in Iran. Below is an excerpt from the speech she gave on April 27, 2023.

The Islamic Republic of Iran continues to suppress peaceful and democratic uprisings by using force. During the past year, the feminist movement of 'Woman, Life, Freedom' took centre stage among all other challenges to the regime. The IRG [Islamic Revolutionary Guard] and its sub-



organization militia, known as Basij, are responsible for the death of hundreds, the wounding of thousands, and the imprisonment and harsh treatment of tens of thousands of protesters. Despite

these barbaric acts, Iranian women continue their struggle against the forced hijab and their demand for equal rights. Women are now walking the streets of every single city and town in Iran without wearing hijab, a scene that even one year ago was impossible to dream of. This movement is trying to coordinate its efforts with other struggles and movements in Iran, such as workers' demand for improvement of workplace conditions and higher wages, equal rights for ethnic and religious minorities, university students and professors' demand for democracy, teachers' call for free access to education and higher salaries and against the privatization of education, and environmental activist campaigns.

The Islamic Republic [of Iran]'s harsh treatment of any objection to its rules has now reached the point of unimaginable cruelty. In the past few months, hundreds of mostly female schools have been subjected to chemical attacks. These attacks try to achieve two goals: taking revenge on students for supporting the 'Woman, Life, Freedom' movement and forcing girls to stay home by using the same tactics as their counterparts in Afghanistan, the Taliban.

Supporting our Iranian compatriots in their struggles against the entirety of the regime is our first and most important task. We continue to streamline the secular, democratic, and peaceful movements to act in unison.

As a woman, I have been subjected to inequality, such as being forbidden from travelling abroad

alone without the permission of a male relative and being denied the right to divorce an abusive spouse. My chances of equal employment and pay for doing the same job as male colleagues is close to zero. The list, unfortunately, can go on. As a result, I consider myself a freedom fighter, a human rights activist, and a supporter of workers, teachers, and ethnic and religious minorities in Iran. It is my honour and privilege to be the voice of the silenced.

The European Parliament can support women and civil society in Iran by:

- Putting pressure on Iranian authorities to release political prisoners.
- Demanding an end to the use of force against civil and peaceful movements.
- Demanding the release of non-Iranians and those with dual citizenship from prison.
- Monitoring the terrorist acts by Iranian intelligent officers residing in the regime's embassies.
- Continuing sanctions of those responsible for murdering peaceful demonstrators, especially Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and Basij organizations.
- Demanding the regime bring to justice those responsible for the death of 176 passengers of flight PS-752.
- Helping opposition abroad by organizing events like these.
- Using diplomacy to force Iranian authorities in the United Nations to accept human rights, women's rights, ethnic and religious minorities rights.
- Opposing any attempt by any foreign country to start a war with the Islamic Republic [of Iran]'s regime.
- Supporting, attending, and giving speeches at peaceful Iranian demonstrations in Europe.
- Continuing the political sponsorship of Iranian political prisoners.
- Disclosing any information in relation to the regime's support of Russia in its war against Ukraine.
- Not recognizing the Taliban regime unless they accept girls' rights to attend schools, universities, and workplaces.
- Supporting the normalization of Iran's relations with the countries of the region.

Roza Roozbehan, Standardized Patient Program

In Memoriam: Shelley Glazer



Shelley Glazer (centre) carrying a Free Abortion on Demand placard at the 1982 International Women's Day March in Toronto, with Sheila Miller (right).

We are sad to report that Shelley (Rochelle) Glazer passed away on February 26, 2023. A psychological counsellor in the University's Health Services, she was devoted to social justice and women's empowerment.

A member of the USW 1998's Job Evaluation Committee (JEC), Shelley was instrumental in refining the job evaluation language that is now used to classify the extraordinary range of positions at the University of Toronto.

In particular, she championed the exposure and appropriate evaluation of the work of the many women whose main function is to ensure that everyday teaching and other University services function well and that disputes and conflicts are contained. While job descriptions may feature long lists of tasks such as reconciling accounts, preparing grant applications or maintaining schedules, Shelley asserted that the smooth functioning of offices depends on personal relationships, teaching, loyalty, and collaborative innovation as well.

Determination to capture the entirety of administrative work and its competing demands was an invaluable contribution to the membership of USW 1998.

Fellow JEC member Carolellen Norskey remembers Shelley patiently explaining to the senior staff of Human Resources that these relational practices are not just “what women do,” but that they are important skills. The paradox is that the more successful this glue work is, the more invisible it is. Shelley’s determination to capture the entirety of administrative work and its competing demands was an invaluable contribution to the membership of USW 1998.



The JEC Team from 2004. Back row from left to right: P.C. Choo, Robin Breon, Mary Bird, Marisa Freire, Shelley Glazer; Front row: Ana Sapp (left), Kristina Smith (right). [This photo appeared in the February 2004, Volume 4, No. 1 issue of Steel Drum.](#)

With individual members whom the committee spent two years interviewing, Shelley was warm and encouraging. She never let anyone

dismiss their work as unimportant. Instead, she would patiently coax them to reveal the complexities of their job in detail. Then, she brought every detail to the negotiating table.

For the team with whom she worked, Shelley was a joy. She was always prepared, ready to help with anything, optimistic and cheerful.

In her retirement, she pursued many interests. She studied natural herbal medicine (her first degree was in Pharmacy). She engaged in numerous courses at the Life Institute at Toronto Metropolitan University, sang in a choir, loved documentary film festivals, and even studied opera and Italian in order to sing her favorite arias and choruses properly.

Every night, when she left the office, she smiled and called out, “Toodles!”

Rest in peace, dear Shelley. You enriched the lives of so many.

Carolellen Norskey & P. C. Choo, long-time colleagues of Glazer on the USW Local 1998 Job Evaluation Committee.

In Memoriam: Robin H. Breon (1948 – 2023)



Robin Breon

Photo courtesy of [American Theatre Group](#), and edited by Jim Pollock

Former **USW Local 1998** Vice-President and long-time union activist, Robin H. Breon, passed away on November 23, 2023. He was 75.

Hundreds packed Friends House where a Celebration of Life for Robin was held on January 20, 2024. Those in attendance included political luminaries, colleagues and friends from the theatre and music world where Robin was a much beloved fixture for many years. They remembered Robin as someone who was a friend to everyone and ever willing to lend a helping hand to make the world a better place.

John Cartwright, Chair of the Council of Canadians and former President of the Toronto and York Region Labour Council, recounted how he knew Robin as someone who fought tirelessly for the underdog. John's wife, Councillor Paula Fletcher (Ward 14), read a message of condolence from the City of Toronto. Community social worker, Chiara Padovani, tearfully remembered Robin as a local activist in his home constituency of York South Weston (Ward 5). Former NDP MPP, Faisal Hassan, was also in attendance.

Martin Morrow and Don Rubin from the Canadian Theatre Critics Association remembered Robin's many contributions in the early days of the association's existence. Fellow writer and collaborator Andrew Moodie joked that Robin still owed him some outstanding work at the time of his passing. Amah Harris from Black Theatre Canada praised Robin's "sincerity of the heart" in extending a helping hand whenever she needed his help.

Elka Weinstein, a colleague from the Department of Museum Studies at the University of Toronto recalled how Robin first hired her as a work-study student and how she later became permanent administrative staff. She remembered him as a kind-hearted boss who took time to listen to those around him.

Long-time U of T Administrative Staff Governor P. C. Choo recalled how he felt lost when he was tapped to run for Governor in 2003 until someone told him to ask Robin for his help because "he knows everybody and everybody knows him." Choo said that Robin would take time from his busy schedule to campaign with him in the thick of winter on the St. George campus. Choo won with nearly half the votes cast and went on to serve on Governing Council for a record 15 years "thanks to Robin's pivotal help."

A number of those who served with Robin on the Executive Committee of USW Local 1998 in the early years of the union, including Marjorie Bhola-Swami, Christine Beckermann, Nawesa Bollers, Alex Thomson, and current Local 1998 President John Ankenman, as well as former Job Evaluation Committee (JEC) colleague Kim Walker were also in attendance.

Former colleague Carolellen Norskey who served alongside Robin on the Job Evaluation Committee but was unable to attend the Celebration of Life, said that "Robin had a real gift for talking people into being candid and generous with information if they were hesitant about participating. He was able to persuade

Robin had a real gift for talking people into being candid and generous with information if they were hesitant about participating. He was able to persuade people to see themselves as workers who had a responsibility to each other.

people to see themselves as workers who had a responsibility to each other."

A number of musicians paid tribute to Robin with their performances: David Kutzik on clarinet, Joe Sealey on piano, Camilo and Daniel Lanfranco (Breon's godsons) on guitar and Bill King on piano.

At the conclusion of the Celebration of Life, Robin's long-time beloved partner, Professor Joan Simalchik, thanked those in attendance and said that "Robin would have been pleased."

We are grateful that a man of so many talents and interests had so much to share with the staff at U of T. Robin had been active in the U of T Staff Association (UTSA) for many years, but he was one of the few who saw the writing on the wall - that UTSA had outlived its usefulness and that unionization was the only way forward. Armed with this foresight, he threw himself into the unionization drive with his boundless energy and charismatic appeal. "His manner with members was his gentle way of making people - particularly white collared workers who don't always see themselves as sharing much with workers in, say, factories or mines - understand that they have power when they work together. It was a fine political education he gave them, in a very respectful manner," says Norskey.

Thank you, Robin, for your guidance that continues to inspire us, your wisdom that continues to guide us, and your laughter that continues to echo in our hearts. Your legacy lives on - in the lives of all those you inspired and in the hearts of all those you touched.

Rest in power, dear friend.

Carolellen Norskey & P. C. Choo, long-time colleagues of Robin on the USW Local 1998 Job Evaluation Committee.

Organizational Change

The process, and your rights and entitlements.

U OF T STAFF-APPOINTED UNIT



Note: This article speaks to organizational change within the University of Toronto Staff-Appointed unit. If you have questions about term and/or temporary layoffs in the Staff-Appointed unit, or about layoff or termination language in other Local 1998 units, please reach out to info@usw1998.ca.

Organizational change is stressful and, while most members may never be affected by it, it's still a real concern. While an employer's right to reorganize the workplace is deeply established in labour law and jurisprudence, USW Local 1998 has bargained over the years to minimize the impact of these decisions on our members as much as possible. In this article, we hope to generally explain the process of organizational change and some of the rights and entitlements we've bargained for members when they are impacted by it.

Organizational change is defined in our Collective Agreement as being an action implemented by management as a result of "budget cuts, departmental reorganizations, the introduction of new technology, or other factors" that leads to the elimination of one or more positions, or the involuntary reduction of an employee's appointment by 20% or more.

The process begins for a member when they are issued a **Notice of Organizational Change**. From that date, it is a minimum of **18 weeks until their last day of employment**. This is broken up into a minimum of six weeks of organizational change notice and a minimum of 12 weeks of layoff notice.

Notice of Organizational Change

When a member is provided **Notice of Organizational Change** by the University, they have the following rights and entitlements:

- At least **six weeks' notice** of organizational change before they are provided a **Notice of Layoff**.
- An explanation from their **Department Head** or designate of the reasons for the organizational change.
- An opportunity to meet privately with a **Union Representative**.
- The opportunity to apply to any **new Staff-Appointed positions** created in the organizational change, and to receive the **job description, organizational chart, core duties, responsibilities, and qualifications** required for the position(s).

- **Redeployment pool status** from the time notice is given.
 - This status means that for any USW Staff-Appointed position the member applies to that is **at their same payband or below**, the member only needs to meet the **minimum requirements** for the position, rather than be the “most qualified applicant.” This should also take into account a two-month training/onboarding period.
- Access to **Careers Services** and to the **Pathways to Careers Coordinator** for assistance in applying to and securing a new position.

Notice of Layoff

At least six weeks after a member is issued a **Notice of Organizational Change**, the University will issue them a **Notice of Layoff**. When a member is provided a **Notice of Layoff**, they have the following rights and entitlements:

- At least **12 weeks’ notice** before their **final day of employment**.
- **Seven paid days off work** to focus on their job search.
- An opportunity to meet privately with a **Union Representative**.
- Redeployment pool status continues from the issuance of their **Notice of Layoff**.
- Continued access to **Careers Services** and to the **Pathways to Careers Coordinator** for assistance in applying to and securing a new position.

End of Layoff Period

At the end of the combined organizational change and layoff notice periods (≥18 weeks), if the member has still not secured a new position, they must decide to either:

- a) Remain in the **redeployment pool** for up to 24 months; or
- b) Sever their relationship with the University and collect **enhanced severance** based on their years of service.

If a member **remains in the redeployment pool**, they will retain their hiring preference to help them secure a new position in the Staff-Appointed unit. They can also elect to continue paying for some benefits for a period of time.

If a member leaves the University and collects **enhanced severance**, they cannot work at the University for a period equivalent to the number of weeks of pay their enhanced severance represents.

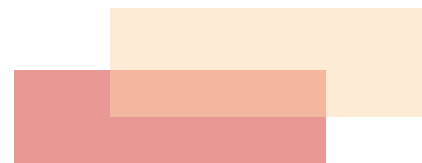
In either circumstance, we recommend members apply for **Employment Insurance**, if they are eligible, before their final day of employment.

Special Circumstances

Some special circumstances may impact how the rights and entitlements outlined above may be accessed. If a member is eligible or near eligible for retirement, or they are on pregnancy or parental or medical leave, or if there are other special circumstances, the member should **make their Union Representative aware** of such circumstances. The Union Representative will ensure the member is aware of how these special circumstances may impact their options.

Additional information about organizational change and layoff is available on the [Resources section](#) of the USW 1998 website. Members can always [contact their Union Steward](#) or e-mail info@usw1998.ca with further questions.

Justen Bennett, Grievance Officer



Steelworkers Toronto Area Council Honours Three Iconic Leaders

The Steelworkers Toronto Area Council (STAC) held a thank you dinner on December 8, 2023, to honour three retiring leaders: former Canadian National Director, Ken Neumann; former Toronto Area Coordinator and USW Local 1998 Staff Representative, Omero Landi; and former Local 3950 President, Norm Dixon.

STAC President, Carolyn Egan, began by introducing Neumann, Landi and Dixon.

Ontario New Democratic Party (NDP) President, Marit Stiles, thanked Neumann for the Steelworkers' long-time support of the party. Neumann recounted his journey from rural Saskatchewan to the top position of National Director for Steelworkers Canada.



Ontario NDP Leader Marit Stiles thanked USW for its support. Photo by P.C. Choo



Ken Neumann giving his speech. Photo by P.C. Choo

USW Local 1998 President, John Ankenman, took to the podium to thank Omero Landi for guiding the Local at a critical juncture in our history. He also paid tribute to Landi for helping him grow personally in his union career. He later presented Landi with a plaque.

Landi reflected on his 32-year involvement with the Steelworkers. He recalled the numerous challenges the Union had faced and how we always managed to live to fight another day.



USW Local 1998 President John Ankenman thanking the Local's former Staff Rep, Omero Landi.



Omero Landi speaking at the dinner Photos by P.C. Choo.

Former, long-time Local 3950 President, Norm Dixon, was the third honouree of the evening. For his many achievements, Dixon was previously awarded Steelworker of the Year. He also received the Health and Safety Award from the Workers Health and Safety Centre.



Norm Dixon at the podium. Photo by P.C. Choo

Toronto Area Council President, Carolyn Egan, praised Dixon as "a courageous fighter for equity and human rights in our union for many years."

In his speech, Dixon reminisced about his struggles against the many odds he faced during his career and encouraged members to remain steadfast and united.

P. C. Choo, Special Correspondent and USW SOAR (Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees) Member



Taking a Chance: Stephen Watt and Northern Lights Canada

Stephen Watt on his way to a march for World Refugee Day in June 2023. Photo by Stephen Watt.

One of the nice things about living in Toronto is how it exposes you to ideas, people and projects that might be harder to come by elsewhere. My name is Stephen Watt, and for many years I've been a marketing manager at the Rotman School of Management. In my off hours, I run a volunteer organization called Northern Lights Canada, which aims to get Canadians involved in the private sponsorship of refugees.

Like many people, I first became involved in private sponsorship during the civil war in Syria. In 2016, I answered a request for volunteers from a local settlement agency based in St. James Town, in downtown East, called [Community Matters Toronto](#). I submitted a few applications through CMT for Syrians displaced by the war, and realized what a gift this private sponsorship program was – a way for ordinary Canadians to make a huge and positive impact in the lives of persecuted people around the world.

Flash forward to 2019, and dozens of long nights and applications later, submitted to Canadian Immigration by mail and email, like wishes made on shooting stars, had done their work and brought many warm and dynamic people into my life, and into the lives of friends and fellow sponsors. In addition to the original Syrian arrivals, we had helped bring LGBTQ+ from Iran, Christians from Pakistan and Sri Lankan Tamils held in detention in Papua New Guinea, among others.

A friend of mine, Jaivet Ealom, a student in political economy at the University of Toronto, suggested that we form an organization, which would help us connect to more volunteers, and extend the reach and credibility of these efforts.

Jaivet had his own miraculous story, having come to Canada as an asylum seeker all on his own. He was the only person to successfully escape the refugee detention centre established by Australia on Manus Island in Papua New Guinea, in the middle of the South Pacific. That remarkable journey is detailed in his book [Escape from Manus Prison](#), published by Penguin in 2022.

After settling in Canada, Jaivet had become involved in organizing the [Rohingya Centre](#) to help those displaced by the civil conflict in his own home country of Burma. Drawing on that knowledge, he helped me develop a new group, which we called [Northern Lights Canada](#). We applied for Northern Lights to become a not-for-profit, and built a website to advance the mission of educating and inspiring other potential sponsors and helpers.

Our network kept growing, and soon we were involved in big projects to bring hundreds of those detained on Manus Island, and in 2021, those stuck in Afghanistan after the takeover by the new Taliban regime. This work occasionally attracted the attention of the media, which brought in new volunteers.

And the refugees kept coming – refugees no longer, but arriving at the airport as permanent residents. Not all of them became personal friends, but many did, and each of them brought their own gifts to the communities lucky enough to have them.

One thing that Jaivet points out in his book is how much refugees have to offer a country that is willing to give them a fair opportunity:

“These were smart, talented people, the most resourceful on earth: their survival and arrival on these foreign shores was proof of that. They were not the richest people in their home countries, or

Not all of them became personal friends, but many did, and each of them brought their own gifts to the communities lucky enough to have them.

the most privileged – just the most capable. They had so much to offer the world. They just needed a chance.”

Jaivet’s own impact as an advocate and writer was proof of his hypothesis, and he is not the only example. Shams Erfan, now studying in the [Transitional Year Programme](#) at U of T, also happens to be an accomplished journalist, and the writer-in-residence at George Brown College, for the second year in a row. He fled Afghanistan after the Taliban took offense to his work teaching English to children, when he himself was just a teenager.

Another friend, Jon Jonaid, fled the Rohingya genocide in Burma, and then helped launch the [Archipelago](#), a literary magazine by refugees in Indonesia. (He and Shams also started the protest movement in Indonesia).

Jon is now working under Senator Marilou McPhedran in Ottawa, serves as a prominent Rohingya advocate, and has launched an online effort called [Humans in Flight](#) that tells the stories of refugee newcomers in Canada and those who helped them get here. Another success story: Khuloud Hadaq, a woman who fled the war in Syria, who runs a publishing house called [Ishtar House](#) to bring the best of Arab literature to Canada.

There are musicians and photographers, writers and entrepreneurs – and outside the world of business and culture, construction workers, homemakers and truck drivers – each holding a warm appreciation for this country, and for the opportunity to reinvent themselves and live up to their potential.



*Right: Stephen Watt with a group of newcomer friends, including Jon Jonaid, far left, visiting Niagara Falls.
Left: Stephen Watt with Halima Bahman and Derakhshan Qurban-Ali, both prominent Hazara advocates, at his home. Photos by Stephen Watt.*

Our shared mission continues to evolve. Since 2018, many of the refugees we have sponsored happen to be Hazaras from Afghanistan, who are the target of genocidal violence under the Taliban regime. (Shams is Hazara).

One of our side projects is a website called Hazara Hope, which features profiles of Hazaras, mostly residing in Indonesia, who have been vetted as refugees by the UN, and have been waiting – over a decade, in some cases – to be resettled in a new country.

We've now brought over three hundred Hazaras and other refugees to Canada in the last few years, and they've settled in towns and cities across the country. But for every happy airport arrival, there is the survivor's guilt of all the friends left behind, people who are still waiting for their opportunity for a new life.

All refugees, regardless of background, have something to offer this country, and to those ordinary Canadians who make the effort to bring them here.

They have so much to offer. They just need a chance.

Stephen Watt, Rotman School of Management

Editor's Note: members interested in volunteering or donating to Northern Lights Canada can visit their website at www.northernlightscanada.net. Volunteer opportunities include private sponsors, teachers, tutors, application writers, profile writers, organizers, and fundraisers.

*All refugees, regardless of background, have something to offer this country,
and to those ordinary Canadians who make the effort to bring them here.*

Victoria University Unit Report

April 2024

Election Year in the Vic Unit

2024 is an election year across our union. Nominations were accepted for all Victoria University Unit positions at our March 27 unit meeting. The results of that process are as follows:

- Unit President: John Ankenman (acclaimed)
- Unit Secretary: Alex Thomson (acclaimed)
- Chief Steward: Mark Austin (acclaimed)
- Steward for Full-time Hourly-paid Employee Members: Mike Lau (acclaimed)
- Steward for Full-time Salaried Employee Members: Wanda Hughes (acclaimed)
- Steward for Part-time & Casual Employee Members: Adrian Rizzi (acclaimed)
- Joint Health & Safety Committee Representatives (4): Mark Austin (acclaimed), Evan May (acclaimed), Milly Weidhaas (acclaimed), Candace Zinkweg (acclaimed)
- Alternative Joint Health & Safety Committee Representative: Paul Robinson (appointed).

Congratulations to all the nominees. I am looking forward to working with you during the next three years as we collectively represent the interests of our Vic colleagues.

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 subsequently advanced the grievance to arbitration.

VC 2024-2 (Individual – failure to hire) This is another grievance that was filed after the University interviewed a member but deemed them to be unqualified. Like the previous

grievance, VC 2024-2 also involves management changing one of the terms of their job posting after interviews had been held.

VC 2024-3 (Individual – improper demand for medical documentation) The Union is waiting for the University's written response to the step 2 grievance meeting.

VC 2024-4 (Individual – failure to accommodate) The Union is waiting for the University's written response to the step 2 grievance meeting.

Implementation of New Letters in Our Collective Agreement

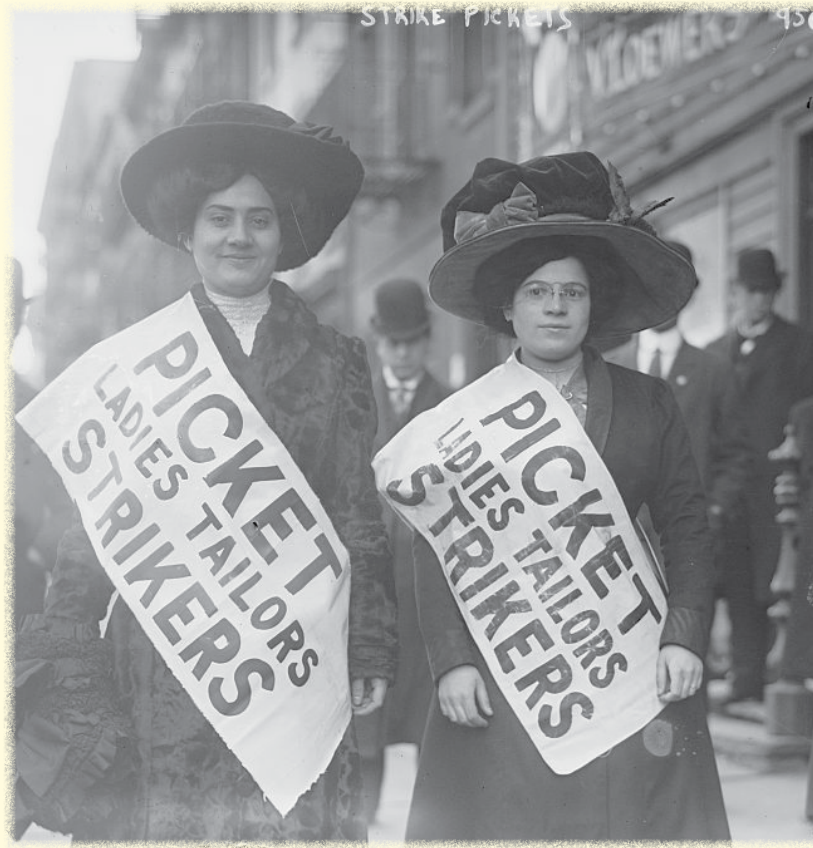
Mark Austin, Mike Lau and I are working with Adrian Rizzi and Krystyna Grzymek to implement the Letter of Intent – Food Services Scheduling that was negotiated into the collective agreement last year. The letter obligates the University to meet with the Union to address two issues: the minimum number of hours between consecutive Food Services shifts and the scheduling of Food Services shifts on statutory holidays. One meeting with the University has taken place and a second meeting is in the process of being scheduled.

Another new letter in the collective agreement, Letter of Understanding – Residence Life and Campus Life Live-in Staff Discussion to Review, provides us with the opportunity to meet with the University to discuss possible changes to the pre-existing letter of understanding that lays out the on-call, call-in and overtime rights of our members who live on campus. Mark Austin, Wanda Hughes and I are consulting with those members as we engage with management on possible changes to the current letter.

There are various other issues that we are assisting members with, including managers' responses to alternative work arrangement requests, workload concerns and a harassment complaint.

John Ankenman, Victoria University Unit President

Triangle Shirtwaist Company Fire, New York (March 25, 1911) 146 Dead: Locked Inside Burning Building by Management



Two women strikers picketing during the Uprising of the 20,000. Courtesy: US National Park Services

The Triangle Shirtwaist Company

On the northwest corner of Greene Street and Washington Place in Greenwich Village, New York City, stood the 10-storey Asch Building. Occupying floors 8, 9 and 10 was the Triangle Shirtwaist Company. The garment factory produced shirtwaists, a ladies' blouse that was very fashionable in the early 1900s. Similar to other garment factories, the company employed young women and girls, mostly newcomers whose first language was not English. Many of the women were Italian and Jewish immigrants struggling with the language, housing and affordability, which made them vulnerable to exploitation by the factory owners, Max Blanck and Isaac Harris.

The workers endured all kinds of exploitation. Their working hours were long, requiring 13-hour days on Mondays to Fridays and seven hours on Saturdays, with only a 30-minute break. Jewish workers were expected to work on Saturdays and were not permitted to observe the Sabbath. They were told that if they did not want to work on Saturday, then they did not need to return on Monday. They were paid \$6 per week for a 72-hour work week and some workers had to bring their own supplies to the factory (sewing machines, needles, and thread). Washrooms were outside of the building, and to discourage work disruptions, management locked the steel doors on floors 8, 9, and 10 to prevent workers from leaving the building. The factory was overcrowded and filthy with only one fire exit. Working conditions were deplorable.

The Uprising of the 20,000

On November 24, 1909, the largest work stoppage in US history took place. Triangle Shirtwaist Company workers, who had already walked off the job weeks earlier, were joined by more than 20,000 garment workers to protest their dangerous working conditions, low wages, and long hours. The Triangle Shirtwaist Company workers sought union representation to ensure safety, fair wages, and reasonable work hours. In orchestrating The Uprising of the 20,000, garment workers—primarily immigrant girls and women—sacrificed their income and risked being blacklisted from ever being hired in a garment factory again.

Their reputations were destroyed; they were mocked, labeled prostitutes, and were physically assaulted on the picket line. The factory owners hired professional boxers and thugs to pick fights with the picketing workers and bribed policemen and judges to find the women guilty of crimes.

“
The Triangle Shirtwaist Company workers sought union representation to ensure safety, fair wages, and reasonable work hours.



Two members of the “Mink Brigade” on the Triangle Shirtwaist Company picket line. Courtesy: Ephemeral New York

The Mink Brigade

A turning point in the garment workers’ strike came when the movement was publicly joined by the “Mink Brigade”, a group of wealthy and otherwise socially-privileged women who supported the labour movement in the early 1900s. Anne Morgan (J.P. Morgan’s daughter), Alva Belmont (ex-wife of W.K. Vanderbilt), and many others provided financial support to the garment workers by paying their rent, covering their bills, and bailing them out of jail so they could continue to strike. Further, many of the Mink Brigade joined the Triangle Shirtwaist Company workers on the picket line, marching and chanting while donning their expensive clothing and mink coats. The garment workers and the Mink Brigade stood in solidarity against dangerous working conditions, low wages, and long hours. The social status of these philanthropic women discouraged the police brutality against the garment workers and ultimately attracted sympathetic attention and public support for their cause.

Workplace Tragedy

Five months into the garment workers' strike, other garment workers from different factories sought the protection of a union and joined the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) Local 25. Meanwhile, Triangle Shirtwaist Company's obstinate owners conceded on improved wages and better working hours, but still resisted unionization and refused demands for safer working conditions. Management continued to lock the steel doors on floors 8, 9, and 10, not only to prevent workers from leaving but also to prevent union organizers from entering. The Triangle Shirtwaist Company remained a non-union shop after the five-month strike.

Then, on March 25, 1911, a devastating fire broke out on the eighth floor of the Triangle Shirtwaist Company factory. Workers found themselves trapped behind management's locked steel doors with no way to escape as the scraps of cotton fabric strewn across the floor ignited.

The one fire escape could not bear the weight of the frantic workers and the metal gave way as they clambered onto it, sending workers falling to their deaths. Another 62 workers died jumping out the factory windows trying desperately to escape the fire. In total, 146 workers died in the fire at the Triangle Shirtwaist Company, 129 of whom were young immigrant women. The youngest was a 14-year-old girl.

To fan the flames of injustice, the New York Fire Department's fire truck ladders were only designed to go as high as a six-storey building and could not reach floors 8, 9 and 10. One onlooker witnessed a young female with her clothing and hair burning plummet down the side of the building like a "living torch" right though the firefighters' netting to the pavement below. Others were holding onto each other as they jumped. It was all over in 30 minutes. For many years, this fire was one of the worst occupational disasters in US history.



The March 25, 1911 fire at the Asch Building that resulted in the deaths of 146 garment workers.

Courtesy: Wikipedia_Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire

Introduction of Workplace Safety Legislation

The Triangle Shirtwaist Company tragedy led to improvements in safety standards for factories including fire codes and new laws concerning child labour. Yet, 113 years later, abuses of this kind are still widespread in the garment industry across the globe where the majority of workers are the youngest, poorest and most vulnerable members of the population. In 2013, locked factory doors led to the Rana Plaza disaster in Bangladesh, resulting in 1134 deaths and more than 2,000 injured when the building collapsed.

Ironically, factory owners Blanck and Harris lacked the insight that the very thing they wanted to avoid - a strike - was what built solidarity amongst New York City garment workers. The idea that unionized employees would somehow threaten their company was a figment of their own greedy imagination. It was Blanck and Harris' own negligence and greed that caused their demise.

Blanck and Harris were sued more than 20 times by the families of the victims. In the end, the insurance paid \$75 to the families for each worker who had died in the fire. Even more infuriating was that Blanck and Harris ultimately profited from the insurance claim they submitted after the fire, having walked away with \$60,000 in damages. The insurance company paid them \$400 per victim. With no loss on the books, they opened a new factory shortly after with the insurance money. At their new factory in 1913, they continued with their old tricks and were fined \$25 for keeping the doors locked during business hours. In 1914, they were caught sewing fraudulent labels into the shirtwaist blouses. However, in the court of public opinion, justice was finally served since Blanck and Harris never quite regained their reputation. People did not forget and by 1918, the doors to their factory finally closed on this completely preventable tragedy.

Margaret Bucknam, Outreach & Communications, USW1998

The Triangle Shirtwaist Company tragedy led to improvements in safety standards for factories including fire codes and new laws concerning child labour. Yet, 113 years later, abuses of this kind are still widespread in the garment industry across the globe



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To Kensington Place sign and Kensington Market row houses.
Photos by Nick Marchese.

Evolution of the Kensington Market: From Multicultural Roots to Hip Urban Enclave

Not much more than a hop, skip and jump from the southwestern edge of U of T's St. George campus, the Kensington Market, now a hip downtown neighbourhood that's on the must-see list of many tourists, was once home to a succession of Toronto immigrant groups. Below is a brief history of their important influence on shaping this iconic neighbourhood, including what USW Local 1998 member Gary Horenkamp learned during a recent tour about the Jewish community that helped build the Market to be the vibrant community it is today.

In the late 1700s, land that was the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee, Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and the Huron-Wendat was parcelled out to British government officials and military officers. By the mid-1800s the parcelled lots making up the Kensington area became a middle-class enclave of mostly British settlers.

A major shift in the population of the Kensington enclave occurred in the early 1900s when Jewish immigrants moved from the Ward District to Kensington, building stalls in front of their homes. They started what became more popularly known as the Kensington Market, or the Jewish Market. The number of Jewish people living in the Kensington Market rose from 5,000 in 1900 to more than 45,000 in 1931. During this time, there were as many as 30 synagogues in the neighbourhood. Only a couple remain today.

By the 1950s, most of the Jewish population moved north along Bathurst Street, with just 780 remaining by 1961. For more about the Jewish influence on the area, see "A History Lesson: The Jewish Community in Kensington Market" on page 38.



One of the few remaining synagogues in Kensington Market. Photo by Nick Marchese.

The Postwar Period

Even during the time when the Jewish population dominated the Kensington Market neighbourhood, there were other immigrant groups living there, including Italians, Ukrainians, and Hungarians. Over time, it was the Portuguese immigrants who began to become the predominant group in the area.

Many Portuguese Canadians continued the practice of adding storefronts to their homes, many selling codfish and other seafood. Also, the selling of live poultry continued, until it was banned in 1982.

On a personal note, in the 1960s, I was born in the Kensington Market. While several of the surrounding homes have been converted into shops or restaurants, the house I was raised in remains a residence. Some of my memories of the

sights are blurred, but what remains vivid to me are the smells – the grilled codfish, the live chickens, and the cheeses – sharp cheddar, blue cheese, etc.

The 1970s saw the expansion of Chinatown out the Ward District, across Spadina Avenue and into the Kensington Market. Along with Chinese immigrants came Vietnamese immigrants and others from different parts of East Asia.

Hip Urbanism and the Advent of Gentrification

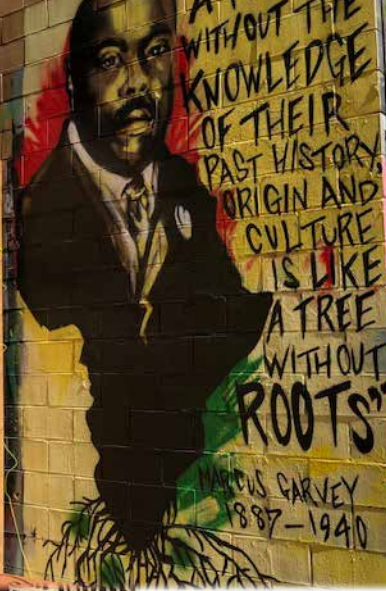
From the 1970s on, Kensington Market became dominated by no one ethnic or racial group. Chic vintage clothing stores opened next to Latin American restaurants next to Jamaican food stores next to health food stores, and so on.

Students and young urban professionals lived alongside working-class minority families, and an alternative life and artist scene added to the vibrancy of the area.

Today, however, the growing complaint is that the enclave of colourful small businesses and row houses that was the Kensington Market is becoming unaffordable for the kinds of working class people that made the area so attractive in the first place. Gone are most of the fruit stands and fish and cheese stores, and the fear is they will be replaced by big-box or chain stores. Walmart was successfully resisted, but a Loblaws store opened on the northern edge of Kensington Market several years ago, and condominium developments to the north along College Street and south along Dundas Street are raising concerns about growing gentrification of the area. Still, the area continues to exude an independent spirit, and small businesses continue to be in the majority. The next phase in the evolution of Kensington Market is still to be determined.

Nick Marchese, Casual Unit Steward – KPE

Opposite page: photos of murals around the Kensington Market neighbourhood taken by Nick Marchese.



A History Lesson: The Jewish Community in Kensington Market

On August 25, 2023, USW 1998 members Anne Noble and Gary Horenkamp participated in a walking tour to learn about the roots of the Jewish community in Kensington Market. Led by tour guide Allan Cooper, one of the stops was in front of the United Steelworkers building at 25 Cecil St. This site was previously the Toronto [Jewish Old Folks' Home](#) that opened in 1918 at 29 Cecil St., thanks to donations collected by Slova Greenberg, an active member of a women's mutual benefit society known as Ezras Noshem. In the 1920s and 1930s, the adjacent houses were purchased, and the home expanded to care for 75 residents. Part of the building was designated as a hospital with medical care donated by Jewish doctors.

As the Jewish community moved north, so did the facility, which came to be known as Baycrest Hospital. In 1948, a 25-acre tract of land was purchased to build a new Jewish Home for the Aged on Bathurst Street. More about this history is detailed here on the [Baycrest website](#). During the tour, Gary pointed out to that the third floor of the Steelworkers building now houses a union local representing thousands of University of Toronto employees. As the tour continued, one of the others touring, Helen Burstyn, introduced herself to Gary as a friend of Leo Gerard, past President of the International United Steelworkers. Both Helen and Leo received Order of Canada recognition.

Some other notable buildings on the tour were the [George Brown House](#), [Grossman's Tavern](#), two synagogues and an Anglican church.

Participating in this tour was a good reminder that when you take a walk in your neighbourhood, you should try to learn the history of what preceded it. It may turn your walk into a history lesson as well as some good exercise.

Gary Horenkamp, Standardized Patients Unit



USW1998 members Gary Horenkamp (right) and Anne Noble (middle) with tour guide Allan Cooper (left). Photo by Joshua Heuman.



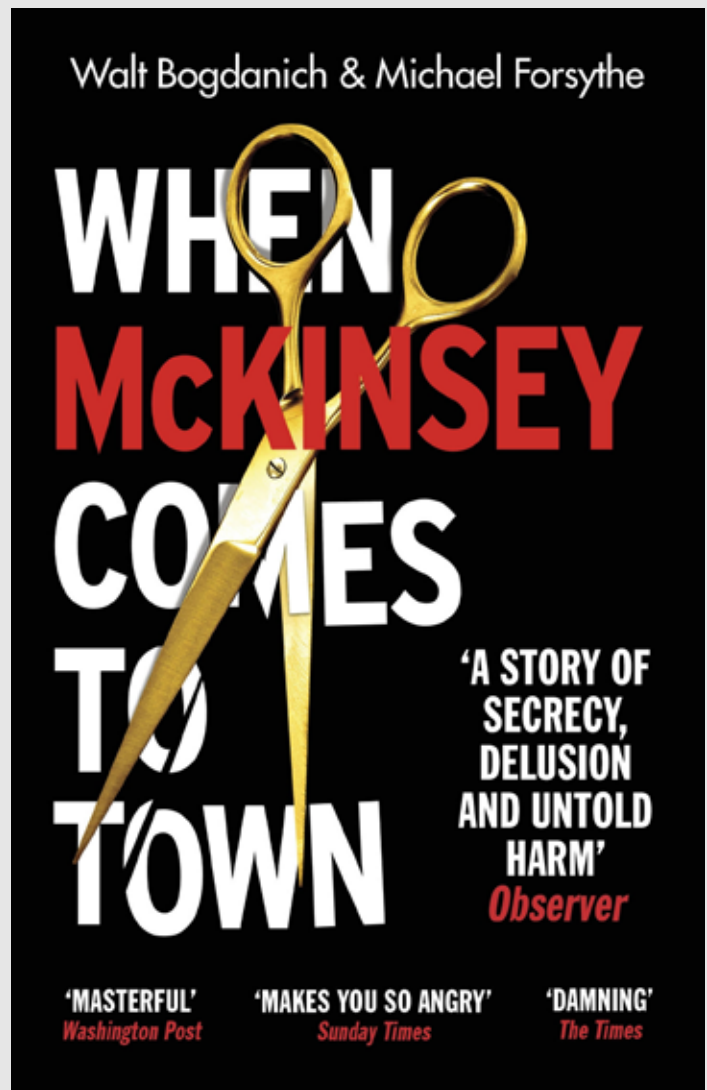
29 Cecil St., the site of the Toronto Jewish Old Folks Home established in 1918. Photo from the Baycrest website

Keep McKinsey Out of Hogtown: A Book Review

Have you ever heard of McKinsey & Company? Are you familiar with who their clients are? They certainly wish for your answer to the second question to be no. When McKinsey Comes to Town: The Hidden Influence of the World's Most Powerful Consulting Firm by Walt Bogdanich and Michael Forsythe aims to make it yes. This deeply-researched book, published in 2022, exposes how important it is for us—and our elected representatives—to understand just what it is that McKinsey does and how deep their influence runs.

The world of management consulting is intentionally mired in mystery and misdirection. As Bogdanich and Forsythe write, “McKinsey sold clients on its reputation as a firm that delivered scientific solutions to complex problems,” getting companies and governments alike to hire them under the belief they “had the wisdom and wherewithal that their managers lacked.” This book reveals this supposed magic for what many always suspected: overpaid, highly educated outsiders coming in to tell management how to cut workers’ jobs and thereby increase the bottom line for them and their fellow stakeholders, consequences be damned—health and safety included. If you’re interested in a lighter take on this topic, infused with dark comedy and debauchery, I’d recommend watching House of Lies, a scripted TV show set in this shadowy industry.

Unexpectedly—for me—and relevantly, for us, the introduction features an exploration



Book Cover of When McKinsey Comes to Town, courtesy of [Penguin Random House](#)

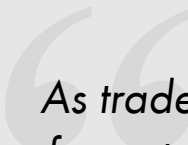
the introduction features an exploration of how McKinsey got involved with the U.S. Steel Corporation, resulting in workforce cuts that diminished the safety of their Gary, Indiana plant so significantly that two workers (and our USW comrades, no less) died on the job.

of how McKinsey got involved with the U.S. Steel Corporation, resulting in workforce cuts that diminished the safety of their Gary, Indiana plant so significantly that two workers (and our USW comrades, no less) died on the job. This dark trend would continue as McKinsey imposed cuts at Disneyland, where two customers died on rides and at least twenty others were seriously injured, after the elimination of key maintenance personnel. Consultants evidently thought that the lack of previous accidents meant routine maintenance checks were unnecessary and that the workforce performing them could be substantially cut, the deep irony being that the lack of accidents was, now even more demonstrably, a clear result of those routine maintenance checks by skilled workers with deep knowledge of the rides.

Bogdanich and Forsythe, likely through their connections and sources as long-term New York Times investigative reporters, come by a resource that they state no other reporters ever have: McKinsey's tightly guarded client list. This key document gives them insight into the depth of McKinsey's reach around the world and across industries, leading to chapters focused on McKinsey's work propping up wealth inequality, tobacco and vaping, opioids, fossil fuels, toxic debt, and even the Houston Astros during their infamous cheating scandal. They also manage to speak to several former McKinsey consultants, helping them illustrate the internal frustrations and disappointments faced by many optimistic workers lured in from ivy league colleges with promises of meaningful, social justice-oriented work. These bright young grads join "the firm" only to discover they are working such long hours to do meaningful things like increase the bottom line of Allstate Insurance. They do this noble work by helping to implement a system to aggressively fight meritorious claims, denying coverage to injured people with fully paid insurance policies that ought to have covered their losses, all for having the gall to refuse a lowball settlement offer.

As trade unionists, it's essential for us to understand the levers of power and by whom

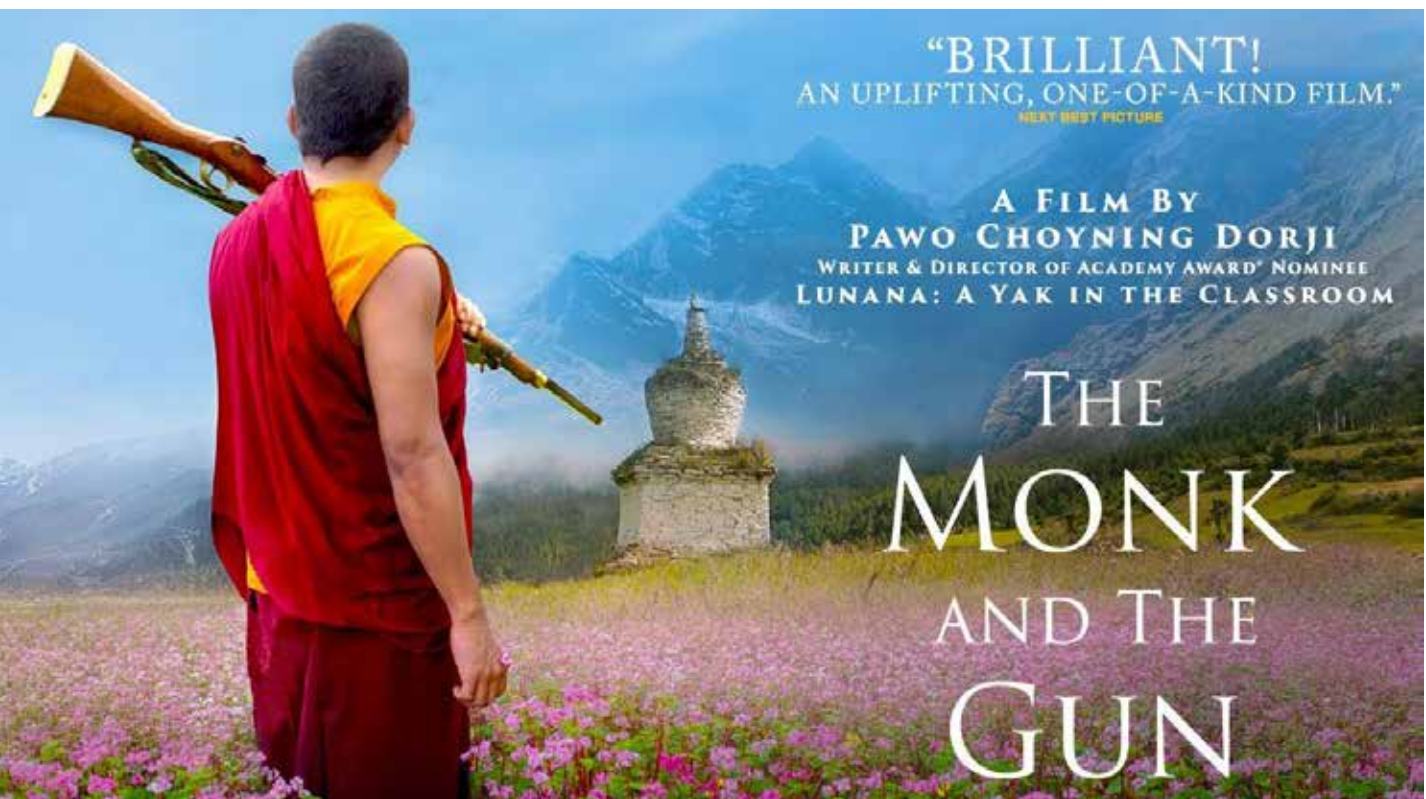
they are influenced. Various governments (including those of the United States, China, South Africa, Russia, Malaysia, and Saudi Arabia) and their agencies are revealed to hire McKinsey and Company to tell them how to cut costs, often by reducing services. It also turns out that McKinsey has advised almost every major pharmaceutical company along with their government regulators; this alarmingly clear potential conflict of interest is routinely dismissed by McKinsey through claims that they can keep the workers on each file entirely separate. The clients themselves were likely never aware of the potential conflict, due to the prized confidentiality of McKinsey's client list.



As trade unionists, it's essential for us to understand the levers of power and by whom they are influenced.

England's once-beloved National Health Service is one example that merits a whole chapter to tell of its decline, which includes hiring McKinsey for the first time in the 1970s and bringing them in again, almost fifty years later, to try tackling many of the same problems they'd failed to address in the interim and undo legislation they helped create. If only that money could have gone into actual health care and its essential workers instead...I bet they had a few solutions to offer too, at less cost.

Sukhpreet Sangha, Law Youth Summer Program



The Monk and the Gun promotional image, courtesy of YouTube.

Film Review: **The Monk and the Gun**

On March 2, my husband and I went to the Carlton Theatre to watch the film *The Monk and the Gun*. Ostensibly, the film is about an American who goes to Bhutan in pursuit of a Civil War era musket (gun) currently owned by an elderly Bhutanese man. The lead was furnished by a young Bhutanese man who somehow knew about the weapon and its owner. The backdrop to all of this is Bhutan's transition from a monarchy to a democracy and government officials' attempts to educate the largely rural population about what democracy is and how elections work.

The plot thickens when we discover that an elderly senior Buddhist monk wants to possess two guns by the next full moon for an event that will make things better for the changes the country is experiencing. A monk assistant to the senior monk also learns of the elderly man who possesses one gun; the same one the American has found when he visits that elderly gentleman.

The American cuts a deal for the musket, but when the monk arrives and asks for the gun, the elderly gentleman gifts it to the monk in gratitude for the senior monk's prayers and blessings for his village. When the American returns to pay the elderly gentleman, he learns that he has given it to the monk. The American and his Bhutanese driver (and finder of the elderly gentleman) catches up with the walking monk and strikes a deal to provide two weapons in exchange for the one musket; the exchange is to take place at the full moon event. This is the same date the government is holding a mock election to teach Bhutanese what an election is. It turns out that the full moon event involves the senior monk's dedication of a new stupa (a kind of Buddhist shrine), the foundation of which will include weapons of violence. He wanted the guns to throw them into the concrete foundation of the stupa.

I won't spoil the ending or other minor elements of the plot. Parts of the film explore the complexity of converting a country that has lived under a monarchy for centuries into a democracy. It poses some questions that we, living in a democracy of sorts, never think of when we see a country transitioning from an autocratic government to an elected one. It's worth a watch!

Gary Horenkamp, *Standardized Patient Program*

USW 1998 Happenings



Min Kim and Mary Danesh bartending at the USW holiday dinner



Moulika Ranikunta, Simona Montolova, Iz Leitch, Casual Unit members receiving bargaining swag. Photo by: Scott Eldridge



Members at the UTM Holiday Luncheon. Photo by: USW Local 1998.



Members at the UTSC Holiday Luncheon. Photo by: USW Local 1998.



Members at the USW Annual Holiday Party. Photo by: USW Local 1998.



Residence Dons Members at their Unit Holiday Party. Photo by: USW Local 1998.



USW 1998 members who attended the Vida Viva Health & Safety Training on February 29 and March 1, 2024. Photo courtesy of Scott Eldridge.



John Ankenman, Colleen Burke, Nik Redman, and Steven Craig at SMC Unit Holiday Party



Calvin Liang, Jennifer Cypher, and Bert Horvath at the UTS Unit Holiday Party.



John Ankenman and Jake Pereira handing over a prize to the residence dons member.



Brad James, former USW organizer for UoFT Staff-Appointed and Casual Unit taking a selfie with USW 1998 Members at the holiday social.



Amna Adnan and Jessica Gong, Casual Unit members receiving bargaining swag. Photo by: Scott Eldridge



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If you want to contribute to the next issue, please
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