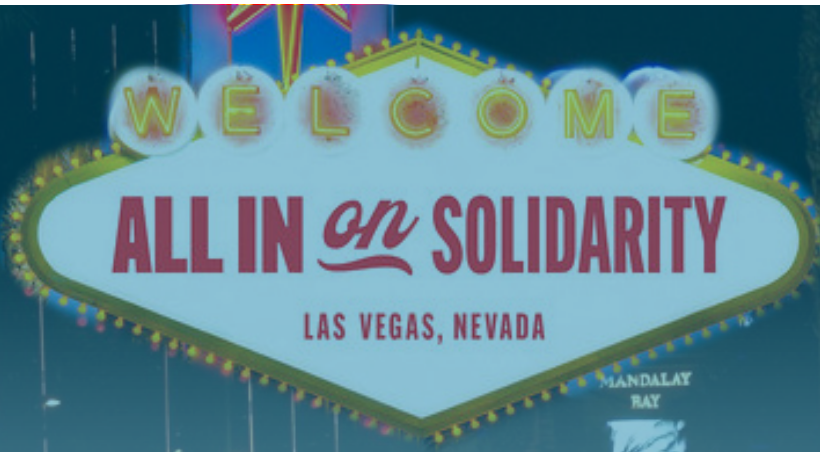


STEELDRUM

USW1998 NEWSMAGAZINE

WINTER 2025 | Vol.23 No.2



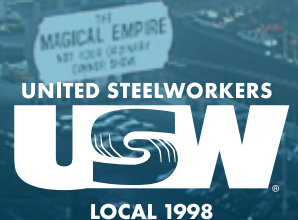
UNITED FOR A STRONGER FUTURE



Inside the SteelDrum:

Growing Our Sharing Circle - 17

How I Built A House With No Debt - 26



CONTENTS

- 3** **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**
- 5** Obituary: Leo Gerard
- 7** United for a Stronger Future
- 8** All in on Solidarity?? Steelworkers United for Palestine!
- 12** What Happens in Vegas
- 14** Divesting the UPP from Genocide, Apartheid, and Illegal Occupation
- 15** Invested in Crisis (Book Review)
- 17** Growing Our Sharing Circle
- 20** Unions as Living Guardians Across Generations
- 21** A Smorgasbord of Communications Strategies
- 23** St. Mike's Pay Equity Advances
- 26** How I Built a House with No Debt
- 29** Spotlight on Standing Committees
- 33** Why I Like USW Swag
- 35** SOAR Members' Summer Trip to Port Dover
- 36** Facing the Heat, How Ontario's Proposed Heat Stress Act Protects Workers
- 42** My Citizenship Ceremony
- 43** USW 1998 Happenings



Correction – Steel Drum

In the Summer 2025 edition of the Steel Drum (page 20), the replica wampum belt held by Andrea Johns was inadvertently identified as the Hiawatha Belt. It is in fact known as **Guswenta**, or more commonly referred to as the **Two Row Wampum Belt**. A **Hiawatha Belt** is featured on the cover of that issue of the Steel Drum. We deeply regret this error, and we are committed to learning from it and ensuring the utmost care and accuracy in future reporting on Indigenous practices and traditions.

For reference:

- **The Two Row Wampum Belt** (Guswenta) Onondaga Nation - [Two Row Wampum Belt](#).
- **The Hiawatha Belt:** Onondaga Nation - [Hiawatha Belt](#).

Correction – Steel Drum

In the Summer 2025 edition of the Steel Drum 2025 (Masthead), Meredith Rappaport was erroneously excluded from the list of Communications Committee members who assisted with this issue of the Steel Drum. We would like to take the opportunity to thank Meredith for taking all the photos for our USW Happenings page, creating the photo captions and documenting the many special events USW Local 1998 embarks on. With much appreciation, we apologize for the omission.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



On October 3, 2025, the President of U of T, Melanie Woodin, issued a letter to staff that indicated she was implementing a change in direction of the University's alternative work arrangements (AWA) program. The full meaning of Woodin's message is not clear, although the Union's reading of the text leads us to understand that it is not the University's intention to order all employees back to 100% on-campus work. It is our understanding that Woodin's plan is to implement a more restrictive AWA program so that there are more staff working on campus on any given day. As I am writing this report, Staff Appointed Unit President Tamara Vickery and I are working to get greater clarity on the details of Woodin's AWA plan.

It was the dedicated efforts of USW members that were at the heart of the move of the University's operations to online at the beginning of the COVID-19 lockdowns. Staff worked many unpaid hours to ensure that faculty and students could continue their teaching, research and learning. As the lockdowns wore on, an inadvertent consequence of having most of the University's work being done online was the recognition of the significant enhancement of an employee's work/life balance that came from working remotely. Child and elder care became

less of a burden for many employees. The pressure and stress caused by long commutes was relieved. The University continued to enjoy a high level of productivity from its staff.

When COVID related lockdowns came to an end, staff moved back to at least partial work on campus. Over the following months, a balance between in-person and remote work was reached, with many front-line employees working full time on campus and other staff working in hybrid arrangements. There is no

doubt in my mind that the needs of faculty and students were being well served. New collective agreement language was negotiated in 2022 and 2023 that recognized the new hybrid work reality.

In her October 3 announcement, Melanie Woodin wrote: 'Being present with and for one another matters. In our Statement of Institutional Purpose, we emphasize our dedication to "fostering an academic community in which the learning and scholarship of every member may flourish."' Woodin prioritizes the interests of faculty and students. Those interests are, of course, vitally important. All our jobs, whether we work at U of T, Victoria University, St. Michael's College or University of Toronto Schools, exist because of the academic life of the university or school. That said, the health and well-being of the staff must be properly considered by management.

The University has stated many times that they are committed to fostering a healthy work/life balance for its employees. In a 2019 article on the Benefits Canada website, Kelly Hannah-Moffat, U of T's Vice-President, People Strategy, Equity & Culture, talked about the University's Family Care Office, which supports employees

and their families. A passage in that article reads, "Kelly Hannah-Moffat, U of T's vice-president of human resources and equity, says the office [the Family Care Office] embodies the university's commitment to retaining its talent, noting it also helps set it apart as an employer. Part of that is being responsive to the holistic needs of employees inside and outside the workplace," she says. "Certainly, they come here to work, but they also have lives outside of their work."

AWAs can be an effective component in a broad program to support workers' holistic needs and efforts to achieve a healthy work/life balance. That truth fits comfortably with the fact that many employees find that they work more efficiently and are more productive when they work remotely. I have heard many times from members about how U of T's AWA program and the healthier work/life balance it brings to them make it more likely they will continue to work at the University.

Given that U of T benefits from having their employees on AWAs that continue to provide the workplace structure that robustly supports faculty and staff, given that AWAs help provide workers with the greater work/life balance the U of T has stated it supports, and given that the ability to work on campus and remotely undoubtedly leads to the University retaining valuable employees, the University's decision to degrade the AWA program and harm the well-being of many of its employees is disheartening. More importantly, it gives us the motivation to fight back.

At their October meeting, the Local 1998 Executive passed a motion that recommended to the Local's membership an expenditure of up to \$100,000 on a campaign to support continuing access to a fulsome AWA program for members who currently enjoy an AWA. The motion links the AWA campaign to sustainability, employment equity and access to affordable public transit. The Executive's recommended spending motion was passed at the October 15 general membership meeting.

We are looking at the possibility of joining other employee groups who are negatively impacted by the change in direction being implemented by the University. We are also looking for allies farther afield, such as the unionized provincial government workers.

Over the coming weeks and months, you will have the opportunity to work with your union to protect access to alternative work arrangements. I encourage members who are in jobs that are not compatible with AWAs to join in the effort. Our shared strength is made greater when we work together towards goals that may not directly serve our personal interests. We have an opportunity to work together in the months leading up to when we will be in collective bargaining with senior administrators at the University of Toronto, Victoria University, St. Michael's College and University of Toronto Schools.



John Ankenman, USW 1998 President

Obituary

Leo Gerard

USW Local 1998 and the entire USW family are mourning the loss of **Leo W. Gerard**, our longest-serving International President and one of the most respected labour leaders in the world. Gerard died on September 21, 2025, in his hometown of Sudbury. He was 78 years old.

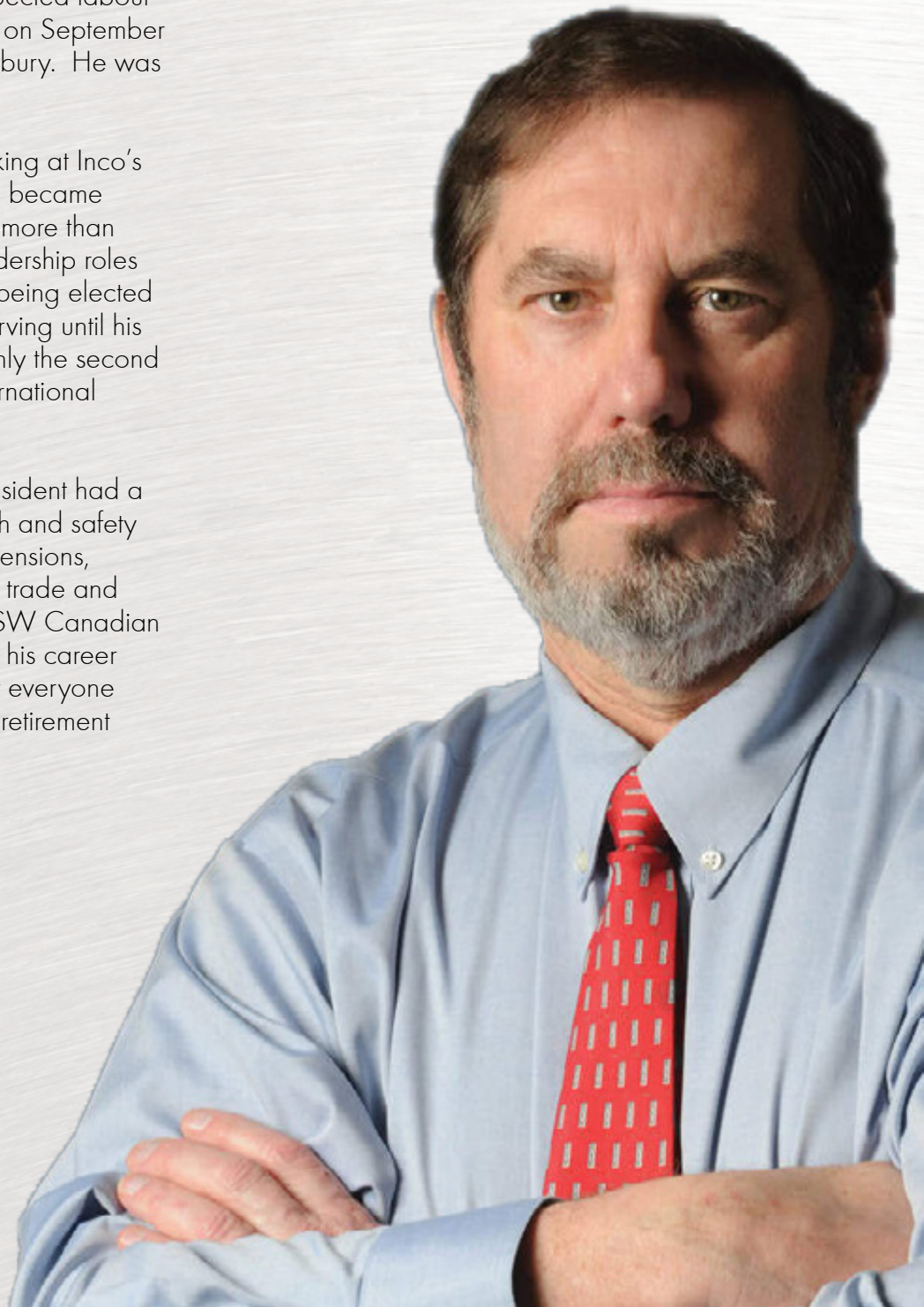
Born in 1947, Gerard started working at Inco's nickel smelter at age 18 and soon became active in USW Local 6500. Over more than five decades, he rose through leadership roles at every level of the union before being elected International President in 2001, serving until his retirement in 2019. Gerard was only the second Canadian to serve as USW's International President.

Gerard's work as International President had a positive effect on workplace health and safety issues, gender equality, fair pay, pensions, labour rights, global solidarity, fair trade and social justice. **Marty Warren**, USW Canadian National Director, said, "He spent his career building power for workers so that everyone could have safer jobs, better pay, retirement security and respect on the job."

In 2023, Gerard was appointed a Companion of the Order of Canada, the country's highest civilian honour, for his contributions to the labour movement, both in Canada and internationally.

In 2024, U of T and USW established the United Steelworkers/Leo Gerard Chair in Collective Bargaining

"He spent his career building power for workers so that everyone could have safer jobs, better pay, retirement security and respect on the job."



and Worker Representation at U of T's Centre for Industrial Relations and Human Resources. The role of the endowed chair focuses on teaching labour relations and fostering greater understanding of employment and workplace issues for policymakers, employers, unions and other stakeholders in Canada and on a global scale.

“The labour movement has lost a remarkable leader, but his vision and spirit will continue to inspire and guide workers.”

John Ankenman, Local 1998 President, noted, “The significance of Leo’s impact on the labour movement was made clear to me when, during the reception for the official launch of U of T’s United Steelworkers/Leo Gerard Chair in Collective Bargaining and Worker Representation, the co-founder of a major American investment company and the CEO of Stelco both spoke about how Leo had transformed their views on industry, workers and unions. Leo’s impact was broadly-based and profound.”

With Gerard’s passing, the labour movement has lost a remarkable leader, but his vision and spirit will continue to inspire and guide workers. We will honour him by carrying on the fight for fairness and justice.

Leo Gerard (1947-2025)

Margaret Bucknam (with acknowledgement of the use of International USW sources)



Our longest serving International President



Leo Gerard as a young Steelworker



Constitutional Convention April 7-10, 2025 Las Vegas, Nevada

United for a Stronger Future

The 2025 United Steelworkers (USW)

International Constitutional Convention was a powerful gathering that united thousands of delegates from every sector and region across North America and the Caribbean. For several days, we stood shoulder to shoulder—steelworkers, miners, healthcare workers, public sector employees, and more—bound by a common goal: to build a stronger, more united union in the face of growing challenges.

The convention was a vital opportunity to shape the future of our union through democratic debate and collective decision-making. From the outset, the message was clear: now, more than ever, we must be bold, strategic, and united. International President David McCall opened the convention with a resounding call to action, urging us to defend working people from political attacks, corporate greed, and economic injustice.

A major focus of the convention was the need to respond to escalating trade pressures, particularly tariffs that continue to threaten our industries and jobs. Delegates from manufacturing sectors shared firsthand stories about the toll that unfair trade practices have taken on their communities. Together, we passed resolutions demanding stronger enforcement of trade laws and protections for North American jobs. The message we sent to decision-makers in Washington and Ottawa was loud and

clear: workers must not be left behind in trade negotiations.

Another key issue was the increasing hostility toward public sector workers. As provinces and states attempt to erode collective bargaining rights and privatize essential services, USW made it clear that we will stand firm. I was especially proud to see public sector workers from across the continent speak passionately about defending their right to organize, bargain, and serve their communities with dignity. The convention reaffirmed our union's unwavering support for public workers and its commitment to fighting back against legislative overreach and austerity measures.

Throughout the week, delegates participated in workshops focused on organizing, health and safety, equity, and building local union power. I attended sessions on strategic bargaining and political action, where we shared tools and tactics to build stronger contracts, engage members, and influence the political landscape in favour of working people.

One of the most inspiring moments came during the open debate on constitutional resolutions. Delegates lined up at the microphones, not only to voice opinions but also to listen, compromise, and move forward together. That spirit of solidarity—the recognition that our strength lies in unity—defined the entire convention.



L to R: USW Local 1998 convention delegates John Ankenman, Andre Amaral, Laura Patterson, Scott Eldridge, Zhanina Bregu, Ruxandra Pop, and Ryan Lahti

I left Las Vegas energized and hopeful. The USW is more than a union—it's a movement of workers who believe in justice, fairness, and a better future for all. I'm proud to have represented Local 1998 at the convention and even prouder to return home with renewed purpose.

We have important work ahead of us: protecting jobs, defending our rights, and organizing for the future. But if the 2025 convention showed us anything, it's that when we come together, there's nothing we can't achieve.

Andre Amaral, Faculty of Arts & Science

All in on Solidarity???

Steelworkers United for Palestine!

The 2025 USW International Constitutional Convention was my first international policy convention (Canada, US, and the Caribbean, with partner unions in Mexico). I was extremely fortunate to attend with such a great group representing USW Local 1998.

Besides approximately 34 resolutions to speak to and vote on, there were many proceedings, guest speeches from the podium, remarks from the mics on the convention floor, as well as meetings and events that were very inspirational.

The "Higher Education Sector Meeting," attended by members from the universities of Pittsburgh, Queen's, Guelph, and Toronto (USW Local 1998), discussed several critical issues that other locals sought advice on including the

University Pension Plan (UPP). The UPP voluntarily divested of all Russian-owned holdings following United Nations sanctions. But, despite several divestment motions passed by USW Local 1998, UTFA (University of Toronto Faculty Association), CUPE Locals 3902 and 1230 and other members across Canada, the UPP continues to refuse to commit to "divestment from military industries in general and from companies supplying the Israeli military specifically."

Later that night, USW Local 675 (Los Angeles) hosted a "Steelworkers United for Palestine" meeting attended by Local 1998's President John Ankenman, Feyisami Adara, Zhanina Bregu, and myself. Also in attendance were members of Local 3657 (all across the United States, Canada, and the Caribbean) and Local 9562 (Pittsburgh).



L to R: John Ankenman, Adonica Huggins, Feyisami Adara and Zhanina Bregu at the Constitutional Convention. Photo courtesy of Adonica Huggins

Amidst an evening of small and large group political discussions and an address by international guest, Maicon Michel Vasconcelos da Silva, Board of Directors, ABC Metalworkers Union—employed by Mercedes-Benz in São Bernardo do Campo, Brazil, and serving as Secretary of International Relations of the National Confederation of Metalworkers of the Central Unica dos Trabalhadores (Brazil’s Unified Workers’ Central)—we talked about tactics for an action we would carry out the following day.

In the early morning as the 2,111 delegates started arriving, John and I were stationed at one entrance to the convention, while Feyisami, Zhanina and other participating members from the solidarity locals positioned themselves at other entrances, to hand out “Steelworkers United for Palestine” flyers to other delegates, against the expressed wishes of the USW international leadership!

Prior to the convention, the Resolutions Committee had already rejected all four strongly worded “Steelworkers United for Palestine” resolutions: No. 12, submitted by USW Local 3657 (District 10); No. 19, submitted by USW Local 675 (District 10); No. 20, submitted by USW Local 9562 (District 10); and No. 47, submitted by Local 1998 (District 6). In their place, in a deeply offensive strategic move by top USW leadership, a new Resolution No. 5 “Global Unity and Activism” was substituted. Essentially, it was an ‘everything but the kitchen sink’ resolution that minimally touched on almost every political

situation in the world while doing none of them any justice. In one of thirty-two “whereases” contained in Resolution No. 5 alone, it called for the delivery of basic supplies to Gaza but was otherwise non-committal.

These were the combined “Steelworkers United for Palestine” resolutions that were ‘rejected’ and instead referred to the International Executive Board, essentially to wither and die:

“Whereas we mourn the tragic loss of all Palestinian and Israeli lives both before and after the attacks of October 7th, 2023, including the decades-long military occupation, forced displacement, and oppression endured by Palestinians since 1948;

Whereas since October 7th, 2023, Israel has significantly intensified its attacks on the Palestinian people, with relentless bombardments killing over 46,000 people in the Gaza Strip, a total estimated death toll of up to 78,500, nearly two million people displaced, and government-sanctioned settler violence increasing in the West Bank;

Whereas the current conditions of violence keep the Palestinian people from being able to work with security and dignity: unemployment rates have soared; constant Israeli attacks have destroyed an estimated two-thirds of structures in Gaza, reducing most workplaces to rubble; and West Bank residents are restricted from traveling to work;

Whereas various human rights organizations, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the Israeli organization B'Tselem, and the United Nations Human Rights Council, as well as the International Court of Justice, have found that Israel's policies in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) constitute systematic racial domination consistent with the definition of apartheid articulated in the 1998 Rome Statute;

Whereas since October 2023 Palestinian labor organizations have urgently appealed to the global labor movement for immediate action to end all forms of complicity with Israel's crimes;

Whereas labor unions and workers' organizations worldwide, including Unite the Union in Great Britain and Ireland (the USW's partner in the transatlantic Workers Uniting federation), have condemned Israeli policies of apartheid against the Palestinian people;

Whereas 8 major US labor unions, together representing a majority of organized workers in the country, have formed the National Labor Network for Ceasefire and are calling for an immediate end to military aid to Israel; Whereas the USW routinely takes positions on matters of international affairs on the side of justice and in expression of global solidarity, as, for example, with the passage of resolutions against apartheid in South Africa at both the 1986 and the 1988 International Conventions;

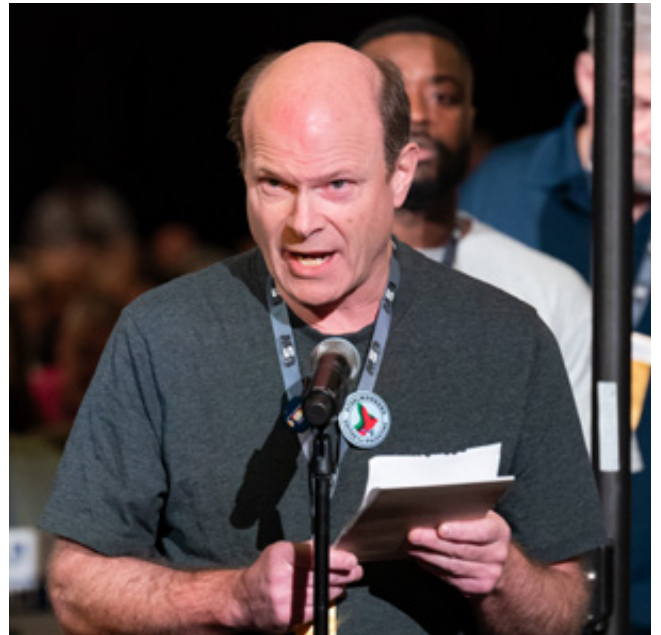
Whereas the Steelworkers Humanity Fund in Canada has already donated \$10,000 to Oxfam to support civilians in Gaza; Whereas the USW is committed to civil and human rights, and condemns all forms of hate, including antisemitism, Islamophobia, anti-Arab sentiment, and anti-Palestinian racism;

Therefore, be it resolved:

That the USW issue a statement calling for an immediate and permanent ceasefire, an end to all forms of violence and discrimination against the Palestinian people, and for Israel to respect its human rights obligations under international law;

That the USW issue a statement in support of the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions;

That the USW affiliate with the National Labor Network for Ceasefire, joining the American Postal Workers Union (APWU), the Association of Flight Attendants (AFA-CWA), National Nurses United (NNU), the International Union of



John Ankenman makes an impassioned plea for justice in solidarity

Painters and Allied Trades (IUPAT), the National Education Association (NEA), the National Writers Union (NWXU), the United Auto Workers (UAW), and the United Electrical Workers (UE);

That the USW urge other labor unions and organizations, including the AFL-CIO and its affiliated organizations, to join these calls to action;

That the USW support all workers who risk intimidation for exercising their right to political speech and political activism in support of Palestinians and in opposition to the Israeli regime and occupation;

That the USW call on the United States government to end all US military aid to the State of Israel, which is funded by our tax dollars;

That the USW form a committee to examine its connection to the war in Palestine, assess whether its current investments align with the values of international solidarity, justice, and human rights, and develop an ethical investment policy." Several people spoke from the floor in opposition to the heavily revised and reviled Resolution No. 5, and in support of the "Steelworkers United for Palestine" resolutions, but a related motion regrettably failed.

Here are some of the remarks John Ankenman made at the mic:

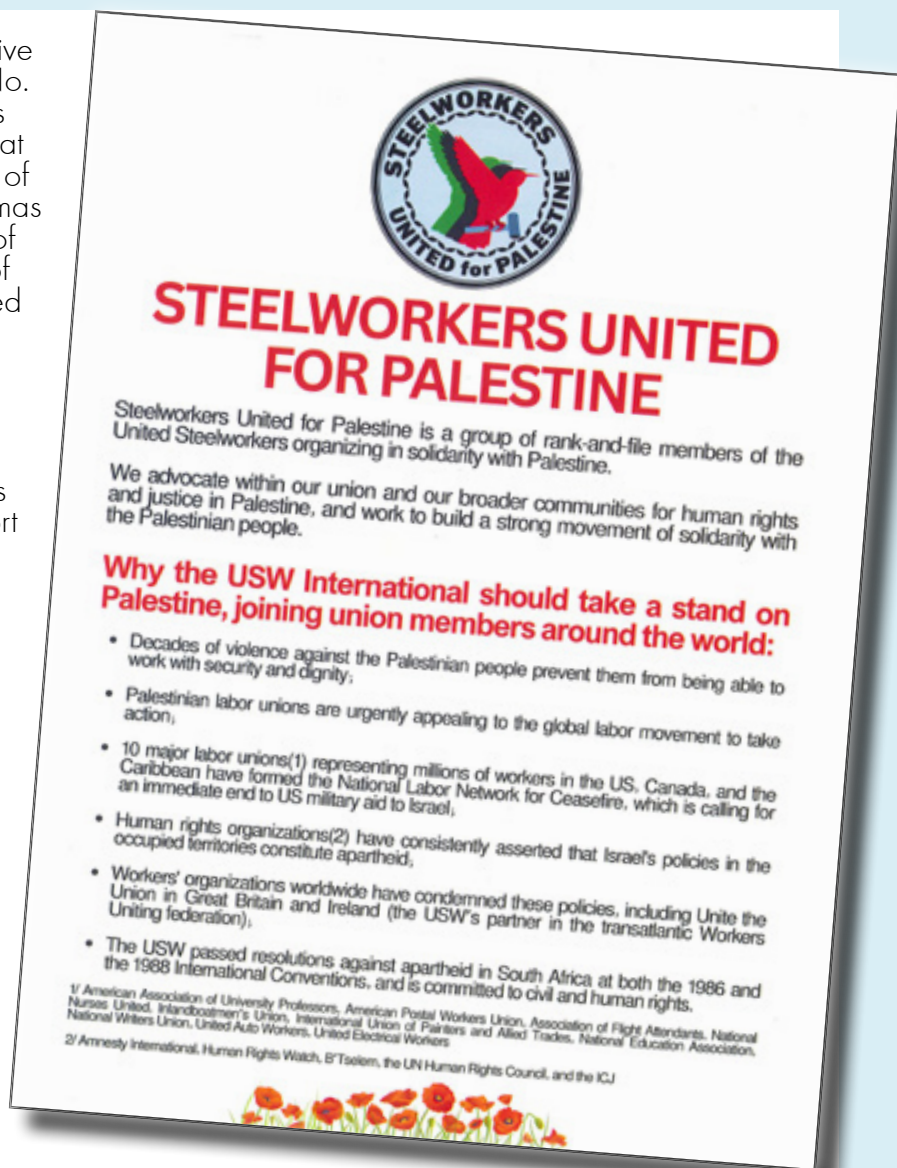
"I am happy that the International Executive has added language to the Resolution No. 5 Global Unity & Activism that addresses the Gaza situation, but it is unfortunate that the added text includes a condemnation of the horrific October 2023 attack by Hamas without a corresponding condemnation of the Israeli State's subsequent genocide of Palestinians. Calling for aid to be allowed into Gaza, lasting peace and indicating support for a two-state solution is not enough.

The resolution needs text that includes a condemnation of the Israeli State's actions and commits our union to solidarity support for the Palestinian trade unions that the Israeli State is trying to crush as part of their assault on the Palestinian people.

The Local 1998 Executive has issued several statements related to these issues. The Local 1998 membership has passed a motion that calls on the administrators of University of Toronto and Victoria University members' pension plan, the UPP, to divest from companies that support the Israeli military, and we are working towards achieving that goal.

It would be helpful and meaningful if our International Union would commit to active solidarity with Palestinians in general and Palestinian trade unions specifically."

Adonica Huggins, Student Life



"Steelworkers United for Palestine" flyer

My Story

After graduating from Kinesiology & Physical Education at U of T, I returned as a part-time student while working full-time travelling across Canada with VIA Rail, as other family members had already worked there for decades.

In 1956, my dad and his eldest brother had immigrated together from St. Kitts and Nevis, in the Caribbean, as accomplished Police Inspectors who applied to work for the Metropolitan Toronto Police Force - which dismissed the idea of hiring "coloured" officers to protect white people. Like most Black men and women at the time, their employment options were limited. Although the Huggins brothers were hired by Canadian National Railways (CN), both Canadian Pacific Railways (CP) and CN had long histories of anti-Black racism which included firing Black men outright for trying to organize their own union even though they were not allowed to join the existing union.

It was Black Sleeping Car Porters who tirelessly lobbied the federal government to demand that railway employers end their racist union practices, which they finally did only after legislation was passed in 1964. In 1977, VIA Rail Canada was formed, which took over passenger services from both railway companies and inherited the union, Canadian Brotherhood of Railway, Transport and General Workers (CBRT&GW).

My father, who became a Service Manager, also served as the Local Chairperson and Grievance Officer well into the 1980s. I was later elected as CBRT&GW Local 282's Secretary, before quitting in 1990 to become a full-time Indigenous Studies student at what is now the First Nations University on the Regina campus. I was a delegate to the May 1990 Canadian Labour Congress Constitutional Convention and still have photos of me caucusing with the 37-member Ontario Coalition of Black Trade Unionists in attendance, and separately with an even smaller "Lesbian and Gay Caucus."

What Happens in Vegas

On April 6th, 2025, at 6:25pm I landed in Las Vegas, Nevada, for the 2025 USW International Conference. As a first-time delegate from USW Local 1998 to any sort of union conference, it was a great opportunity to understand how the puzzles of the local, national and international union fit together.

This was my very first time in Vegas, which, up until this point, had only existed in the movies. But those larger-than-life portrayals of the infamous city did not prepare me for what I was about to experience.

The city was bold, hazy and brash. The juxtaposition of gorgeous desert foliage and dusty red mountains with harsh bright lights and cigarette-perfumed air, made my head spin.

At the Flamingo Hotel, the 'All In' theme of the convention seemed to be inspired by the idea of betting it all. I'd like to offer another interpretation of the phrase. You can find anything and everything in Vegas. I was amazed to discover that the majority of workers on the strip are Steelworkers. From the diversity of the people I met, imitations of world-famous landmarks and the sheer number of hotels, I felt like you could find it all in Vegas!



What a view



Baby duck!



Fake flamingos



You couldn't walk 5 feet on the strip without bumping into a slot machine



And real flamingos!



Las Vegas or the tropics ?

Feyisami Adara, Kinesiology and Physical Education

All photos were taken with a Minolta x 700 on Kodak Gold film.

Divesting the UPP from Genocide, Apartheid, and Illegal Occupation

Since 2023, many of us have watched with horror at Israel's ongoing genocide in Gaza, its expansion of illegal settlements in the West Bank, and the greater entrenchment of its system of apartheid across occupied Palestinian territories. In response, workers from USW 1998 have deepened our connections with other university labour groups to examine Canadian complicity, and intervene where we can to resist the genocide.

Beginning in early 2024, USW 1998 members came together to consider our options, and quickly identified the University Pension Plan (UPP) as a key source of our complicity. As the UPP manages billions of dollars of our retirement funds – our deferred wages – we've seen our assets invested in Israel's genocide with little concern beyond profit maximization. UPP's problematic investments are in plain view through its public disclosures.

After analyzing UPP's portfolio, and sharing our findings during info sessions with members, we brought our concerns to USW 1998 leadership and put them into action. On July 18, 2024, USW Local 1998 passed a motion calling for the UPP to: "implement an immediate screen on any new investments in military industries in general and, due to the State of Israel's ongoing assault on the people of Gaza, an immediate screen on any new investments in companies supplying the Israeli military specifically." The motion also urged the UPP to "announce a rapid timeline for complete divestment from military industries in general and from companies supplying the Israeli military specifically."

In the year since this motion was passed, USW 1998 has been joined by similar motions from other UPP member labour organizations: the first was in fact from Trent University Faculty Association (June 2024), and subsequent motions have been passed by CUPE 3902 (August

2024), CUPE 1230 (November 2024), U of T Faculty Association (May 2025), and CUPE 1281 (July 2025).

This wave of motions demonstrates a broader collective response to Israel's atrocities, now representing over 10,000 post-secondary workers who are members of UPP. Increasingly, university workers are standing for human rights and Palestinian sovereignty over the profit-maximizing actions of our pension plan. As our knowledge grows, we see that responsible investing is possible and necessary, and that a rate of return doesn't supersede our values.

For their part, the UPP has to date shown no meaningful action toward implementing meaningful divestment. On paper, the UPP would seem to have precedent and policy supporting divestment, due in large part to the prior fossil fuel divestment campaign led by members. UPP has an "Investment Exclusion Policy" which outlines excluded nations, industries, or companies from its investments (including Russia upon its invasion of Ukraine). It also maintains a "Responsible Investing Policy" which states: "UPP respects internationally recognized human rights and seeks to identify and address risks related to adverse human rights impacts contributed to or directly linked to our investments." UPP has also





Students in St. John's, Newfoundland, stage a punk rock concert in support of Palestine
Photo courtesy of Rebecca Chua

recently created an "Inequality Stewardship Plan" which identifies the detrimental effects of "inequality." This policy, too, is being violated by continued support of Israeli apartheid—one of the highest expressions of inequality.

Even a cursory review of these policies shows them to be consistent with our divestment demands. And yet, meaningful divestment remains elusive so long as UPP fails to implement it. But we won't give up: there are still more UPP member groups to reach, other pension plans to divest, and further actions we can take as workers. Divestment is a pillar of political action that will hurt the pocketbooks of any companies that benefit from Israel's genocide, illegal occupation, and systemic application of apartheid policies.

To learn more about the campaign, and get involved, visit www.divestmyupp.ca

Fraser McCallum

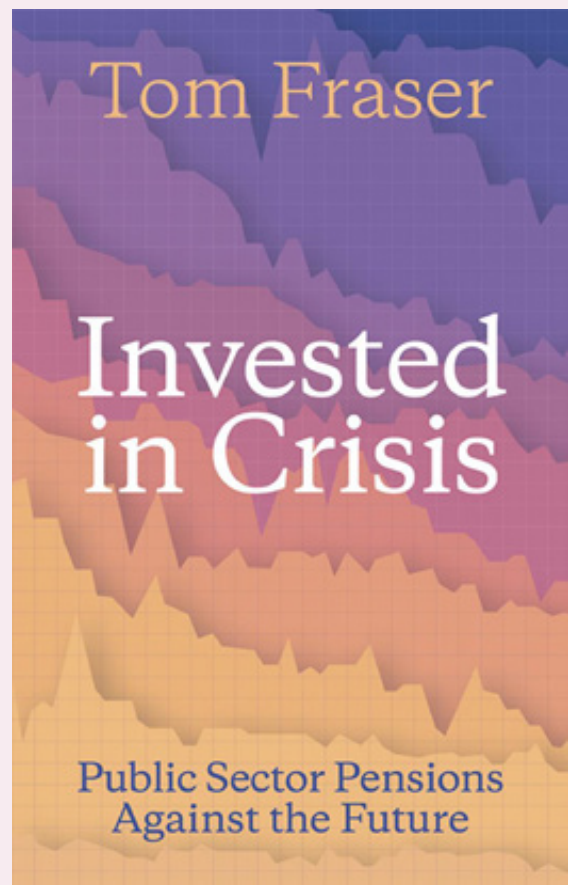
USW 1998 Workers' Campaign for UPP
Divestment

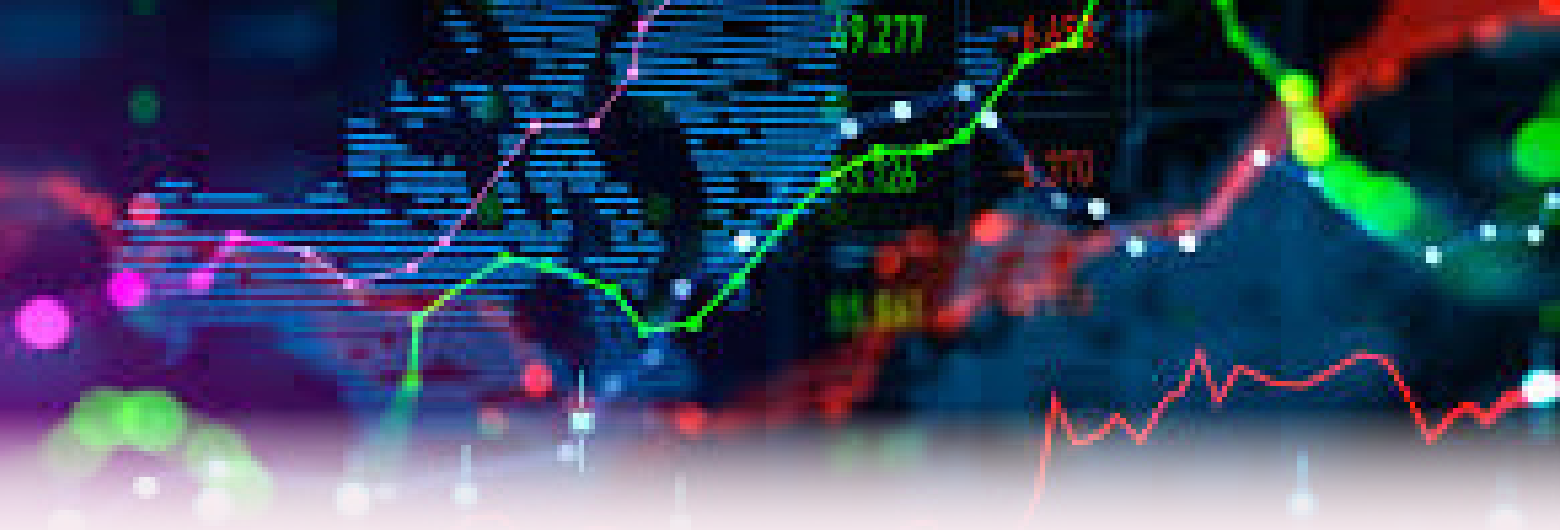
Invested in Crisis Book Review

Invested in Crisis
By Tom Fraser
Between the Lines Press 2024
133 pages

The housing crisis seems to be top of mind for almost everyone living in our city. Whether it's talk of housing prices or rental costs, many are feeling the precarity and uncertainty that comes with an increasingly unaffordable housing market. But have you ever considered how your pension might be contributing to the problem?

Tom Fraser's *Invested in Crisis* highlights the direct relationship between the housing affordability crisis and pension fund real estate investment. Looking specifically at public sector pension funds in Ontario, Fraser tracks the history of how they came to be some of the biggest real estate players in our province and, in some cases, even globally.





Ontario municipal workers and teachers are both groups of unionized workers who have the benefit of pensions to rely on in their retirement. But those pensions are increasingly reliant on the financialization of real estate for their returns. As Fraser notes, OMERS (Ontario Municipal Employees' Retirement System) owns Oxford Properties which, in 2020, had about \$60 billion in real estate holdings. Cadillac Fairview, known to most for its ownership of various shopping malls in Toronto (Eaton Centre, Sherway Gardens etc.), is itself owned entirely by the OTPP (Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan).

These funds further the financialization of housing, with an inherent fiduciary responsibility to create returns for pensioners by keeping rents and prices high. Those returns largely come from working-class renters who have already been priced out of home ownership by low wages and financial speculation. This places pensioned, unionized workers in a contradiction where they may benefit, in the long term, from returns predicated on the precarity of other working-class people, while struggling themselves in the short term with the same issues of unaffordability.

An example close to home is the group of Thorncliffe Park tenants who, until recently, had been withholding their rent since May 2023 as result of rent increases by their landlord Starlight Investments. The federal public service's pension fund, PSP (Public Sector Pension) Investments, was implicated in the situation because of its partnership with Starlight as part of their real estate portfolio.

Although, at first glance, pension funds may seem innocuous, where they choose to invest can be impactful, especially in the case of large funds holding billions of dollars. Increasingly, union activists are advocating for these investments to be reflective of their collective values. Here at Local 1998, our membership has passed motions over the last year calling on the University Pension Plan (UPP) to divest from fossil fuels (Motion 2024-43) and from military industries including companies specifically supplying the Israeli military (Motion 2024-12). As union members, it's important that we stay aware of how our collective assets are invested and what our contributions are funding.

If ethical investing has been on your mind or you're just looking to learn a bit more about the world of pensions, I highly recommend *Invested in Crisis*. At just 133 pages, it is a quick but insightful read that will likely leave you with more questions!

Zhanina Bregu, Kinesiology and Physical Education

National Gathering of Indigenous Steelworkers July 6-8, 2025, Winnipeg, Manitoba

Growing Our Sharing Circle

The sound of my alarm rang at 5am on July 6th. The day had finally arrived! For weeks, I had been preparing for my trip to Winnipeg to attend the 4th National Gathering for Indigenous Steelworkers: Growing our Circle - and growing my circle within the union was something I aspired to. This would be my first time attending this gathering.

My name is Amanda Andrews, and I am from Neyaashiinigiing. I am English on my mother's side and Ojibway, Potawatomi and Oneida on my father's side. In my younger years, I worked in unionized employment but did not fully understand what being part of a union meant. All I knew was that it was "something good," as I had observed family members seek unionized jobs. After working for many years in the non-profit sector, I found myself working at the University of Toronto in a unionized role. This time, I had more knowledge about unions. I felt inspired by my older cousin, who was very active in his union, and often shared stories of his involvement. It was his positive experiences that inspired me to get involved in the work of USW Local 1998. Today, I see the union not only as "something good," but a space for meaningful change.



*Alecia Mcleod (left) and Amanda Andrews (right) lead the session on Indigenous Women of Steel
Photo courtesy of Brett Barden, USW District 3*

Preparing for the trip took careful planning. As a single Indigenous parent with sole responsibility for my twin daughters, residing in an urban setting often comes with unique challenges. With no family in the city to rely on for support (as both my parents had recently passed), I reached out to my close family friend, who kindly agreed to care for my children while I was away. The day before my departure, she drove 3.5 hours to Toronto and settled in at my home. As any parent knows, planning trips can sometimes feel overwhelming, especially if there are extra needs to be considered. Being an overpacker, I packed, unpacked and repacked several times - and still managed to overpack!

The night before my flight, I barely slept, I was so nervous. I was not very familiar with Winnipeg (Treaty One Territory); I had only visited the city a couple times in the past. Thankfully, my best friend, who lives in Fort Francis, drove 3 hours to meet me at the airport. She helped me get acquainted with the area; we toured around and scoped out the event venue, the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. At the end of the first day, I had a sense of the area and felt a little more grounded. If you ever visit Winnipeg,

I encourage you to visit The Forks and learn about the history of the area, the traditional lands of the Anishinaabe, Inineew and Dakota Peoples as well as the National Homeland Arc of the Red River Metis.

The gathering began the next morning. As I walked towards the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, I noticed many Indigenous folks heading in the same direction. Instantly, I felt a sense of connection and belonging. At registration, we were welcomed with a bag of resources, along with a painted feather and leather medicine pouch. I am thankful for all who contributed to the information provided as well as the wonderful gifts.

The gathering by far exceeded my expectations. It was a full two days of knowledge sharing and connection. The sharing circle seating format created a space that felt both inclusive and welcoming.

Several speakers left a lasting impression on me. I will carry their words with me as I move forward. Knowledge Carrier Eric Flett's wisdom and humour reassured me that the work I have been doing at the University of Toronto is on the right path. I was moved by the empowering words of Carol McCorrister, and I learned about the impactful work being done by the National Indigenous Committee of the United Steelworkers Union through speakers Tshakepesh Jerome of USW Local 7493 and Brett Bird of USW Local 2009. Julia McKay introduced a new resource that I hadn't known existed. I invite everyone

to have a look at the resources that have been developed at <https://usw.ca/equity-for-indigenous-people/>. Manitoba's Premier, Wab Kinew, also joined us and shared encouraging words regarding unions that uplifted the entire space.

One highlight of Day 1 was learning about the course, Unionism on Turtle Island. Hearing from both facilitators and past participants sparked my interest in the course. I left eager to attend the course in the future and perhaps one day even contribute as a facilitator.

Day 2 was just as inspiring as Day 1. I was honoured to be asked to speak alongside the incredible Alecia Mcleod from USW Local 7913 as part of the Indigenous Women of Steel session. Listening to the advocacy and leadership being shared made me feel in good company, united in the work we do for the generations that follow us. Then, we had the opportunity to hear from MP Leah Gazan. I was beyond inspired by her words about the power we hold when we stand together.

We also heard from Food First Manitoba, who expressed thanks to the Steelworkers Humanity Fund (<https://usw.ca/humanity-fund/>). for its support, another initiative I was unaware existed.

Wab Kinew, Premier of Manitoba, addresses the 4th National Gathering for Indigenous Steelworkers Photo courtesy of Rebecca Chua





Esplanade Riel, a side-spar, cable-stayed pedestrian bridge that spans the Red River, is named after Louis Riel. Photo courtesy of Rebecca Chua

We later welcomed two amazing women miners, Guadalupe Paniagua Choque and Ninfa Cayo Mamani, who had traveled all the way from Bolivia to share their stories and advocacy work, followed by Brendon Jacque, who shared his unique journey as an Inuit steelworker. All were equally moving.

The gathering closed with words from USW National Director Marty Warren, who shared gratitude for the gathering. It brought tears to my eyes to hear that the gathering had grown year after year, growing that circle.

Words cannot express the way I felt upon leaving the gathering. I was filled with hope and pride. The number of individuals I connected with, the diverse communities and industries represented, and the shared passion for making change was powerful beyond words. I feel supported in the work I do and aim to do. I look forward to the 5th National Gathering for Indigenous Steelworkers, and I am excited to see that circle grow.

Amanda Andrews, Indigenous Student Life

Did You Know?



Louis Riel circa 1876, Hall and Lowe photographers, Archives of Manitoba

- Louis Riel was a founding father of the province of Manitoba and a leader of the Métis people.
- He led the Red River Rebellion in opposition to the transfer of Rupert's Land by the Hudson's Bay Company to the Dominion of Canada without consulting the Métis people
- As head of the provisional government, his negotiated list of rights formed the basis of the Manitoba Act, which in 1870 brought Manitoba into Confederation as Canada's fifth province
- Despite having been re-elected twice and the only Member of Parliament not to be implicated in the Canadian Pacific Railway Scandal that led to the resignation of the John A. MacDonald government, Riel was expelled from the House of Commons.
- Riel was asked to lead the Saskatchewan Métis in the North-West Resistance in 1885, advocating for the rights of Métis and First Nations people in the North-West Territories
- Defeated at Batoche, he was convicted of high treason and, despite widespread calls for clemency, particularly from Quebec, incensed by Ontario settlers being given priority to land, Riel was sentenced to death by hanging.
- Louis Riel's last words before his execution were, "I have nothing but my heart, I have given it long ago to my country".

CBTU Conference
Aug 15-17, 2025, Albany, New York

Unions as Living Guardians Across Generations

At the **Coalition** of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU) Region One Conference in Albany, New York, hundreds of members heard the story of how the CBTU came into existence. CBTU is rooted in a long history of resistance since 1972 against the exclusion of Black workers from mainstream society. The conference highlighted how systemic injustice continues to shape the daily lives of Black communities. Incarceration remains a travesty, as punishment extends far beyond the prison gates, affecting entire families regardless of a person's criminal record.

A vast majority of members at the conference had close experiences with incarceration. Sharing these experiences encourages participants to actively contribute to the core political issues that negatively impact the community. Discussions revealed how the burden of incarceration falls heavily on families.

In Canada and the United States, the cost of staying connected with an incarcerated loved one can be staggering. A 15-minute phone call can cost a minimum of \$6. In some states, in-person visits have been replaced by video calls to generate more revenue from prisoners' families. Additionally, commissary prices for snacks like pizza or soda are often marked up 30-40% compared to prices in outside stores. Every moment of contact - whether a letter, a call, or a visit - translates into another expense. For many families, these unexpected costs quickly become overwhelming, especially when the incarcerated person also has dependents relying on them.

The union is not only the organization that bargains on behalf of members or handles specific cases. While those are some of the largest responsibilities, history shows that the union functions as a living organism, working



*L to R: Adonica Huggins, Scott Eldridge and Jin Kim at the CBTU Conference.
Photo courtesy of Jin Kim*

to build a better society in solidarity. Living organisms need fuel to survive. However, survival also depends on renewal, and renewal must come from young members, the very people who are generating new power for the union. The conference highlighted the importance of inviting young people into the union and encouraging them to participate in union activism. As a young person myself, I believe the reason why young members, particularly in the Casual Unit, are not active is similar to why some young people are generally not interested in politics. We are tired of the long lists of agenda items we are presented with in our 20s and the boxes we are expected to check. As a result, we are often unaware of the

behind-the-scenes work that needs to be done to improve our working conditions. In fact, many of my colleagues had no idea about the protections they receive from a union; and some were surprised to discover annual raises were secured through bargaining.

At the beginning of the conference, it was emphasized that the union represents the middle class of society, which is the goal for many after graduation. Most young members do not recognize this. There is a difference between not being able to raise a voice and choosing not to raise a voice. Bringing people to the union starts with making the union visible. There is no silver lining to this challenge. Even so, it is important to set a baseline to address key issues: it is never too late to invite young people into the union and to demonstrate unity in solidarity.

Even as the CUPE 4092 strike, involving Air Canada flight attendants, was covered in every major media outlet; it was impossible to ignore the union's message. This allowed young Canadians, including young union members, to see that solidarity is real, that solidarity has power, and that solidarity can bring about change. We all need to spread the word about the change that unions champion, particularly to young people. Our responsibility is to intergenerationally carry forward the values of unionism, especially those of USW 1998, proving through its members that the union is a guardian of all workers.

Jin Kim, Kinesiology & Physical Education

CALM Convention June 5-7, 2025, St John's, Newfoundland

A Smorgasbord of Communications Strategies

Attending the Canadian Association of Labour Media (CALM) Convention was a powerful reminder of the importance of storytelling, organizing, and communicating with our members. The convention turned out to be a smorgasbord of multiple workshops facilitated by various labour communicators, organizers, and digital strategists coming together to share best practices, lessons learned, and strategies for moving forward in a rapidly shifting media landscape.



*Rebecca Chua, Steel Drum Editor, and Margaret Bucknam,
Communications & Outreach Coordinator at Quidi Vidi Village
Photo by Richard Waters*



Lobster traps for sale in charming Quidi Vidi village, St John's, Newfoundland
Photo by Margaret Bucknam

What I Learned:

1. Always be campaigning, with every member-to-member conversation.

Every interaction is a chance to build power and shape the narrative. A cautionary term that surfaced was **“enshittification”** – a reminder of how platforms and systems can decay or become less useful as they’re over-monetized or misused. The takeaway: focus on authentic, value-driven, in-person, long-term engagement rather than chasing short-term social media metrics.

2. Digital tools are powerful, if used thoughtfully.

There was robust discussion about digital tools used to connect with members. Some of the social media, email platform, and peer-to-peer texting tools that were referenced included:

- Matrix – direct chat
- Slack – peer-to-peer
- Discourse – peer-to-peer
- CallHub – digital organizing, campaigning & canvassing

All tools can be powerful, but they require active moderation and thoughtful implementation.

3. Facebook isn’t dead.

Facebook’s usefulness depends entirely on your specific membership base and demographics. Some union workplaces think it’s a bit of a dinosaur if their main employees are younger, but for others in Northern Ontario, it’s their only form of communication and it works well for them. The membership will dictate what you should do. Blue Sky is a nice alternative to X (formerly Twitter), but no one is on it, so how relevant is it? It’s better to be present on only a few social media platforms that are executed well, rather than on many that are executed poorly. The takeaway? Consider implementing CallHub, an organizing platform that provides voice and text messaging communication tools as another way to connect with members. This would require obtaining members’ telephone numbers first, but it could be an effective way to connect with younger members (via text) to get the messaging out. It can also be used to call, text, or send out automated dialers (voice messages in bulk). It may be used sparingly for things like pop-up events and bargaining.

4. Using short videos to connect with members by humanizing issues that members can relate to.

A strong emphasis was placed on telling personal stories to make issues relatable to members. While one person might feel small in the face of systemic challenges, hearing from other members magnifies those voices, allowing members to relate. This is frequently used in organizing, or to build power within the membership.

5. Mailchimp alternatives.

Everyone uses Mailchimp. I didn't meet anyone who used an alternate program. However, there are two main Canadian platforms for sending emails from Canada, namely, Evoke and Cyber Impact. There is also CakeMail, but no one I spoke to had used the system, although they had heard of it. I was told that none of the other platforms are as slick as Mailchimp, but are likely comparable in price and would have support from Canada's Anti-Spam Legislation (CASL) standards, which protect consumers from unsolicited commercial emails and other electronic communications by regulating the sending of commercial electronic messages (CEMs) in Canada.

Margaret Bucknam, Communications and Outreach Coordinator, USW1998

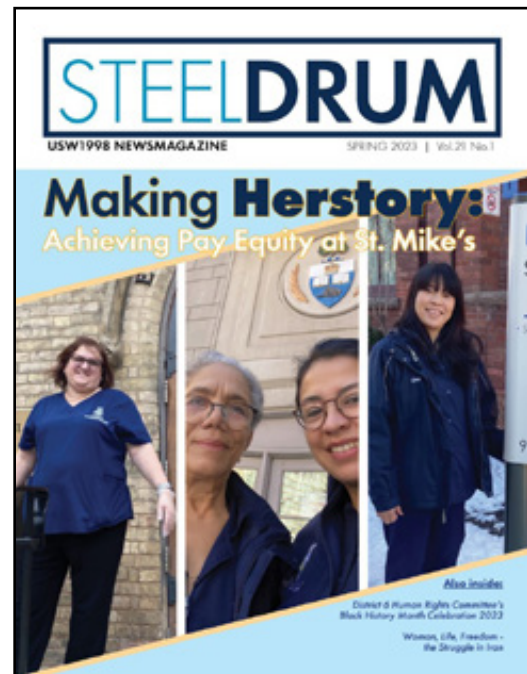


*An iceberg off the coast of Bonavista, Newfoundland
Photo by Rebecca Chua*

St. Mike's Pay Equity Advances

For avid readers of the Steel Drum Magazine, you'll recall that we reported on achieving pay equity for members of the St. Mike's bargaining unit in the cover story of the [Spring 2023 issue](#).

By way of a recap, "Making Herstory: Achieving Pay Equity at St. Mike's," detailed USW 1998's monumental and long-awaited win for members, particularly those working in female-dominated jobs, who were finally able to see job evaluation and pay equity come to fruition. While Ontario's Pay Equity Act came into effect in 1988 and pay equity had been implemented in the Staff-Appointed and Victoria University units by 2013, for close to a decade, St. Mike's members continued to work in jobs that had not been formally assessed or valued using a gender-neutral comparison system. This meant



[Spring 2023 issue](#)

that pay equity which, simply put, means equal pay for work of equal value, remained elusive for hard-working members like the housekeepers, who work in traditionally female-dominated roles.

The article further described how the union was able to negotiate an impactful pay equity settlement for its St. Mike's members, which was signed in November 2022 and ratified by the membership in December 2022. The Local's team was composed of John Ankenman, USW 1998 President; Mary-Marta Briones-Bird, Job Evaluation Coordinator; and Liesl

Joson, one of the Local's three Job Evaluation & Pay Equity Analysts, and led by Colleen Burke, Staff Representative for USW 1998. Although the Pay Equity Act does not require adjustments for those working in male-dominated job classes, the University of St. Michael's College (USMC) management had also agreed to implement internal equity for members in these roles. What had once seemed virtually impossible had culminated in great success.

Fast forward to September 2025. The same team, joined by Steven Craig, St. Mike's Unit President, is pleased to report that the Union has done it again! On September 5th, the union and USMC's management team reached a final negotiated settlement on Phase II of the job evaluation project. This phase entailed the evaluation of positions that had been created between July 1, 2018 and November 1, 2022, which had not been previously assessed during the initial phase of job evaluation. Negotiations resulted in the signing of a new [Memorandum of Settlement \(MoS\)](#) for Phase II in addition to several appendices that detail for every position the joint ratings for each of the [17 SES/U factors](#),

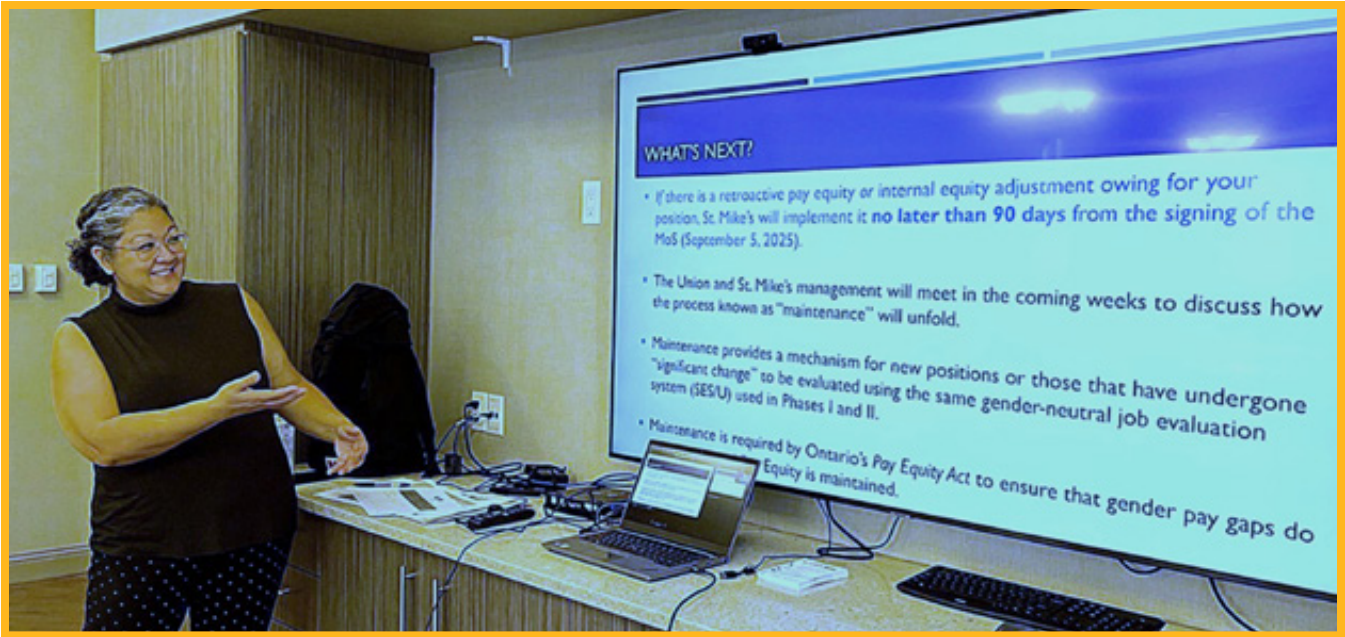


Mary-Marta Briones-Bird presents Phase II results to St. Mike's members. Photo courtesy of Liesl Joson.

gender predominance, male comparators, and pay bands.

Following the successful Phase I implementation of pay equity and internal equity in late 2022 and early 2023, the newly inked MoS sets out precisely how and when pay equity and internal equity adjustments will be implemented for all job classes assessed in Phase II. Like Phase I, this round of pay equity negotiations has also resulted in significant gains for St. Mike's members: 5 pay equity adjustments will impact ten members in female-dominated job classes, while 8 internal equity adjustments will impact eight members in male-dominated job classes. Implementation will take place no later than 90 days from the signing of the new MoS, signalling an important move toward fair compensation for St. Mike's members.

On September 18th, USW 1998 job evaluation team members Mary-Marta Briones-Bird and Liesl Joson held two back-to-back lunchtime meetings on the USMC campus and on Zoom to present the overwhelmingly positive results of Phase II to members who had been waiting



*Liesl Joson conveys next steps of job evaluation project to St. Mike's members.
Photo courtesy of Mary-Marta Briones-Bird.*

anxiously for the conclusion of this phase. Though questions were few, the gratitude of the members was on full display, whether expressed with quiet smiles or aloud with words of heartfelt thanks. It was immensely rewarding to witness the tangible impact of job evaluation, pay equity and internal equity on these members. These wins are also due in part to the willingness of St. Mike's members to participate in the Phase II process by responding thoughtfully to questions asked in a lengthy job evaluation questionnaire, to engage in follow-up interviews with members of the Joint Job Evaluation Committee and, in some cases, both. The job information collected was absolutely critical to being able to fairly evaluate the work of bargaining unit members.

Although Phase II negotiations have officially wrapped up, St. Mike's management will be working to implement all pay equity and internal equity adjustments in the coming months, including any retroactive adjustments that may be owed. As this unfolds, Mary-Marta Briones-Bird and Liesl Joson, as members of the USMC Joint Job Evaluation Committee, will be turning their attention toward the next phase of the job evaluation project, known as "maintenance." The Pay Equity Act requires the ongoing evaluation of

new and existing job classes with the objective of maintaining pay equity in the workplace, which ensures that new gender pay gaps do not open up once again. Like the Staff-Appointed, Victoria University and University of Toronto Schools units which entered the maintenance phase over a decade ago, the St. Mike's unit will also begin this final but ongoing phase in the not-too-distant future. Because the groundwork was laid in Phases I and II, including a negotiated Job Evaluation and [Pay Equity Maintenance Protocol](#), USMC members can breathe a sigh of relief knowing that there are now robust processes and procedures in place to help ensure fairer and more equitable compensation for all members of the unit.

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

Acknowledgment: The author would like to acknowledge and sincerely thank Jan Borowy of Borowy Law for her considerable and thoughtful guidance, and wise counsel throughout this process.

How I Built a House with No Debt



Kristy Bard holding the keys to her new house.

Often hear it said that Millennials and Gen Z will never be able to afford to own a home. But I did it. Though I am an older Millennial, born in 1983, and recognize all my privilege that has allowed me to accomplish this, it has also taken a lot of discipline, hard work, and careful planning. Here are some of the ways I've been able to build a house without taking on debt or a mortgage.

Having a Union Job

Both my partner and I have had unionized jobs since 2006. The job security, benefits, and regular pay increases that unions provide have been critical. I owe so much to USW 1998, but it's been a reciprocal relationship. I've always believed unions are only as strong as their members are actively engaged. I started working at U of T in 2008 and immediately started attending union meetings and training, spent countless unpaid volunteer hours assisting members as a steward while also being an incredibly dedicated employee (managers are much more flexible in allowing union release when all your other work is being done well). I have loved working at U of T and serving this community. And thanks to the union, I've been compensated handsomely for it.

First, Wave 7 of Job Evaluation resulted in my Chair's Assistant position being reclassified from an O6N to pay band 10. It was a big pay increase for me, and I received a large retroactive payment, not to mention adjustments and step increases. Then in 2017, because of my years of experience as a steward, I had the opportunity to work for Local 1998 full time as a Grievance Officer, resulting in a salary increase to pay band 15.

Over the years, I've encountered many people who are afraid to get involved in the union because they worry it might hinder their career. I've never cared much about career advancement. Doing the right thing and helping people has always been far more important to me. I think working for the union helped me secure a job as a Project Manager in sustainability. Of course, there were other factors, including all the volunteer sustainability initiatives on campus I've participated in and spearheaded. But I doubt I would have gotten the role had I applied directly from my previous pay band 10 position. Clearly, my responses referencing my union experience as a Grievance Officer were valued enough to vault me into the new position.

Having a Life Partner as Financially Disciplined as You

I could not have done this alone. I fell in love with my partner in high school, in part because he did his own laundry, cooked his own meals, worked part-time jobs and saved his money. I recognized he was life partner material, and he also made me laugh lots, so we've been together ever since.

Soon after moving in together, we began budgeting. Back then, the goal was to save money to travel. We'd look at where we were spending too much, and rein it in. We travelled a lot in our 20s as a result.

We assumed we would never be able to afford a house in Toronto, so we've always rented - importantly, the same small, junior one-bedroom apartment since 2009. As an old building subject to rent control, our rent was significantly below the Toronto average. When we calculated the amount spent on travel over the years, we thought about how we could have put that towards a down payment on a house or invested it instead. We learned about FIRE (Financial Independence, Retire Early) and became dedicated subscribers (read our favourite FIRE blogger, Mr. Money Moustache, to learn more). By our 30s, we felt we had spent enough on travelling. What we wanted more was to not have to work until our 60s and to own property where we could grow our own food. So, we started saving to buy land.

Buying Land

Timing is everything. And to time things right, you need to be doing research and paying attention. My partner regularly checked realtor.ca, kept tabs on vacant land prices and pored over soil maps. We convinced his brother to buy land with us since we couldn't afford to do it by ourselves, and went on reconnaissance missions, driving around to look at properties. We

made lists of what we wanted: privacy, within two hours of Toronto, a driveway, decent soil to grow food and plant fruit and nut trees. When my partner started to notice vacant land prices were increasing— properties weren't staying on the market as long - and read about China buying up vast amounts of Canadian farmland, our talk of buying land had to turn into action before our window of opportunity closed.

We contacted realtors based on three promising properties we had stumbled upon. When we toured the property we eventually bought, I immediately knew it was the one. It was the May 24 weekend. We noticed fruit trees and got excited. Then we walked down a path to the back of the property where there was a fenced garden. I was in love. This was it. It was everything we wanted. We put in an offer, and by July 1, 2014, it was ours.

Our goal was to build our house in year 10 of owning the property. At times, we considered alternatives, such as buying a house in the area. Building a house yourself is a daunting process, with all the permits, steps, and decisions that had to be made. But all the houses we saw for sale were either way too big and expensive, or, if they were the right size and price, they were very old and likely would require major renovations or cost a fortune to heat in the winter.



House under construction in 2024.

During the pandemic, when everyone seemed to be taking on debt to purchase big houses far away, it was tempting to jump ahead of our ten-year plan. We thought we might have saved enough and could pull it off. We got our architect to draw up plans but, by the time he priced it out, lumber prices had skyrocketed. I felt my dream slipping away, and it hurt. Seeing the house drawings got me so excited, I wanted to proceed, but we just were not willing to go into debt. We've both had a life-long aversion to debt. If we can't afford something outright, we can't have it. This is how we have structured our life. So, we put things on hold.

Some people said lumber prices would never go back down. But they did. And in the interim, we saved even harder. We got a financial advisor to manage our investments. We earned more money. We bided our time, until the timing was right.

DIY and Discipline

Our budgets helped us see how much money we spent on eating out and alcohol. We started brewing our own wine and apple cider. We rarely spend money on take-out coffee or lunch, as these small purchases add up over time. We keep our grocery costs low by growing as much of our own food as we can, preserving it, never wasting food and eating a mostly vegetarian

diet. When we want or need something, we ask our family to buy it for us for Christmas.

Or we wait and do without until the universe provides it for free. You'd be surprised how often this happens. We find free stuff on Kijiji or at the side of the road all the time. We get my mechanic dad to make repairs on our 2003 truck instead of buying a newer vehicle. I mend clothes, have friends give me clothes, or I only buy from thrift stores. My partner cuts my hair. We keep our phones and computer until they no longer work and must be replaced. We haven't paid for any of the furniture we own, except for our mattress and dresser. We walk and bike to work. Our regular bills are limited to rent, internet, cell phones, property tax, and insurance. Nothing else.

Sure, we have the occasional indulgence. We never say no when friends invite us out, or to celebrate a birthday. Although we save roughly 70% of our income most months, we live a very comfortable life. Certainly not as extravagant as most people who earn our income and are somehow still in debt and complain they don't earn enough.

Sometimes I find myself wondering what other people spend their money on, because it's become so ingrained in me to just not buy stuff. This also aligns well with my desire to live as



The author at Webwood Falls Nature Reserve, Bruce Trail Conservation Corridor

sustainably as possible. The less stuff you buy, the less you throw out, the more money you have to live the life you want. A healthy rejection of consumer culture and a DIY attitude has helped.

Achieving financial independence can be hard – especially at first, when you are building new habits. But it gets easier over time, as you see your savings and freedom grow. It's the ultimate in delayed gratification. Other than this house, there is nothing I could buy that would provide the same feeling of independence that saved money provides. Investing in stocks has always made me nervous, and I am relieved to have now invested in something that provides tangible value in my life. It means never having to work in a job where I am treated poorly, harassed, or

not valued. No employer can have that kind of power over me. The union helped me achieve this. And now, as I prepare to leave U of T and embark on the next chapter of my life living full-time in my new home in the country, I bid farewell. Thank you for everything you have given me, Steelworkers, Local 1998, and University of Toronto.

Kristy Bard, Committee on the Environment, Climate Change, and Sustainability (CECCS)

All photos courtesy of Kristy Bard.

Editorial note: This is an abbreviated version of a blog post that can be read in full at <https://pomona-permaculture.wordpress.com/>

SPOTLIGHT ON STANDING COMMITTEES



BIPOC Committee

Black, Indigenous, People of Colour (BIPOC) members' lives are rooted in intersectionality, neurodivergence, and multi-cultural/multi-ethnic identities and abilities. The BIPOC Committee is committed to equity, inclusion, dignity, and social justice for everyone, and, much more crucially, to dismantling the systemic barriers and distinct silos that keep us divided. We welcome BIPOC members as well as allies of every gender, generation, philosophy, and persuasion to be a part of the change you expect to see. While our key initiatives revolve around anti-racism and amplifying the voices of the disadvantaged, we are, above all, committed to building a community of individuals with disparate lived experiences and perspectives.



Current Co-Chairs:

Amanda Andrews is from Neyaashiinigmiing, and is English on her mother's side and Ojibway, Potawatomi and Oneida on her father's side. As an Indigenous Career Educator, she is passionate about developing culturally relevant programming, honed over decades of experience as an educator, advisor and youth worker. She helps Indigenous students succeed by integrating Indigenous ways of knowing, enhancing connections with employers, and increasing access and engagement in career opportunities for under-represented groups. Amanda enjoys spending time with her family, standup boarding, walking/hiking, gathering medicines, and foraging- especially fungi!

Rebecca Chua trained in Alternative Dispute Resolution at the University of Waterloo and has worked as both a family and small business mediator. She brings an equity lens and a keen understanding of the importance of ethics in communications to all that she does. She is dedicated to enabling representation for the

traditionally marginalized and consistently overlooked, and to nurture a safe space where they can shine and realize their full potential. Rebecca enjoys exploring Canada's biosphere reserves, playing chess and other board games, and having conversations that matter.

Recent Highlights

All events featured multi-campus representation and participation:

- Black History Month Keynote Speakers include MPP Jean Augustine, the first Black woman to serve as federal minister of the Crown; Andria Babbington, President of the Toronto and York Region Labour Council; and Senior Justice of the Peace Samantha Burton
- Lunch and Learn sessions on Truth and Reconciliation, Universal Design for Learning and Anti-Asian Racism
- Chinese banquet

Looking Ahead

- Expedition to Woodlands Cultural Centre (formerly Mohawk Residential School)
- Panel Discussions on Women in Leadership, Wage Theft, Internalized Oppression
- Community Feast

To join the BIPOC Committee, or to get involved with organizing events, please contact bipoc@usw1998.ca.



Communications Committee

The Communications Committee serves as a vital resource to USW Local 1998 by offering recommendations and providing insight on matters related to the Local's communications tools. These include the website, the **Steel Drum** magazine, and the weekly e-newsletter. The committee's goal is to support transparent, accessible, and engaging communication with all members.



Current Co-Chairs:

Margaret Bucknam brings creativity, dedication, and a strong sense of community to her role as Outreach and Communications Coordinator at USW Local 1998. An avid traveller who loves exploring new places and cultures, she is also a motorsport enthusiast with a particular love for F1 and IndyCar racing.

Rebecca Chua is the Casual Unit's Chief Steward for the St. George campus, an award-winning journalist, and Editor of the Steel Drum. She has served as a speechwriter to presidents, diplomats and senior executives, and brings her experience in a broad range of public media

and communications to her role. She has also travelled the world and enjoys international cuisines and movies rooted in different cultures and languages.

Recent Highlights

- Among our proudest achievements: winning an award from the **Canadian Association of Labour Media (CALM)** in 2025 for Best Layout and Design for the *Steel Drum* magazine—recognized as one of the best publications in the labour movement.
- Committee-initiated discussions on revamping our website, with the goal of creating a more modern, user-friendly platform for members.
- Pub Night at Hemingway's in Yorkville, offering members a chance to connect in person and build community in a relaxed, informal setting.

Looking Ahead

- Making recommendations for an expansion of the Local's presence and activity on **social media**
- Making recommendations for an exploration of new formats such as a **Local 1998 podcast**
- Making recommendations for finding innovative ways to make the Local's communications more useful, accessible and impactful for all members



Jodi Mills, Dental Assistant, with her Staff Appointed Collective Agreement and Steel Drum.

Health and Safety Committee

The Health and Safety Committee highlights the importance of health and safety in the workplace. It fosters a group setting where individuals can come together to discuss health and safety concerns, interests, news items, and participate in initiatives and campaigns to improve health & safety in the workplace. We value mental health as an important aspect of health and safety, and plan activities based on supporting positive interactions and activities for members.



Current Co-Chairs:

Katrina Marshall is the Chief Steward at the Faculty of Dentistry as well as Health and Safety Coordinator at USW Local 1998. Reading, painting on clothes, camping, hiking, baking and spending time with her family and friends rank high on her list of passions. A fun fact about Katrina is that she learned how to make balloon animals at a clown conference when she was 13.

Rabia Nasir is the Chief Steward at UTSC and works in the Department of Physical and Environmental Sciences. She enjoys reading, cooking, writing poetry, and spending time with her family. A fun (and proudly nerdy) fact about Rabia is that she's both a published poet and a HUGE Harry Potter fan—so in her world, life's best moments are always signed off with "Mischief Managed."

Recent Highlight

The roller-skating event that the committee hosted earlier this year was a huge hit!

Looking Ahead

- Health and safety walking tour around Toronto
- Self-defence class

Please feel free to contact hscommittee@usw1998.ca if you are interested in being part of the committee.



NextGen Committee

NextGen is a space for new and younger workers, 35 and under, to connect, exchange ideas and create change within USW Local 1998. Our goal is to empower new and younger workers in the workplace and in the union. Our perspective is a unique and important one that is key to building a strong labour movement. The future of the union depends on connecting the next generation of union activists!



Current Co-Chairs:

Zhanina Bregu is a Records and Database Administrator at USW 1998 who hails from the Faculty of Kinesiology & Physical Education (KPE). She loves riding her bike around the city and knitting way more sweaters than can fit in her closet.

Feyisami (Feyi) Adara (he/him) is currently a USW 1998 Grievance Officer, on release from the Faculty of Kinesiology & Physical Education (KPE). He also loves riding his bike around, doing improv, and taking photos. His photography can be found on [Instagram @feyi.snapped](https://www.instagram.com/feyi.snapped)

Recent Highlights

- Pub Social
- Board Game Night

Looking Ahead

- NextGen Shoptalk, engaging, informative and supportive themed conversation circles for members to bring up issues they are navigating
- Exciting, recreational and collaborative Socials to connect with each other
- Educational events to help members develop leadership skills, learn more about their rights and about union processes.

To join, please contact: nextgen@usw1998.ca.

Women of Steel Committee

The USW 1998 Women of Steel Committee is about empowering women to be active in our union and in the wider community. Through our activities, we aim to build solidarity and mutual respect for a stronger union.



Current Co-Chairs:

Anish Arif earned a double-major in Education and Psychology, and is currently an Instructional Support Assistant at the Department of Statistical Sciences. She recently learned how to bake and finds it therapeutic.

Linda Gural has a PhD in Art History and is currently a Project Manager in Rehabilitation Sciences at the Temerty Faculty of Medicine. Outside of work, she is an avid equestrian.



Members enjoying the clothing swap

Recent Highlights

- Clothing Swap
- Meditation & Yoga
- Improv session

Looking Ahead

- Women's Wellbeing
- Yoga session in collaboration with Steel Pride

Please feel free to contact wos@usw1998.ca if you are interested in being part of the committee.

Why I Like USW Swag

My first exposure to Local 1998 swag was the shirt worn by Paul Milne in an elevator. It was Autumn of 2003, when I first started working at the biology lab at UTM, and I was being given a tour of the building. "So you're part of the Steelworkers Union?" I asked. "So are you!" he laughed. Believe it or not, that's how I found out I was part of the union!



UTM has wonderful, wooded areas. Here I am in my orange Truth and Reconciliation shirt with my colleague Natalia Dourbalova. Photo by Scott Reynolds

I couldn't take my eyes off that white T-shirt with a large USWA logo on the front and the words, "United we bargain, divided we fall" on the back. It was unapologetically pro-labour and led to many conversations about the union and how USW came to U of T.

From an early age, I've had a deep appreciation of how the labour movement helped create the social safety net in Canada. When I was a young boy, our family experienced the death of our primary breadwinner. It was our good fortune that Canada had a robust social safety net. Our family received income and housing support that really helped us all. As I progressed through school, I learned about pivotal events like the Winnipeg general strike and the formation of the single payer health care system. That's why, whenever I wear union swag, I celebrate the labour movement's accomplishments.

However, this same social safety net has been eroded over the decades since the peak of union activism in the 1970's. As Canadians, our work to protect the social safety net is far from over. For me, union swag provides opportunities to have conversations about the benefits of being in a unionized environment. An important lesson that I've learned over the years is that an engaged membership is vital to the union's mission. Sporting union swag in the office not only invites new members to join in, it demonstrates union solidarity, which is important regardless of where we are in the negotiation cycle.

My swag collection is my way of honouring how I found the union and paying it forward to colleagues who just might find out more about the union by engaging me in conversation, just as Paul Milne did with me that fateful day.



Showing off my collection of union mugs: solidarity has never tasted sweeter



*This was the shirt that started it all!
This page from the Steel Drum's 2017 Year in Review shows everyone on the staff-appointed bargaining team and me in the proverbial white shirt.*



My lab coat was decorated by the MBiotech students at the end of the course after I talked their ears off about pensions and benefits.

Windsor Chan, Biology

All photos courtesy of Windsor Chan

SOAR Members' Summer Trip to Port Dover

On July 16th, 2025, Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR) members embarked on a summer day trip to Port Dover on Lake Erie.

Members were picked up at both Cecil Street in Toronto and the Leo Gerard Building in Mississauga. We had a comfortable ride accompanied by music, bingo and a 50/50 draw.

Lunch was at The Mandarin in Hamilton. We were then taken to see two hilarious short plays at the Lighthouse Theatre in Port Dover. We walked on the beachfront and enjoyed ice cream.

We departed Port Dover around 5 p.m. It was an awesome trip. We met and mingled with and made new friends from other locals.

The weather cooperated, which made the trip an immense success!

Marjorie Bhola-Swami

SOAR member

To learn more about the Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR):

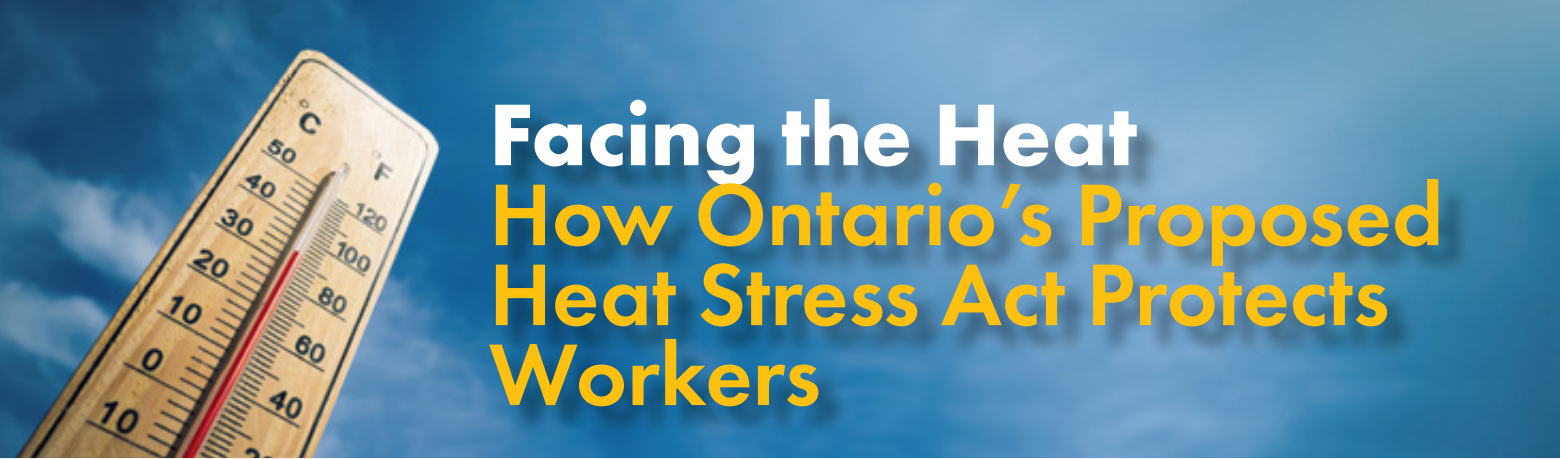
<https://usw.ca/issues/soar/>



(L-R): Gloria Barrow, Esther Veeren, Daisy Ramkellawan, Madhu Arora, Wei Hua Ni and wife, Marjorie Bhola-Swami, Toni Eyre, Fe deGazon, Pamela Ferguson and Sonia Hopwood.



The Lighthouse Theatre in Port Dover



Facing the Heat

How Ontario's Proposed Heat Stress Act Protects Workers

As you may have experienced firsthand over the past few summers, heat waves in Ontario are becoming more frequent and severe due to global climate change. During the summer of 2025, the City of Toronto was under heat warnings for a total of 22 days, exceeding the 16 heat warning days recorded in the summer of 2024.¹ This trend places workers across the province at increased risk of exposure to hazardous levels of heat and humidity, which can lead to heat exhaustion and heat stroke (Figure 1). In light of this growing threat, there is an urgent need for legislation to safeguard workers from extreme heat in the workplace.

Led by the advocacy efforts of the Ontario New Democratic Party (NDP) and the Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL), Bill 36, Heat Stress Act, 2025 was introduced at Queen's Park this past year to address this issue.^{2,3} The proposed legislation seeks to protect workers from exposure to excessive heat by establishing enforceable standards that would apply to all workplaces in Ontario. This article provides an overview of Bill 36 and outlines some of its key requirements.

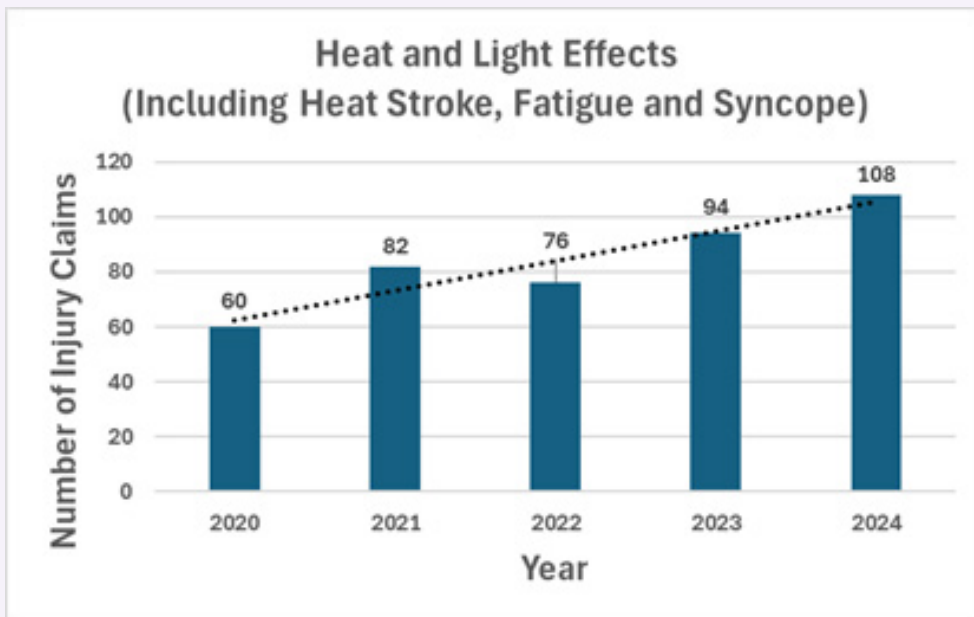


Figure 1. Statistics from the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) of Ontario show that there has been an increasing number of heat-related workplace injuries over the past five years (2020-2024).

Data source: WSIB Ontario, Schedule 1 and 2.⁴

How is Heat Stress Currently Addressed Under the OHSA?

The Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) and its regulations currently do not include specific requirements for employers regarding work in hot environments. While Ontario Regulation 851 requires that industrial establishments be maintained at a temperature suitable for the type of work performed—and not below 18°C—there is no legislated maximum working temperature in the province (O. Reg. 851, s. 129(1)).⁵

In the absence of heat-specific legislation, employers and supervisors are still legally required to take every reasonable precaution in the circumstances for the protection of workers. This legal obligation, commonly referred to as the “general duty clause,” is outlined in sections 25(2)(h) and 27(2)(c) of the OHSA and applies to all workplaces, including the University of Toronto. ⁶ Also under the OHSA, workers have the right to refuse unsafe work, including work that puts their health at risk due to extreme heat.

For compliance purposes, the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development (MLITSD) refers to the Threshold Limit Values (TLVs) for Heat Stress and Heat Strain published by the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists (ACGIH). These values are based on preventing unacclimatized workers’ core body temperatures from rising above 38°C. The ACGIH TLVs are used as guidelines but have not been officially adopted as occupational exposure limits in Ontario.

How is Heat Stress Currently Addressed at the University of Toronto?

The Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) office at the University of Toronto has published a *Guideline on Heat Stress – Working in Hot Environments* and offers a self-guided online course, *EHS531 Heat Stress: Working in Hot Environments*.

Departments are encouraged to follow the guidance outlined in the document. Workers who perform work outdoors during the summer, or in hot indoor environments, are recommended to complete the training. Links to both the guideline and training are available in the Resources section at the end of this article.^{9,10}

The EHS office also provides consultations and can perform assessments related to heat stress. Where appropriate, the work environment may be evaluated by measuring the Wet Bulb Globe Temperature (WBGT) index using a heat stress monitor. Factors such as clothing worn, job demands (types of activities performed), work-rest cycles, and the worker’s level of acclimatization are also taken into consideration. Results are then compared against the action limits and threshold limit values (TLVs) published in the ACGIH TLVs and BEIs booklet.¹¹

Bill 36 and the Legislative Process

Bill 36 was first introduced to the Ontario Legislature by the Ontario NDP (the official opposition) in November 2024 as a Private Member's Bill under the title Bill 222, Heat Stress Act, 2024.⁷ It was tabled by NDP MPP Peter Tabuns and co-sponsored by NDP MPPs Chandra Pasma, Lise Vaugeois and Jamie West.

Although the Bill was ordered for second reading, it did not proceed to this stage due to the provincial election called by Premier Doug Ford in January 2025. The legislature was dissolved, and all outstanding bills that had not received Royal Assent—including Bill 222—were subsequently abandoned.

After the election, the Ontario NDP (still the official opposition) reintroduced the legislation on May 29, 2025.⁸ It was renumbered as Bill 36 and returned to the same legislative stage that it had reached prior to the election.

Who is Covered by Bill 36?

Bill 36 will apply to any Ontario workplace where workers are exposed to elevated heat. The legislation spans all industry sectors and could apply to a wide range of work environments.

For USW 1998 members at the University of Toronto, this could include work performed outdoors (e.g., rooftops, exterior grounds, loading docks, fieldwork), in vehicles, or in hot indoor environments (e.g., steam tunnels, mechanical rooms, crawlspaces, kitchens, spaces lacking mechanical cooling). Essentially, any work done in hot conditions—whether outdoors or indoors—could fall under the scope of this legislation.

How will Bill 36 Impact Employers?

Once enacted, Bill 36 will amend the OHSA by including a new section (Part IV.1 – Heat Stress) which will mandate the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development to develop and implement a Worker Heat Protection Standard. This standard will establish the mandatory requirements that Ontario employers must follow to protect workers from heat stress.

The standard will require employers to:

- Eliminate hazardous heat exposure through engineering controls, such as isolating or shielding employees from heat sources (e.g., shading), exhaust ventilation, insulating hot surfaces, or using climate-control technologies.
- Limit heat exposure through administrative controls, including adjusting work procedures, schedules, or other work practices.
- Provide at the employer's expense, personal protective equipment (PPE), such as water-cooled or air-cooled garments, heat-reflective clothing, or cooling vests.
- Develop and implement, in consultation with the Joint Health and Safety Committees (JHSCs), a heat stress policy and program. Both the policy and program must be reviewed at least annually or as often as necessary.
- Conduct heat stress assessments and share findings with the JHSCs.
- Provide workers with access to cool drinking water or alternative hydrating fluids near the work area.
- Provide heat stress training to workers that is approved by the Chief Prevention Officer (CPO) and delivered by a CPO-approved training provider.
- Compensate workers at their regular rate of pay for rest breaks, training time, and time required for medical removal protection.

Responsibilities Under the EHS Guideline on Heat Stress

University of Toronto supervisors, managers, and principal investigators are responsible for:

- Identifying work areas or tasks where heat exposure may occur.
- Identifying workers who may be exposed to heat during their work (indoors or outdoors) and require medical surveillance.
- Monitoring workers for signs of heat-related illnesses.
- Developing and implementing safe work procedures (e.g., heat stress control plan) and applying appropriate controls (e.g., engineering, administrative/work practice, and medical surveillance).
- Providing written procedures, training, equipment, personal protective equipment (PPE), and resources to workers and ensuring they are properly followed or used.

University of Toronto workers are responsible for:

- Reporting heat-related concerns to their supervisor.
- Assisting in identifying hot work environments or heat-related risks.
- Participating in the development of safe work procedures.
- Reviewing procedures before beginning work.
- Following safety protocols and using PPE and equipment properly.

Heat Stress Training Requirements

The standard will also specify the required content of the heat stress training which must cover:

- Signs and symptoms of heat-related illness, emergency response procedures, and worker rights.
- Supervisor responsibilities, including monitoring and reporting on weather conditions, recognizing signs of heat-related illness, and initiating response protocols.
- Occupational health and safety law relevant to heat stress.
- Best practices for controlling heat exposure in the workplace.

Anticipated Impacts of Bill 36 on the University

If enacted, the bill is expected to impact university operations and any USW 1998 members working in hot environments. Potential changes may include:

- Development and implementation of university-wide policies, programs, and resources on heat stress.
- Revision of existing training materials and/or adoption of training offered by third-party, CPO-approved providers.
- Creation of department-specific procedures (e.g., heat stress control plans).
- Enhanced heat control measures, such as increased weather monitoring, university-wide heat alerts, mechanical cooling upgrades, installation of portable fans or air conditioning, hydration stations, and mandatory rest and water breaks.

- Rescheduling work activities to cooler periods of the day.
- Increased posting of signage and educational materials on heat stress, including symptoms of heat-related illness, protective measures, and heat stress notices.
- Broader use of temperature and humidity monitoring devices (e.g., smart building environmental sensors, consumer-grade monitors).
- Introduction of wearable technology to monitor workers' physiological conditions.

What Happens Next?

What will happen moving forward is subject to ongoing debate. The Ontario legislature was adjourned for the summer at the time this article was submitted to the Steel Drum for publication with no date set for the second reading of the bill.

If Bill 36 advances past the second reading, it will likely be referred to a committee for review, during which public input will be sought. This stage will be followed by further debate, potential amendments, a third reading, a final vote, and if successful, Royal Assent.

Once the bill is passed, the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training, and Skills Development will have 12 months to develop and implement the Worker Heat Protection Standard. A grace period will likely follow before the Heat Stress Act comes into force, allowing employers time to comply with the new legal requirements and implement changes to their workplaces.

Bill 36 will likely face resistance due to the financial and logistical implications it will have on employers, particularly in sectors such as construction, agriculture, and mining, where the majority of work is performed outdoors. Compliance with the Heat Protection Standard may require organizations to upgrade existing infrastructure, invest in new equipment, provide additional personal protective equipment, and impact work schedules. These changes could

place financial strain on employers still recovering from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing U.S. tariffs.

Further updates on Bill 36 are expected to become available after the Ontario Legislative Assembly resumes sitting in late October 2025. To stay informed on the latest developments, visit the Legislative Assembly of Ontario's website.¹²

Disclaimer

The information in this article is intended for informational purposes only. Any opinions expressed are solely my own and do not represent the official policy or position of the University of Toronto or the Environmental Health and Safety office. The content is based on my interpretation of Bill 36 and the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA), as well as my expectations of future developments.

Readers interested in learning more about heat stress are encouraged to take the online course EHS531: Heat Stress: Working in Hot Environments. The CCOHS and OHCOW websites are also excellent resources on this topic.

If you have concerns about heat exposure in your workplace, speak with their supervisor, Joint Health and Safety Committee, or union representative. For questions related to heat stress, heat stress monitoring, or interpreting the heat stress guideline, contact the EHS office.

Resources

¹ Environment & Climate Change Canada:

Historical Data for: City of Toronto:

https://climate.weather.gc.ca/historical_data/search_historic_data_e.html

² MPP Peter Tabuns, Toronto-Danforth, May 29, 2025: Ontario NDP Pushes for Workplace Heat Protection as Climate Crisis Escalates:

https://www.petertabuns.ca/ontario_ndp_pushes_for_workplace_heat_protection_as_climate_crisis_escalates

³ Ontario Federation of Labour: Heat Stress Campaign:

<https://ofl.ca/action/the-heat-is-on/>

⁴ WSIB Ontario: Health and Safety Statistics:

https://safetycheck.onlineservices.wsib.on.ca/safetycheck/explore/provincial/SH_12/injurycharacteristics

⁵ Government of Ontario: R.R.O. 1990, Reg. 851:

Industrial Establishments: <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/900851>

⁶ Government of Ontario: Occupational Health and Safety Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. O.1:

<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90o01>

⁷ Legislative Assembly of Ontario: Bill 222, Heat Stress Act, 2024:

<https://www.ola.org/en/legislative-business/bills/parliament-43/session-1/bill-222>

⁸ Legislative Assembly of Ontario: Bill 36, Heat Stress Act, 2025:

<https://www.ola.org/en/legislative-business/bills/parliament-44/session-1/bill-36>

⁹ Environmental Health and Safety: Guideline on Heat Stress – Working in Hot Environments:

<https://ehs.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Heat-Stress.pdf>

¹⁰ Environmental Health and Safety: EHS531 Heat Stress – Working in Hot Environments:

<https://ehs.utoronto.ca/training/>

¹¹ American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists: TLVs and BEIs:

<https://www.acgih.org/>

¹² Legislative Assembly of Ontario: Current Bills:

<https://www.ola.org/en/legislative-business/bills/current>

Ronald Ng, Environmental Health and Safety





My Citizenship Ceremony

I recently had the special experience of taking my oath of citizenship in a virtual ceremony right here in my office at Criminology & Sociolegal Studies.

What made it truly memorable was the incredible support and celebration I received from my colleagues and friends. Their encouragement and joy made the moment feel even more meaningful, turning what could have been a simple virtual milestone into a deeply personal and unforgettable achievement.

Meng Xiao, Criminology & Sociolegal Studies



USW 1998 Happenings

Photos by: Meredith Rappaport



Members enjoy frozen treats at an ice cream pop-up event at University of Toronto Schools.



Meredith Rappaport, Administrative & Events Coordinator, wins the Award for Best Poster for push back against Victoria's University Attendance Awareness Program.



Grievance Officer Justen Bennett speaks to a member about their collective agreement at a union event at Sidney Smith Hall.



Richard Waters, Administrative & Technical Coordinator, wins the Rosemarie Bahr Award for Best Print Layout and Design for the Steel Drum.



Residence Dons from across the St. George campus gather at a Local 1998 event on the Victoria University campus.



Members pose with their soft serve cones at an ice cream pop up event at University of Toronto Schools.



**SCAN THE QR CODE
TO FIND YOUR USW
1998 STEWARD**



STEELDRUM NEWSMAGAZINE

is published by
USW Local 1998
at the University of Toronto,
Victoria University, University
of St. Michael's College and
University of Toronto Schools.

The following Communications Committee members assisted with this issue of Steel Drum

Margaret Bucknam (Co-Chair),
Rebecca Chua (Co-Chair & Editor),
Amanda Andrews, John Ankenman,
Mary-Marta Briones-Bird, Pat Doherty,
Liesl Joson, Zoe Kalsatos, Meredith Rappaport,
Tamara Vickery, Heather von Atzigen.

Production: Richard Waters


To contribute to the next issue, please email
submissions to steeldrum@usw1998.ca by
March 15, 2026.


Special thanks to all our contributors!

STEELDRUM is a member of the
United Steelworkers Press Association &
the Canadian Association of Labour Media
(CALM)

USW Local 1998 Office

25 Cecil Street
Third Floor
Toronto, ON M5T 1N1

 (416) 506-9090

 info@usw1998.ca

