



# UNION MATTERS

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*My local works  
because I participate*

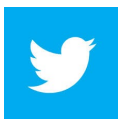
Date and time of  
General Membership  
meetings are posted  
at each worksite and  
at [www.cupe1169.ca](http://www.cupe1169.ca)

**"Clients do not  
come first.  
Employees come  
first. If you take  
care of your em-  
ployees, they will  
take care of the  
clients."**

~ Richard Branson ~



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## President's Podium

### Your Health and Safety at Work

The Calgary Public Library (CPL) is one of the highest utilized public venues in our city, but does the very openness of our libraries make those who work and visit library locations susceptible to random acts of violence? Further, are our libraries free from occupational health and safety concerns which contribute to a hazardous workplace? What is being done and are you safe? While all workplaces can be exposed to various hazards, library workers are often exposed to workplace situations that are exacerbated by their locations, hours of operation, budget cuts and the failure of administration to understand the working conditions of their employees.

Many of the newer CPL locations are part of a major community hub comprised of schools, recreation centres, a Young Men's Christian Association, otherwise known as the YMCA or sometimes simply the "Y", and major shopping outlets making the physical location a more user-friendly place. That is not the case for many stand-alone branches including the location of the W.R. Castell Central Library.

Are libraries unsafe workplaces? Our members have shared the following concerns: location is unfriendly; late night closing; as a community gathering place staff deal with a variety of patrons, some of whom bring their own frustration, anger and other personal psychological challenges to the library; high patron expectations for one-on-one service; expectations for our members to monitor against theft, and unacceptable behaviours such as threats and other acts of aggression; equipment failures; and staffing shortages.

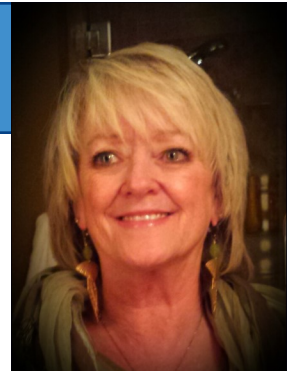
Our members have shared that they do not believe that their health and safety is a priority for management and site the factors listed above as well as in-

creased workloads and stress, working alone, lack of support and placing patron satisfaction before the safety and wellbeing of their staff, our members.

During conversations with the membership it has also been brought to the attention of your Union that very few are aware that they have the right to refuse unsafe work. Those who were aware were informed of their rights by their Union; however, those same individuals expressed hesitancy to bring their fears to the attention of their managers.

Occupational Health and Safety legislation is only effective if there is an internal commitment to maintaining healthy and safe worksites. Each of us must hold management accountable to ensuring that assigned tasks are carried out in a safe manner. It is also each individual's responsibility to follow safety procedures and ensure that supervisors and managers are informed of any potential hazards. Tidying your worksite before an inspection does not make it safe, and it does not make unsafe conditions acceptable.

With administration focusing on outreach and community interaction initiatives, staffing is stretched so thin that our members often find themselves working alone with only a teen page or shelver who are often working on the far side of the floor or department. Each employee is significantly too separated to give any moral support. Minimal staffing leaves our members feeling intimidated and unsupported. Frontline staff is expected to ensure a safe, welcoming environment, but find they are often working in environments that increasingly expose them to threatening and abusive behaviours. When incidents have been reported, often our members are then subjected to a



cross examination of their responses to situations that far exceed what should be expected of frontline staff.

Recently, social media was the tool of choice highlighting an incident that occurred between a patron and a staff member, placing the blame on the actions of the staff member. Further, our member was not asked if the incident in which they were involved, and which is known to their colleagues, could be used as a social media promotional ad in support of the CPL's efforts to be the "best library in the world".

Earlier this year, one of our members was physically assaulted by a patron while on the job. Your Union reached out to this member and through our conversation it was shared by the member that was assaulted, that not one representative of senior administration had bothered to contact our member to ask how they were coping and if there was anything they could do to help. Only your Union took the time to contact our member who shared that they felt abandoned by administration. They and their family and neighbours were shocked at

the lack of compassion from the leadership of the CPL.

Our member further shared they were dealing with feelings of fear and anxiety about returning to their worksite. It was your Union in response to and in support of our member's safety that composed a letter addressed to both the Chair of the CPL Board and the Chief Executive Officer requesting a response on our concerns regarding their failure to reach out to our member, their valued employee. Your Union has never received a response from either party to our letter questioning their lack of support...shame!

Remember, you are not alone. Your Union is here to advocate on your behalf. Become informed of your rights, and bring your concerns to the attention of your Union. If you are afraid to speak out contact your Union, and we will be your voice.

*In solidarity,  
Rh'ena Oake, President CUPE Local 1169  
Calgary and Cochrane Public Library Workers*

## Contract Corner: know your rights under the collective agreement



### Article 22 – Health and Safety Committee

22.01. The Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC) shall be comprised of equal numbers of Employer and Union representatives. Union members shall be appointed by the Union to serve as representatives on the Joint Health and Safety Committee. One (1) of the Union

representatives shall be appointed co-chair of the Committee.

The Joint Health and Safety Committee shall identify health and safety problems in the workplace and recommend solutions. The Joint Health and Safety Committee shall hold regularly scheduled meetings at least five (5) times in each calendar year.

### What does this mean?

The JHSC reviews all First Aid and Incident Accident Reports to determine injury trends and a plan of action. The co-chairs review the JHSC email ([JHSC@calgarylibrary.ca](mailto:JHSC@calgarylibrary.ca)) and bring concerns to the committee. Health and safety concerns should be brought to your manager's attention before emailing the committee. If the situation continues, email the committee and your Union. Minutes from the committee are available on SharePoint and distributed by your Safety Representative. Each community library and department has an assigned representative who can answer questions about the committee, and Workplace Inspections and Hazard Assessments.

*Respectfully submitted by,  
Terrill Budd, Chief Steward CUPE Local 1169*

*Wishing you a safe and happy holiday season!*



## CUPE LOCAL 1169 AFFILIATES



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For comments regarding the newsletter, contact the union office

