

# Workers' Rights **ALERT**



May, 2013

## ***The Workers' Rights ALERT has a new focus.***

This issue of the ALERT, and future issues, will not be used as leaflets for union members. The ALERT will be used to keep local union leaders and campaigners up-to-date on campaign news. Visit [www.labourcouncil.ca/workersrights](http://www.labourcouncil.ca/workersrights) for leaflets for union members.

## **THE WORKERS' RIGHTS CAMPAIGN IS UP AND RUNNING**

*On March 2, over 700 Campaigners got the Workers' Rights Campaign off to a great start. The campaign launch raised awareness, throughout the labour movement, of the Conservatives' plans to change labour laws in order to weaken unions.*

Campaigners are highly motivated to make sure that Harper and Hudak are not allowed to impose a low wage economy.

Following March 2, Campaigners returned to their workplaces and talked with thousands of co-workers about the campaign issues. (See page 2 for a detailed report on these)

### **Has your local union conducted a planning session – to make the campaign a success?**

This campaign cannot be won by hard-working activists alone. The attention and resources of the entire local must be committed in order to ensure success. The first step is an Executive Board planning session – to overcome denial and engage every board member, steward and committee member in the campaign.

### ***Campaign planning should include:***

- ✓ A detailed “mapping’ of the membership by job classification and/or work location – so that campaigners can be assigned to every grouping of members
- ✓ Evaluation/support sessions where campaigners can share experiences, overcome obstacles and keep the conversation going in the workplace
- ✓ Integration of the campaign message into all of the work the union and all its communications

Workers' Rights  
Campaign Training

Saturday May 11,

1:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Registration 12:30

15 Gervais Drive, OFL building

Who should attend? Union leaders and members who missed the March 2<sup>nd</sup> Campaign launch, but are willing to help educate co-workers about the Conservative attack.

Register now at [labourcouncil.ca](http://labourcouncil.ca)

# Lessons from the first month of the workplace campaign

## We can defend our wages, benefits and our rights

On April 4, Campaigners came to a special Labour Council meeting to share and evaluate their discussions with members about the Conservatives' attack. Here are some of the lessons learned:

### **When members get the facts, they don't like the Conservatives' low wage scheme**

Members are particularly offended by the unfairness of "free riders". Some Campaigners find the term harsh, but most think it reflects a bitter reality.

### **Face-to-face communication is really effective**

When we meet with members in person we can listen, respond and connect.

### **There are many ways to start a discussion**

"I cannot afford to take a pay cut." "Did you know..." "You should hear about what the Conservatives are planning to do to us..." "Have you seen this leaflet? "Take a look..."

### **Members have a wide range of concerns**

Even members who appreciate the union often have complaints about festering issues, grievances that are stuck, etc. An important part of strengthening our movement is listening to and addressing those concerns.

### **Send more people for training**

Keep up our efforts to ensure maximum attendance at campaign training. (Please get people out for the May 11 Campaign Training.)

### **Some union members do not understand the importance of their collective agreement or the struggle required to create it**

Many discussions with members include basic education about the union: It took a lot of hard work by workers, through their unions, to achieve the wages, rights and benefits in our collective agreements. These are not gifts from our employers. If there is no union, the employer can change wages and benefits at any time.

### **There is still a lot of denial within the labour movement**

The job of sounding the alarm with union leaders and staff is far from over. People are very busy with very heavy workloads. It takes time to come to terms with the fact that things could get very bad for us – very fast.

### **Election readiness**

Campaigners are concerned that many locals are not getting ready for the next provincial election. It could come at any time. We must absolutely do everything possible to make sure Hudak does not win.

### **Let's go public**

Campaigners are eager to take the campaign message to the public. Getting the message out to our own members is the first step. Materials for allies, family and friends are in the works.

### **Don't use the Conservatives' language**

*Never* use the phrase "Right to work". It is a propaganda slogan designed to make a dangerous idea sound good.

### **Campaigners want concise materials**

A new, more concise leaflet is now available. It is written for use in the workplace. Other materials are written for Campaigners.

Download from [www.labourcouncil.ca](http://www.labourcouncil.ca)

### **Now is the time for union renewal**

Although the Conservative attack is scary, many Campaigners see it as an opportunity for union renewal – to make the labour movement a much more powerful defender of all working people.