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# THE UNION STAND

A PUBLICATION OF THE N.S. GOVERNMENT & GENERAL EMPLOYEES UNION

WINTER 2016/2017





## CONNECT WITH US!

We want to hear from our members. If you have thoughts on this issue of The Stand, or ongoing union issues, send us your feedback! You can email us at [inquiry@nsgeu.ca](mailto:inquiry@nsgeu.ca) or connect with us:



Dear members,

The winter always seems like the longest, bleakest season (a lot of you already know about my not so great attitude toward it). I hope you had a chance to take some much needed downtime with your loved ones over the holiday season. The union has been a very busy place during the past few months:

Staff and members of bargaining committees have been working diligently to prepare for upcoming rounds of bargaining, and in the case of our Civil Service and Health Care groups, we are pressing hard for progress at the table, in hopes that we can negotiate the best possible contract for all of us.

In January, we launched an exciting contest designed to ensure we have up-to-date and accurate contact information for our members. If you haven't entered yet, you really should: the prize is a \$3,000 travel voucher with Air Canada Vacations! All NSGEU members who are signed and in good standing with the union (except current sitting Board members) are eligible to enter, and the contest is open until March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2017 (see page 11 for more information)

We have also been putting the finishing touches on a public branding campaign which will kick off in the spring. This advertising campaign will be featured in a wide variety of public spaces throughout the province for the year, and will showcase the diversity of the members and occupations our union represents. The campaign is designed to raise public awareness of the important work you do for our province and the contributions our members make to society.

In January, I was honoured to be sponsored by our national union, National Union for Public & General Employees (NUPGE), to participate in the prestigious Trade Union Program held at Harvard University. This intensive six-week executive training program is designed for trade union

leaders, and helps participants develop essential skills for the management and leadership of unions, as well as providing a unique opportunity to explore key issues for the broader labour movement. This has been an incredible experience, and I am looking forward to bringing the skills and knowledge I've gained through this program to my role as President of the NSGEU.

I am looking forward to the challenges and successes that lie ahead for our union in the coming year.

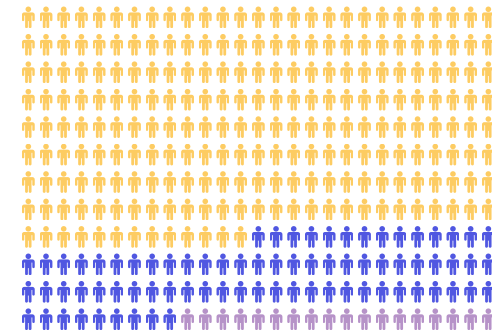


In solidarity,

Jason MacLean  
President, NSGEU

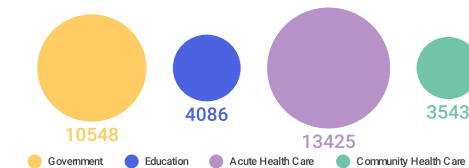


The largest public sector union in Nova Scotia, we represent 31,602 working women and men:



Women Men Other/Did Not Specify

They work in four main sectors: Government, Education, Acute Health Care & Community Health Care



81 The # of collective agreements NSGEU services on behalf of its membership

Our members live & work in communities throughout the province: HRM, Cumberland Colchester, Cape Breton, Pictou Antigonish Guysborough, the Valley and South Shore:



## FEATURES

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## NSGEU TWEETS

### Living the Dream (@NurseHezz)

Random thought: I wonder how many nurses will put in retirement notices when @NSLiberal attacks us again (soon)? #nspoli @NSGEU @NS\_nurses

### Tony Tracy (@Tony\_Tracy)

Jason MacLean (@JMACL3AN), President of @NSGEU, brings message of Solidarity to @NSTeachersUnion. #NSTUnited #NSGEU #NSpoli #canlab #1u #p2

### Bonnie Moore (@moxiedoxie2)

@NSGEU Thank you for your support yesterday! We will not forget it. #NSTU #nspoli #Bill75 #nslg#NSTUnited

### Rick (@rickcourtney1)

@NSLiberal are anti-film, anti-seniors, anti-teachers, anti-health, anti-NS! Time to change! #Election! @NSGEU @NSTeachersUnion @Screen\_NS

### Breaking Bern (@bealangi)

This also means I'll be joining the @NSGEU, which means I can (more) officially stand with the @NSTeachersUnion & @HTU\_official! Excited!

## THE STAND

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# THE ROAD TO THE NEXT PROVINCIAL ELECTION

## Summer of Decisions

The political question of the summer of 2016 was one of “will they or won’t they?” The provincial Liberals were approaching their 3<sup>rd</sup> anniversary in power, Stephen McNeil was still very high in the polls and the Liberal “brand” was stronger than ever with Trudeau and the Federal Liberals still enjoying a honeymoon with Canadians from coast-to-coast, which was and is especially strong here in Atlantic Canada.

With the retirement of interim NDP leader Maureen MacDonald in the spring of 2016, Premier McNeil had to decide if or when to call the by-election in Halifax Needham. Everything seemed to favour the Premier: he was high in the polls; he had a great candidate who had been courted by all three parties; the new NDP leader was relatively unknown; and



favour, the general consensus was that it was the Liberals’ seat to lose.

However, on the very same weekend

On election day, it was the NDP who came out on top with political newcomer Lisa Roberts winning the

**“Instead of a bump, the teachers delivered a ‘bump in the road’ with a 70 per cent rejection of the tentative agreement.”**

in 2013 the Liberals had only missed winning the riding by 277 votes.

The big question for the Premier was should he call a general election or use the by-election as a testing ground. After lots of speculation (much of it fed by the Premier himself), he decided to call a by-election in the heat of August, when very few people were actually paying attention to politics. With all the factors seeming to come out in his

that the Premier called the by-election, the NSGEU’s “Operation FOIPOP” released documents that clearly showed a political staffer had been asked for input on a job description for a civil service position, which she subsequently filled. This story and other stories bad for the Premier then seemed to spill out every other day and the Liberals fought most of the by-election on the defensive.

seat with over 50 per cent of the vote.

## The Fall Sitting

With the by-election behind him, the Premier shelved any ideas of a general election and re-called the legislature for October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2016. The best description for the fall sitting would be vanilla with a few sprinkles. Liberals were well aware that they are

approaching the end of their first term and wanted the session to be boring. A government in this position will rarely take on anything controversial and are holding the session so they can say they had one. The goal is always to come out unscathed.

For the most part, the Liberals were able to keep things pretty quiet. Bills weren’t drawing much attention, but on November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2016 the Minister of Community Services introduced *An Act Respecting Accessibility in Nova Scotia*. It was meant to be a framework for government to work with communities, businesses and non-profit organizations to create accessibility standards. The Minister said it was a historic piece of legislation to much fanfare, but as the dust settled it became apparent that disabled Nova Scotians and other advocacy groups were very unhappy with the Bill and the fact that they had not been consulted (a hallmark of this McNeil government).

The Bill was held at Law Amendments where hearings will resume in late February and early March.

With this “hiccup” behind them the Legislature recessed on November 10<sup>th</sup> and the Liberals were looking forward to a smooth ride to this spring’s budget session that could lead into a general election soon after.

## Bumps on the Road

Shortly before the House sitting in October, teachers in Nova Scotia had the potential to deliver a sizable bump to the Liberal government by giving Premier McNeil his first major deal on a collective agreement since taking office in 2013.

It seemed likely the teachers would ratify their tentative agreement with government on October 4<sup>th</sup>, but as the vote approached

that outcome seemed less and less likely. Instead of a bump, the teachers delivered a “bump in the road” with a 70 per cent rejection of the tentative agreement.

Three weeks later, the rejection was solidified with a 96 per cent vote in favour of a strike. The NSTU requested conciliation in the days following, but government refused. However, following the end of the fall session, the government - through conciliation services - invited the teachers back to the table. Conciliation began on November 21<sup>st</sup> and broke off on November 25<sup>th</sup> and teachers announced they would begin to work to rule on December 5<sup>th</sup>.

On Sunday, December 4<sup>th</sup>, a snap Bill briefing was called and Minister Casey announced that the Liberals were going to introduce legislation the next day (Monday, December 5<sup>th</sup>) to impose a contract on teachers. At the same time, the Liberals

decided to lock all students out of schools until the legislation could be passed. This whole ordeal was handled horribly by the Premier and his team. The announcement was made with no heads up to their own MLAs and parents across Nova Scotia were furious they were being given less than 24 hours to arrange childcare.

A Community Group “Students for Teachers” called for a protest at the Legislature supporting teachers, but in the end, the emergency session was called off, the



legislation was never tabled and the fabricated crisis was forgotten by the Liberals.

Students returned to class the following day and the Premier was left licking his wounds over a self-inflicted bump in the road.

### Another Bump in the Road – Civil Servants Vote

The NSGEU had announced that the long-awaited vote on the government's final offer would take place December 12<sup>th</sup> through to the 14<sup>th</sup>. Having the results announced on December 14<sup>th</sup> was fitting as on that date in 2015, the Liberal government tabled Bill 148, *Public Services Sustainability (2015) Act*. This Act includes reference to the vast

the Liberals were not ready to actually negotiate.

When parties are unable to achieve a mutual agreement, either the union or the employer can apply to the Labour Board for the help of conciliation services and this is exactly what the NSGEU did. We had conciliation dates set for March 2017, but government cancelled those and we are now looking at dates in April. In the interim, Premier McNeil is left without a signed collective agreement.

Teachers resumed conciliation on December 17<sup>th</sup> and this carried through to January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2017 when the teachers came to their third tentative agreement with a ratification vote called for February 9<sup>th</sup>.

This third tentative agreement didn't sit well with teachers who didn't like

McNeil was once again using his majority in the House to trample on the rights of union members. From day one, everyone knew the Bill would pass, but the protests and rallies continued outside the House and across Nova Scotia, and the NSGEU was there every step of the way.

McNeil once again used all night sittings to ensure fast passage of the legislation, even though there was never a real emergency. The Liberals used their majority to block speakers at Law Amendments allowing just 68 of the 400 who asked to present the opportunity to speak their mind about the Bill.

Bill 75 passed on February 21<sup>st</sup>, legislating a contract on the teachers of Nova Scotia. This is the seventh piece

of anti-labour legislation passed by the McNeil government.

### What Happens Now?

Is it possible the Premier will come to his senses and use future conciliation dates to actually work to come to a fair agreement with our Civil Servants? Anything could happen, but with Bill 148 and the Premier's past history, it's highly unlikely.

Everyone knows an election is coming, but the timing is all up to the Premier.

The choice for NSGEU members could not be clearer: we need to work to un-elect this Premier and his MLAs across Nova Scotia. If they are allowed a second majority government, they will only be emboldened and most provisions within collective agreements for all NSGEU members will be at risk.

NSGEU members can vote McNeil out – or face the loss of the security you and your families currently have in your collective agreements.

Your choice is simple: vote or lose. ■

***“NSGEU members can vote McNeil out – or face the loss of the security you and your families currently have in your collective agreements.”***

majority of the public sector employees in the province and has not yet been proclaimed or enacted.

This Bill dictates the same wage pattern found in the Employer's final offer and similarly ends the PSA for all employees hired after April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015 and freezes it for all employees as of April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015. This Bill made it impossible for fair and open collective bargaining to happen.

Leading into the vote, in-person meetings and telephone town halls were held across Nova Scotia. The government remained confident that NSGEU members would simply accept the final offer, but on December 14<sup>th</sup> the results showed that the Civil Servants would not be bullied by the Liberals into signing an agreement where the Premier was trying to tear out long held and hard fought for clauses. NSGEU members voted 94 per cent against the employer's final offer on December 14<sup>th</sup>. Following this vote, the union returned to the bargaining table with the employer for two days of negotiations, but it was apparent

the idea of having to negotiate with Bill 148 hanging over their heads and the lack of any real progress in addressing classroom concerns. Teachers handily rejected the tentative agreement with a 78 per cent rejection vote. Yet another failure for the McNeil government in collective bargaining.

### Stormy Days at the Legislature

Over the weekend of February 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>, the Premier announced his government's intentions to recall the Legislature on February 13<sup>th</sup> to introduce Bill 75, an act that would legislate a contract on Nova Scotia teachers.

With a storm forecast in the House, it was fitting that Nova Scotia was hit by a blizzard on February 13<sup>th</sup>. After much public outcry, the Premier reluctantly was pressured into acting in the interest of safety, and delayed the start of the House to February 14<sup>th</sup>.

The entirety of the Nova Scotia Labour movement turned out to support teachers and show their anger that

## How does an idea turn into a bargaining proposal?

The short answer: ideas are passed on to your elected Bargaining Committee and made into official Proposals through your Bargaining Input Surveys.

Here's a bit more information on exactly how that process plays out:

All NSGEU members work under the protection of a collective agreement, which is negotiated with their employer.

Collective Agreements are usually three or four years in length and establish working conditions, including wages, hours of work, benefits, overtime, and safety and health for members.

The terms of the contract are negotiated between:

1. **A NSGEU Bargaining Committee** – made up of union members who've been elected by fellow members to speak on their behalf, along with a professional union negotiator; and
2. **Management representatives** of the employer.

The bargaining process begins at Local meetings where NSGEU members elect their negotiating representatives.

Those elected to the Committee are responsible for organizing a series of bargaining prep meetings where new ideas and proposals are heard. Your elected Committee is also responsible for creating your Bargaining Input Survey to collect and prioritize new bargaining proposals. These surveys are typically distributed electronically or via mail months before your committee meets with your employer, as your Committee members develop their bargaining proposals based on the feedback they receive from members through this survey.

Your Bargaining Input Survey is the primary opportunity for every member to offer their opinion on what they'd like to see in their new contract, or suggest improvements to what currently exists. For that reason, it is very important that you take the time to complete your bargaining survey: have your voice heard! ■

## Update to Cancer Care Fund

The Cancer Care Fund was created by the NSGEU Women's Issues Committee in 2011 to provide up to \$200 in financial assistance to our members who are coping with a cancer diagnosis. The fund may be accessed to assist a member, their spouse or partner, or their child or parent (by blood, adoption or marriage) who is diagnosed with cancer.

Members have accessed the fund to help cover many costs, including: travel expenses, hospital parking fees, utility bills, rent, ostomy supplies, nutrition supplements, groceries, ambulance bills, medication, tattooing for breast reconstruction, wigs, Naturopaths/Naturopathic treatments, home modifications, and health care plan premiums.

Since the development of the fund, **190** individuals facing cancer have been assisted with a grand total of **\$38,008.48**.

Anyone interested in applying to access the fund can do so by emailing [inquiry@nsgeu.ca](mailto:inquiry@nsgeu.ca) for an application. ■



## Honouring one of our own



NSGEU Local 104 is proud to feature one of our members, Johnena Kennedy, a community outreach worker who is a very involved union activist and this year's recipient of the Dr. M.A. Mian Award. This award was presented to her at the 2016 Living with Mental Illness and Addiction Conference in Sydney for the impact she has on the lives of people living with mental illness and addiction.

Johnena expresses how happy she was the day she found out that she was the recipient of the award and knowing that her co-workers nominated her out of respect for the work she did with the clients made it that much more special. She didn't think anything could top that joy until she received a phone call that very same day from her son and daughter-in-law telling her that she would soon be a Grandma. Every day in life is memorable but there are some which you will never forget and that is certainly one for Johnena.

Anyone who has entered Johnena's life, whether on a personal or professional level, knows what a kind and wise woman she is. Johnena has faced and overcome many challenges in her life and has used those challenges as a resource to help others overcome their own challenges.

Johnena has been helping people with addictions for over 25 years and goes above and beyond for every client and co-worker. She is always accessible and will do whatever she can to find a solution for the client. She cares about the clients and does extensive follow-up with them; keeping staff informed every step of the way. Genuine and caring, Johnena gets high praise from clients, staff, and her co-workers. ■

- Submitted by Johnena's co-worker & fellow Local 104 member, Kim Sheppard.





NSGEU members were among the many people who stepped up to help secure roads and make it safe for first responders after the Thanksgiving Day floods in Cape Breton. (Photo submitted)

# STEPPING UP TO HELP THEIR COMMUNITY

*This article profiles NSGEU members who worked and volunteered during the Thanksgiving Day flood in Cape Breton.*

On Thanksgiving (Monday, October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016), Cape Breton was hit by a slow-moving low pressure weather system, the remnants of Hurricane Matthew, that had recently devastated sections of Haiti, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Southeastern and Eastern U.S. as it moved north up the Eastern seaboard over the Atlantic Ocean.

At 3 p.m. Environment Canada reported that over 100 mm. of rain had fallen in the Sydney area and the rain kept coming. Roads were blocked, bridges washed out, and in low lying areas, flooding began. The waters continued to rise until after the rain finally stopped on Tuesday morning. Estimates are that a total of 240 mm. of rain fell in the Sydney area.

Paul Moore, Chief Steward of Local 1 (Civil Service in the Cape Breton region), contacted *The Stand* to share a few of the stories he had heard at a Local meeting following the flood. He wanted others to know about the amazing work NSGEU members had done serving the public during and after this disaster. Paul works in Adoptions in the Department of Community Services and although his house suffered physical damage during the storm and he lost his basement, he was able to save most of his belongings unlike some friends and neighbours who lost everything.

"I was amazed to hear the stories from our members at our Local meeting," says Moore. "Many of our members were

sitting down to Thanksgiving dinner, some were flooded themselves, but they left their families and homes to work long hours to ensure the public was safe."

NSGEU members who work for the Civil Service in Transportation, Infrastructure and Renewal (TIR) were first responders in this flood. They were out on the roads, making it safe for emergency and Nova Scotia Power vehicles to get through.

"I got a call that Hwy 125 was flooding", says Danny Laffin, a Maintenance Supervisor in Sydney River. "So, I drove out to the site of the flooding to assess the situation."

Danny says that in his 33 years in TIR, he had never seen anything like what he saw that day and night.

"The standard that we maintain is that all pipes, culverts and bridges be able to handle a once in a 100 year storm – about 100 mm. of rain. This storm dumped over double that at once and the infrastructure is simply not built to handle that - and it didn't. We had washouts on Beechmount Rd., Mountain Rd., Eskasoni Hwy Rt. 216, and Coxheath Rd."

Danny has high praise for his crew and his fellow supervisors who worked quickly that day and night to secure the safety of the roads for the public and emergency vehicles. The five supervisors, NSGEU members Paul Whelan (Marion Bridge); Mike Boudreau (Port Morien); Sheldon Fiander (Bras D'or); John MacPhee (Sydney River); Lloyd Hall (Coxheath), came together as a team to identify priorities and develop a swift



Many roads were washed out by the record-breaking rainfall levels. (Photo submitted)

plan of action.

"The first roads to be prioritized were the roads that were washed out isolating communities. They had to be able to be reached by emergency crews and Nova Scotia Power."

time to assist others."

Tracey Inder is a Financial Service Officer with TIR. She is responsible for the Area's budget along with the financial forecast. She started working for TIR 18 years ago as a Clerk

***"We were out on the road in the middle of the storm in the dark cutting a big spruce off the road. The wind was howling and rain just pouring down. We could not hear a thing. We looked around after we finished with the tree and another huge tree had fallen just behind us. We did not hear it fall."***

Being the first out in the storm comes with some safety risk: "We were out on the road in the middle of the storm in the dark cutting a big spruce off the road. The wind was howling and rain just pouring down. We could not hear a thing. We looked around after we finished with the tree and another huge tree had fallen just behind us. We did not hear it fall," says Danny.

The number of highway workers employed by the Department changes with the seasons. In October, Danny was working with a crew of 6 to 10 CUPE 1867 members. During the storm and following it, they had to use a large number of contractors as well. It was a tough and stressful couple of weeks with long intense hours of work.

"From the Thanksgiving Day storm to early January, we have spent much less time with our families. I'm glad to report we are now, as of January 15, back to our regular schedule and normal duties."

"I cannot stress enough how proud I am of my fellow NSGEU members and CUPE members who gave up their own home

2 and moved into her current position in 2005.

She was on the road when the storm hit – on her way to help her son whose car was stuck in Frenchvale. While she was there she took some photos of a bridge not far away that had water flowing over it as well as under it.

"When you work in Transportation, you are always thinking about your job," she says.

"For work to be done, budgeted and accounted for, we need quite a bit of information. The Supervisors do an initial impact assessment. They need photos of the location and the damage. Then they need forms and photos of the work they have to do. Every spot needs a pre-evaluation and a post-evaluation form."

"I have five boxes of paperwork on work orders just related to this storm," says Inder. "I work closely with a clerk and together, we do a pretty good job staying on top of things."

STORY CONTINUES ON PAGE 10





Nova Scotia's road infrastructure is engineered to withstand a once in a hundred year rainfall (about 100 mm. of rain). On October 10<sup>th</sup>, the Sydney area received 240 mm. of rain. (Photo submitted)

STORY CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

Tracey is as cool as a cucumber and draws on her past experience when faced with challenges like this storm.

"We've had storm damage before. I've been through three or four of them," she says. The first couple were difficult – the paperwork trail was not there and I had to chase things down afterward. But we have experience now and we all work as a team. I love my job."

"I do worry sometimes about the safety of the crews," she says. "If it wasn't for them moving trees and debris, other first responders wouldn't be able to do their jobs."

Estimates are that there was \$2.9 million damage to Cape Breton County infrastructure as a result of this storm.

Sean O'Toole works for Nova Scotia Environment as a Public Health Officer, appointed under the Health Protection Act to inspect food establishments and investigate health hazards in consultation with the Medical Officer of Health. He has been doing this job for 12 years. He lives and works in the Sydney area and is responsible for inspecting restaurants and food establishments – any place that retails food – including daycares and long term care facilities. Although he had a lot to do following the flood in his regular job as an Officer to ensure public health was being protected, his work as a volunteer with the Canadian Red Cross also stood out.

Sean became a volunteer with the Red Cross in 2006 and has taken national training in disaster management. He was on the ground in 2011, as volunteer and Manager of Operations helping the community of Slave Lake deal with a fire that devastated much of their city. Sean was contacted by the Red Cross as the flood waters rose in Sydney. He was asked if he could help set up and manage a shelter for those were displaced by the storm. As part of the Personal Disaster Assistance Team, he gave out comfort kits, blankets and sock

monkeys for kids, and provided food and shelter.

"Members of our team can be a source of strength and hope, for someone who has been affected by disaster – sometimes, a candle, in what can be the darkest period in someone's life."

The days following the flood were very busy for Sean and other Local members, both Public Health Officers and Environment Inspectors that possess the Certificate in Public Health Inspection (Canada), a nationally recognized certification. In his role as Public Health Officer, he inspected local businesses to gather information about how the flood affected them and to help them return to normal operations. Some needed guidance about what to throw and what to keep because of power outages and the potential for spoiled food. In a few cases, Public Health Officers had to take regulatory action to ensure public health was protected. Environment Inspectors were also part of the inspection teams along with CBRM Bylaw Officers, Building Inspectors, and the Deputy Fire Marshalls that inspected homes in the flood area to determine whether they were fit for people to return to.

"The flood resulted in oil tanks being overturned and there were concerns about oil spillage and clean up from oil tanks, sewage, and potential mould contamination."

He says that one important lesson he has learned is that you never know what people are dealing with in their life and you need to maintain objectivity at all times.

"They could have a palliative parent at home... you never really know and need to approach people with an open mind."

He wanted to give a shout-out to all the other volunteers who work in the Civil Service.

"We have great volunteers in the public service and we enjoy giving back to the community in which we live and work." ■

# A chance to win **BIG** with the NSGEU

This January, the union launched an exciting contest for our members: we are giving away a \$3,000 travel voucher with Air Canada Vacations!

The purpose of this contest is to allow us to build our connections with our members, and ensure we have the most accurate, up-to-date contact information for you, so we can reach you with important information.

The entry form collects your name, local number, mailing address, and PERSONAL email address. It also gives you the opportunity to earn extra entries by providing us with a cell phone number, or following us on Twitter and visiting our Facebook page.

Please take a moment to carefully review the terms & conditions of the contest before entering to ensure your entry is valid:

*This contest is open only to members of the Nova Scotia Government & General Employees Union (NSGEU) who are signed and in good standing at the time of the draw. Each member can enter the contest only once, and can earn up to SEVEN entries by submitting the following ACCURATE pieces of information:*

- 1) Your first & last name (mandatory);

- 2) Your current mailing address (mandatory);
- 3) Your NSGEU Local # (mandatory);
- 4) Your personal, non-work email address (mandatory);
- 5) Your personal cell phone number;
- 6) Following NSGEU on Twitter;
- 7) Visiting our Facebook page.

*Current sitting NSGEU board members are not eligible to participate. People who attempt to enter the contest more than once will be disqualified. The NSGEU Local # you submit must be correct (if unsure, please verify by checking <http://nsgeu.ca/local-page> or contacting us at 902-424-4063 before submitting your entry). The personal email address you provide the union with must be a valid email address: winners will ONLY be notified via this personal email address.*

*A winner will be drawn once the contest has concluded on March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2017. If prize is unclaimed after*



*1 (one) week, the winner will be disqualified and another entry will be drawn.*

*The grand prize, a \$3,000 travel voucher from Air Canada Vacations, must be booked through Susan Williams at Trip Central. The prize is not exchangeable or redeemable for cash value.*

*Should the winner fail to meet any of the above rules and conditions, their entry will be disqualified.*

As of February 21<sup>st</sup>, more than 18,000 ballots had been received. Don't worry though: you can visit <http://nsgeu.ca/enter-to-win-a-dream-vacation-with-the-nsgeu/> to enter until March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2017. Good luck! ■

## Changes to E.I. Waiting Period

On January 1, 2017 the Employment Insurance (EI) waiting period was shortened from two weeks to one week.

The reduction of the waiting period applies to all types of EI benefits—regular, fishing, sickness, maternity, parental, compassionate care, parents of critically ill children, and special benefits for self-employed individuals.

For Civil Service members this means the employer will continue to pay 75% of an Employee's pay in the second week waiting period and will discuss any potential changes

further during contract negotiations. This means, Members will be able to receive their EI payments in the second week and 75% of their pay from the Employer.

Where NSGEU collective agreements have negotiated top-ups we will be discussing this issue with the employers to find out their interpretation of the new rule, and to ensure that the one-week waiting period will apply with no loss to any member in terms of pay and benefits.

Claimants are still entitled to the same maximum number of weeks of EI benefits. Reducing the waiting period shifts forward the period during which EI benefits are payable. ■





PICTURED LEFT TO RIGHT: Human Rights Committee members pose with some of the items collected for this year's Sock It To Poverty campaign at NSGEU's office in Burnside. Committee members include Michelle Bauchman, Paul Pero, Paula McCurdy, John Mortimer, Heather Strang, Melissa Marsman and Tanya Hersey (not pictured: Sandra Mullen).

## Members Sock It To Poverty, Again!

NSGEU's Human Rights Committee would like to send a huge "Thank You!" to all NSGEU members for their contributions to the 2016/2017 Sock it to Poverty Campaign.

Together, we collected 387 mittens & gloves, 396 hats, 149 scarves, and 847 pairs of socks. As well, the cash donations collected allowed us to purchase an additional 2,190 pairs of socks from Stanfield.

We have received another \$2,200 in cash as of January 2017, which the Committee will use to purchase more new socks to be distributed in the respective regions where the donations were received.

Metro Turning Point, Halifax Youth Attendance Centre, Harvest House, and Stepping Stone women's shelter are just a few of the organizations that have benefitted from the help and generosity of NSGEU members this winter. Solidarity!



ABOVE: Blaise McNeil of Local 1 (right) delivered a donation from his workplace to the Glace Bay Food Bank's Coordinator, Sandra MacPherson.



## UNIONS MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN OUR LIVES.

Unions fought for many of the benefits workers enjoy today: Sick leave, maternity & paternity leave, vacation, minimum wage, paid breaks, overtime, workplace safety standards and regulations, collective bargaining rights, and much, much more.

**Do you know of a group of non-unionized workers who might be interested in joining the NSGEU? Please contact:**

Lori Smith, Organizing Officer  
902-456-6531 or 1-877-556-7438 or [lsmith@nsgeu.ca](mailto:lsmith@nsgeu.ca)



# Making room for mental health

There is a real lack of affordable housing in Nova Scotia, and that need is being felt acutely in King's County. A recent study conducted by the Affordable Housing Association of Nova Scotia (AHANS) shows that there is a need for almost 1,000 units in that community alone.

Laurel Taylor is President of NSGEU Local 49 and Team Lead for Project Hope with the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) in Kentville. She works with



people who have a mental health issues who are homeless or are at risk of homelessness, and knows all too well about the lack of affordable housing options and the impact it's having on people.

"We have people staying in really bad relationships or really ... inferior housing that you wouldn't want to put livestock in, really," Taylor said.

People with mental health issues such as anxiety or depression may need extra help securing affordable housing because they may be unable to work full-time – or at all – or because they cannot deal with people or other aspects of everyday life, such as bills.

It's not just homeless people with mental illness that are in need of help with affordable housing, either: it's the working poor, people who are working multiple jobs and still struggling to afford the basics, like food and rent.

The CMHA was recently approved for a \$400,000 Federal grant to increase the number of affordable housing units in

the Kings County area. The plan is to use the grant to purchase a local motel and turn it into affordable housing units that could house up to 12 people, and create a safe "community within a community."

But their plan has hit a snag: the motel is zoned as commercial property, not for multi-residential living, so they need to have the property re-zoned. And not everyone in the community is supportive of the project.

"Sadly, some people in the community believe in affordable housing, but not in their community ... and some people, as soon as you hear the word 'mental health' they suddenly seem to think that they're out to kill people, and that's not the reality of the people we work with every day," Taylor said.

"The reality is the people that I work with every day are normally victims of crime, rather than perpetrators of crime, so it's a very skewed view of the people that we want to assist in helping."

There is a petition circulating against the project, but not all who have signed actually live in the community, and not all have heard CMHA's perspective. There's also a lot of misinformation about the project, including that it will be a treatment facility for the mentally ill.

"We don't want a treatment facility because we don't offer treatment!" Taylor pointed out, "And if we wanted to do a treatment facility, it's already zoned for that – that's the funniest part of it all."

The CMHA is already an experienced landlord: they already have another



ABOVE: The CMHA is looking to purchase Allen's Motel property to create more affordable housing units in Kentville.

small property in another part of the community which houses people with mental health issues, and most people don't even know that it's there.

Still, they aren't giving up. They planned to hold a community meeting in early March to address some of the questions and concerns residents may have, and to hear from the project's supporters, as well. Taylor also sees this meeting as an opportunity to educate people about mental health in general.

After their community meeting, they will submit a formal proposal to town council and after that, submit a development plan for consideration. If the plan to purchase the motel fails as a result of lack of community support, they will move forward in another location.

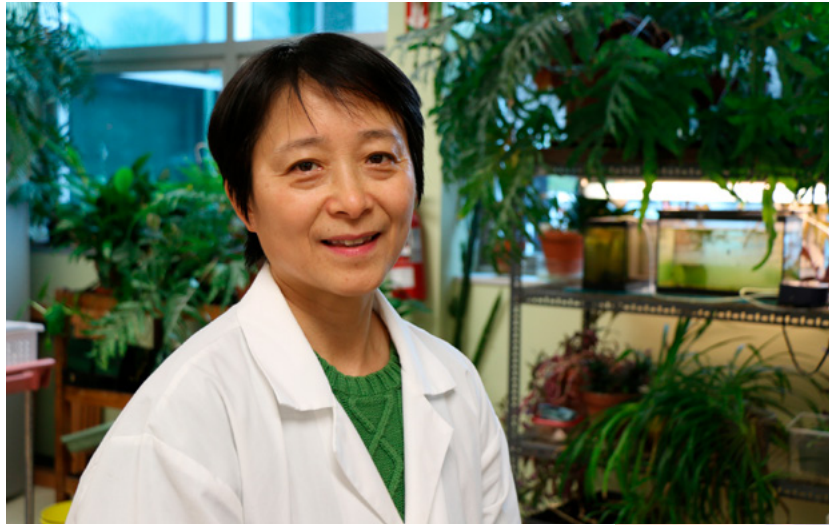
"...We're going to be looking somewhere in the community to have this, because the need is not going away, it is growing."

Taylor calls the situation "disheartening" and says she feels badly for people who are privately dealing with mental health issues and already living in the community.

"...We do have human rights, and we have the right to live within our community. I also live in Kentville and ... I have houses around me that have people that are mentally challenged and mentally ill (living in them) and I think it's a wonderful community. It's vibrant and everyone is represented, and I don't fear when I'm out in my backyard that anything bad is going to happen to me." ■



# Meeting the Membership



**In late 2016, President Jason MacLean headed out on the road to visit with members of Local 79 (Saint Mary's University), Local 77/99 (Dalhousie University) and Local 81 (Mount Saint Vincent University):**

PICTURED LEFT: Jin Yang is a biology technician at Saint Mary's University. Jin says SMU is a nice environment to work in and she likes interacting with the students, working in the taxonomy lab, and dealing with plants and animals.

Her husband is also a biologist at Saint Mary's and she enjoys being able to work on campus with him in a collaborative setting.



RIGHT: Ryan Osborne is a former SMU student who now works in The Language Centre Library as an instructional resources assistant at Saint Mary's University.

She assists in the computer lab with online registration, ordering text books for instructors, and online placement tests with students. She enjoys being able to work with the students and the instructors on a daily basis.

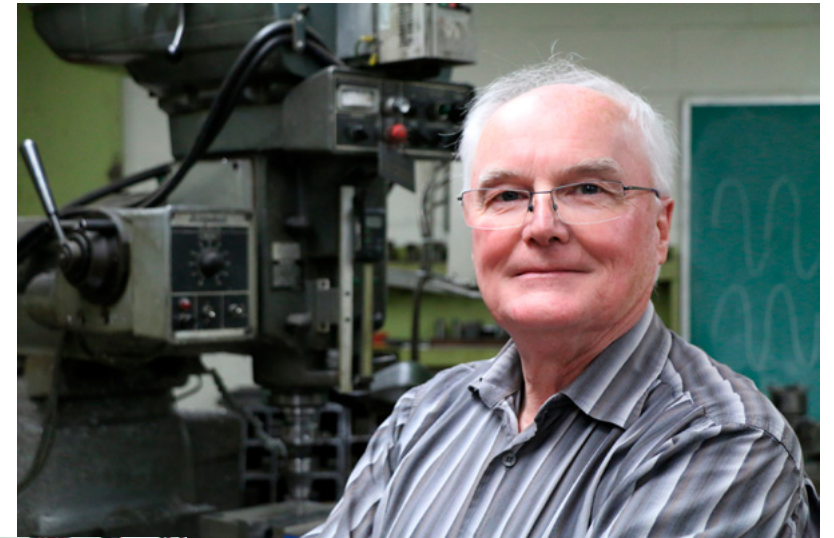


LEFT: Scott Cudmore is a millwright at Dalhousie University. Scott is responsible for repairing pumps, electrical motor bearings, and operating the milling machine.

He's been a millwright at Dalhousie for over 15 years and loves his job. He enjoys having the time to fix things around the building and takes pride in his work.

RIGHT: Angus Macpherson is a member of Local 77 and a machine shop supervisor who has been working at Dalhousie since 1969.

Angus is originally from Scotland and runs the Sexton Campus Machine Shop. He usually has about six to eight students working in the shop daily, and helps students with senior design projects like building a super mileage car.



LEFT: Tara Whitney of Local 79 is a former SMU student who now works full time in Athletics at Saint Mary's University.

Tara is the first point of contact at the Homburg Centre, works on payroll and scheduling as well as membership sales.

She loves working with the community members, some of whom have been here for 20 years, and enjoys building new relationships.

RIGHT: Marcus Orr is President of Local 99 and a plumber with Dalhousie University, where his team of three is responsible for the maintenance of 39 buildings at the core of the university.

He likes being involved with the union and having the opportunity to take education courses, which he says helps him grow as an individual.





**RIGHT:** Miriam Gallant is an administrative assistant for Business and Tourism at Mount Saint Vincent University. She is also the Vice-President of Local 81.

Miriam has been working at the Mount for 14 years, and works closely to facilitate the needs of students. She also helps plan Business and Tourism events, and helps the faculty and students for all their academic requirements within the department.

Miriam loves the interaction with the people and the friendly environment at the Mount.



**LEFT:** Darlene Goucher is a technician in the Chemistry Department at Saint Mary's University.

Darlene is in charge of setting up the academic labs with the chemical solutions and instruments, ordering all the supplies, and monitoring safety.

She loves working with the students and faculty and has been working in this position for over 30 years.



**RIGHT:** Cassie MacDonald is a secretary with the School of Environment, Department of Environmental Science, and Department of Geography and Environmental Science at Saint Mary's University.

She works with 12 faculty members, deals with student inquiries across the two departments, and helps manage a seminar series twice a month. She is very environmentally-conscious and loves working in a department that she feels connected to.



**LEFT:** Tracy Greenwood is a student account service technician in Financial Services at The Mount.

Tracy works with third-party sponsored students and makes sure invoices are paid and sponsorships are still valid. She also works at the service window and helps students pay their course fees and fill out documents.

She really enjoys working with students and likes listening to their stories and hearing where they come from. ■



# PHOTOS FROM AROUND THE UNION



FROM TOP, CLOCKWISE: 1st Vice President Sandra Mullen spoke to the crowd of supporters and media gathered in front of The Chronicle Herald's office on Joseph Howe Drive; NSGEU members joined members of the Halifax Typographical Union (HTU) and other labour leaders on the picket line on January 23<sup>rd</sup> to mark one year on strike at The Chronicle Herald; Students from the University of King's College marched down from their campus to join the rally; two protestors look on quietly, as labour leaders address the crowd.





FROM TOP LEFT, COUNTER-CLOCKWISE: Hundreds gathered at Halifax's Grand Parade on Jan. 21<sup>st</sup> for the Women's March on Washington (Halifax rally), a worldwide protest held to advocate legislation and policies regarding human rights; NSGEU leaders & activists met up at the rally & proudly waved their union flags; The Women's Issues Committee met at the NSGEU office in January to discuss upcoming events & issues; Protestors wielded clever, creative placards at the Women's March; NSGEU's 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice Presidents met with representatives of Feed NS to discuss future opportunities to collaborate with the non-profit organization.



FROM TOP LEFT, CLOCKWISE: Angry parents, students and teachers and their supporters protested against the Nova Scotia Liberal government's decision to lock children out of school and introduce Bill 75, legislation that would impose a contract on all teachers; students and members of the public carried signs to show how unhappy they were with government's heavy-handed approach to collective bargaining and keeping children out of school.







## SCHOLARSHIPS & BURSARIES

The NSGEU believes in supporting members who are continuing their education. Every year, the union offers 29 member bursaries (14 in March and 15 in October). They are awarded based on financial need at the discretion of the NSGEU Education Committee. Once a year, the union offers 10 dependent scholarship awards: one \$2,500 scholarship, four \$1,500 scholarships, and five \$1,000 scholarships. Scholarships are awarded based on scholastic achievement at the discretion of the NSGEU Education Committee.

The following people were selected as recipients of the NSGEU's 2016 Fall Member Bursaries & Scholarships:

### Member Bursaries:

- Bill Hebert Memorial Award: Morgan Blackmore (Local 3)
- Carmen Williams Memorial Award: Anna Gallant (Local 101)
- Haresh Parekh (Local 100)
- Lee Ann Spears (Local 85)
- Nathaniel Houle (Local 7)

- Colleen Currie (Local 8)
- Tamara Fradette (Local 7)
- Stephanie Hudson (Local 34)
- Nicole LaPierre (Local 100)
- Bennett Blades (Local 16)
- Robyn McNeill (Local 100)
- Sarah-Jane Bungay (Local 100)
- Stephanie Noja (Local 101)
- David Adeyemi (Local 99)
- Marilyn MacDougall (Local 6)

### Members' Dependent Bursaries:

- Westray Memorial Award: Charlee Gerrior (Member Barbara Gerrior, Local 470C)
- Brian Langille Memorial Award: Keegan MacNeil (Member Albert DeYoung, Local 88)
- Irving Deale Memorial Award: Angeline Maloney-Arsenault (Member Nicole Isaac, Local 35)
- Phillip Cosgrove Memorial Award: Leah MacPherson (Member Stella MacPherson, Local 1)

- Gordon Burnham Memorial Award: Logan O'Connell (Member Tara O'Connell, Local 190)
- John Rossiter Memorial Award: Courtney Penney (Member Beverley Simmons, Local 470)
- Lauren Doucet (Member Lisa Doucet, Local 423)
- Kwesi Renner (Member Sasha Renner, Local 7)
- Blake Seymour (Member Sharon Jewer, Local 70)
- Dustin Renzelli (Member Nellie Renzelli, Local 77)
- Anique LeBlanc (Member Karen Thibault, Local 16)
- Elsie Blacker (Member Colleen Blacker, Local 81)
- Gabriel Maxwell (Member Evan Maxwell, Local 6)
- Hannah Miles (Member Cheryl Miles, Local 1246)
- Peter Smith (Member Molly Rose-Smith, Local 17)



### Members' Dependent Scholarships:

- Adrian Timmons Memorial Award: Jenny Gillis (Member A Marie Gillis, Local 88)
- Alex Buchanan Memorial Award: Lydia Swiatkowski (Member Deanna MacKay, Local 4)
- Aubrey Stevens Memorial Award: Adam Campbell (Member Cindy Campbell, Local 101)
- Greg Blanchard Award: Ainslie Pierrynowski (Member Joan Cummings/Richard, Local 104/18A)
- David Peters Award: Jennie Newman (Member Cheryl Newman, Local 79)
- Joan Jessome Award: Emily Layland (Member Pauline Layland, Local 101)
- Nikita Kenney (Member Natasha Kenney, Local 119)
- Fraser Robinson (Member Catherine & Gord Robinson, Local 71/2)
- Benjamin Wright (Member Linda Wright, Local 53)
- Hannah Corney (Member Randolph Corney, Local 79)

## APPLY NOW!

The Education Committee would like advise that they are now accepting applications for the **NSGEU Member Bursaries**. The Committee may issue up to 14 \$1,000 Member Bursaries each Spring. The deadline for submission is **March 15<sup>th</sup>** of each year.

NSGEU believes in supporting members who are continuing their education. Bursaries are awarded based on financial need at the discretion of the NSGEU Education Committee.

Check out the NSGEU Web page for more information at <http://nsgeu.ca/education/scholarships-bursaries-awards/>

The Social Recreation Committee would also like to advise that they are now accepting applications for the **NSGEU Amateur Sports and Fine Arts Awards**.

Each year, the NSGEU Social/Recreation Committee may issue up to 15 Amateur Sports Awards (of which up to three may be Fine Arts Awards) of \$300 each to members, or children of members, who are amateur athletes or artists. These awards help defray the costs of participation in or training for sports or fine arts. The deadline is **March 31<sup>st</sup>** of each year.

Please visit the NSGEU Website for details. Application: <http://nsgeu.ca/filemanager/pdf/education/sportsFineArtsAward.pdf>



NSGEU EDUCATION COURSES: SPRING 2017

New Activist	Pre-Retirement	Bully-Free Workplaces
<p><b>Eligibility:</b> Members with no prior training. Recommended for New Stewards prior to Steward I.</p> <p><b>Description:</b> An introduction to the NSGEU and the labour movement. Review of workers rights, union processes, grievances, mobilization and the importance of strong locals.</p>	<p><b>Eligibility:</b> Usually within one to two years of retirement.</p> <p><b>Description:</b> An overview of pension politics in Nova Scotia. Presentation from CPP and your pension plan, i.e., NSAHO, PSSP, etc., retirement benefits. Benefit information varies according to location and Local members.</p>	<p><b>Description:</b> A six-hour interactive workshop that explores bullying issues in depth with small group activities; engages participants to help understand solutions to workplace bullying.</p>
Upcoming Dates:	Upcoming Dates:	Upcoming Dates:
<p><b>Monday, March 20 &amp; Tuesday, March 21</b> (split class) Metro A, B &amp; C Location: NSGEU Office (Dartmouth)</p> <p><b>Monday, April 3 &amp; Tuesday, April 4</b> Cumberland/Colchester &amp; Pictou/Antigonish/Guysborough Location: NSGEU Office (Truro)</p> <p><b>Monday, April 24 &amp; Tuesday, April 25</b> South Shore &amp; Valley Location: Best Western (Liverpool) &amp; Old Orchard Inn (Wolfville)</p> <p><b>Monday, May 15 &amp; Tuesday, May 16</b> Cape Breton &amp; Pictou/Antigonish/Guysborough Location: NSGEU Office (Sydney)</p> <p><b>Monday, May 29 &amp; Tuesday, May 30</b> Metro A, B &amp; C &amp; Cumberland/Colchester Location: NSGEU Office (Dartmouth)</p>	<p><b>Saturday, March 18</b> Location: NSGEU Office (Dartmouth)</p> <p><b>Saturday, April 22</b> Location: Annapolis Basin Conference Centre (Cornwallis)</p> <p><b>Saturday, June 3</b> Location: Dalhousie Agricultural Campus (Truro)</p>	<p><b>Open Sessions</b> (any member can sign up to attend, if space is available, but time off from work is not covered by the union):</p> <p><b>Thursday, March 23</b> Location: NSGEU Office (Dartmouth)</p> <p><b>Tuesday, April 25</b> *tentative date Location: NSGEU Office (Dartmouth)</p> <p><b>Tuesday, May 16</b> Location: NSGEU Office (Dartmouth)</p>

If you're interested in participating in any of the courses or workshops listed here, the NSGEU can help make it happen!

We cover your transportation and child/eldercare costs (as defined by the NSGEU Board policies) and will also help arrange for your time off work (except for Bully-Free).

For more information contact us by calling 902-424-4063 (toll-free 1-877-556-7438) or emailing [inquiry@nsgeu.ca](mailto:inquiry@nsgeu.ca).



Ottawa Lobby Day Advanced Key National Labour Issues

Board member and Political Action Committee Chair Hugh Gillis and NSGEU staff member David MacKenzie joined hundreds of other Labour Activists from across Canada on February 7, 2017 in a Canadian Labour Congress Lobby Day on Parliament Hill to speak with Nova Scotia representatives about key national labour issues.



Canadian Labour Congress  
Congrès du travail du Canada

This year's lobby day focused on four important issues:

1. Halting any further progression of Bill C-27 *An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Standards Act*, and would allow employers to undermine DB pensions, and replace them with TB plans that carry far less risk, legal obligation, and cost for employers.

2. A National Pharmacare Plan that would provide Canadians coast to coast with the same level of pharmacare.

3. Seeking movement on Pay Equity: pay equity is needed to correct
4. Speaking with Nova Scotia Senators on supporting Government Legislation to repeal numerous pieces of anti Labour Legislation Bills C-525 and C-377 that had been introduced and passed by the Stephen Harper Conservatives.

Between them Hugh and David had meetings with MPs Roger Cuzner, Speaker Geoff Regan and Darren Fisher as well as Independent Senator Wanda Thomas Bernard and Liberal Senator Terry Mercer.

The MPs and Senators were presented

systemic discrimination that has led to significantly lower wages in occupations that are dominated by women workers. There have been many reports over decades with few concrete results; and

with the information and information packages were left behind as well.

Since returning there have been reports that the Federal Liberal Government is holding Bill C-27 back and will conduct consultations with Unions before any further decisions are made. The lack of consultation leading into the Bill has left it open to unforeseen and unintended consequences.

As well, there was strong support from Nova Scotia's Senators to work to move forward on the repeal of the Bills C-525 and C-377.

Both Hugh and David enjoyed the time spent on the Hill with hundreds of other union members from across Canada and over the coming weeks and months the CLC will be providing further updates on the issues lobbied for and encourage all NSGEU members to advance issues vital to the labour movement.

UNION THREADS

There's a whole range of colourful NSGEU clothing available at the union office at 255 John Savage Avenue. For more info, call Jackie Creemer at 902-424-4063 (toll free at 1-877-556-7438) or email [jcreemer@nsgeu.ca](mailto:jcreemer@nsgeu.ca).



\$15.00 Micro-fleece jacket



\$20.00 Sweatshirt



\$60.00 Jacket with hood



\$25.00 Umbrella



Our NSGEU sweaters & jackets would make a great addition to your wardrobe!

\$3.00 Water bottle



# *Celebrating Our Administrative Professionals*

Administrative Professionals are critical to strong workplaces, and to the delivery of effective and efficient services to families and communities across Nova Scotia. The NSGEU represents over 6,000 Administrative Professionals throughout the province.

We recognize the important role they play in their workplace as we celebrate Administrative Professionals' Day on Wednesday, April 26<sup>th</sup>.

Thank you for the work that you do for all Nova Scotians!



## **NSGEU**

Nova Scotia Government and General Employees Union  
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