

Today marks 40 years since our founding members chose to take action and go on strike to fight for the right to form a union. We all benefit today from their 7 ½ month long strike and their commitment to have workplace rights protected through a collective agreement. Between November 15, 1982, and June 30, 1983, our founding members walked the picket line through a cold wet winter and spring. A smaller organization then with only 41 employees at the beginning of the strike, and 20 members remaining at the time a collective agreement was reached. Throughout the length of the strike, they had many allies and supporters. The local NDP members, a labour lawyer from Toronto, and CUPE Local 109, were among the biggest resources of support.



While on strike our members that were on the picket lines were only receiving \$50 dollars a week of strike pay, many other unions contributed money to provide extra support. Picket lines were set up at different locations throughout the community. Persons served and their families also joined staff on the picket lines to show support. Some persons served went home to live with their parents for the duration of the strike, others moved in with striking members, or moved into boarding homes. Establishing a union created a positive change and outcome for all those supported by the organization.

We had passionate members that stood strong to their convictions and in 1983 brought the strike to an end, winning the right to negotiate a contract and form the union. When Malcolm Jeffreys took over as Executive Director there was a positive change, he respected the collective agreement and the position of the union members. He wanted to work with the union not against it. He held a relationship building retreat to solidify a positive working relationship and build a culture of respect within the organization.

The founding members efforts led to set wages, paid sick time, paid vacation time, an education fund, and protection for staff. We will continue to build a strong collective agreement in honor of that first contract. We give our thanks to the efforts of all the founding members who were strong and brave enough to advocate for our rights. We continue to be thankful to have a management team that respects the collective agreement and wants to work towards common goals and values. Together we can bring positive change for the future of our union and organization.

**Thank you to CUPE and to each of our members over the years who have continued to push this movement forward and advocate for change, for us, our families, and the individuals that we support.**

**In Solidarity, Local 2635**