Hello brothers and sisters...
We had our last meeting of the year on May 8 and there was a solid turnout. The meeting generated lots of great discussion and our scholarships were presented to our lucky and deserving recipients (see page 2). The next meeting will be after the summer. Please watch for an announcement.

Negotiations update...
Our contract ended March 31 and our negotiations should be starting very soon. The response to our survey wasn't quite what was hoped for, but to those who did submit, "thank you!" Your comments and suggestions have been sent to CUPE National for analysis. The results will be shared with the negotiating team and we will determine what we can use once negotiations begin. If anyone has any further comments or suggestions you can still send them in to any of your negotiation team whose names are listed on our website. Your input is vital to the negotiating team in striving to come up with the best contract we can for all of us.

Parking garage update...
The parking garage issue is still a concern for us. HR has told us there is nothing they can do in regards to pricing. They say that if Eastern Health is subsidizing parking for their employees they have no control or say in the matter. There definitely seems to be an imbalance in the way things are laid out but as far as HR is concerned it is what it is. At this point I will continue to pursue the issue but I am not sure what, if anything, can be done. One comment that was made to me was that if members don’t like the cost of the garage then they don’t have to park there. This to me shows a complete disregard for our employees especially in terms of the added financial distress.

Lifelong Learning’s closure... The closing of Lifelong Learning came as a big shock to all of us, but especially to the members being made redundant. It is a mystery how MUN could let a department fall into such financial disarray. Brian Farewell, our CUPE National Rep, and I, have met with the members affected and we will do our utmost to make the transition to new positions as easy and painless as possible.

Know your contract... I want to stress the importance of knowing your contract. If any workplace problems arise, you always have your executive and your shop stewards to help, but knowing your contract is an important first step with any workplace concern.

Wishes for a safe summer... I want to extend my wishes for a safe and happy summer. As you begin your vacations, and all throughout the summer, remember that safety should always be first and foremost in our minds. Whether you are out catching some sun, fishing, boating or whatever, always be alert for danger and to the consequences of what can happen if we aren’t careful and responsible.

Until September... See you in September at our next monthly meeting. Enjoy your summer.

In solidarity,
Theresa
Winning Numbers from Survey Draw

114
258
968
142
248
508
523
608
123
614

If you have one of the winning numbers, please contact the CUPE office and arrange to present your winning stub.

Scholarship Report 2012

This year there were 18 applications for scholarships from CUPE 1615: Sixteen from Memorial, one from the College of the North Atlantic and one from Dalhousie.

Seven scholarships were awarded. One scholarship went to a Master’s student. The other six went to university undergraduate students, one of whom was a student from Corner Brook.

Application poses unusual challenge

With the receipt of a graduate student application, the committee found that our constitution is deficient in the particulars about what type of student can apply. We have decided to review this more closely and when we have done so we will submit any changes to the constitutional committee for consideration.

We also discussed making the scholarships more permanent by approaching the university to be a part of the program. This will be discussed further and then a recommendation will be brought to the membership.

Respectfully,
Carol Kennedy
Diane Johnson
Nathalie Vanasse
Ingrid Verbree-Barnes

Scholarship Recipients

Ashley Maria Hunt
Bell Island
Danielle Kennedy
C.B.S.
Joseph English
Mount Pearl
Katie Antle
Goulds
Kayla Carey
Corner Brook
Melanie Doyle
C.B.S.
Stephen Jackson
St. John’s

(L to R) Carol Kennedy (Scholarship Committee), Danielle Kennedy (recipient), Katie Antle (recipient), Joseph English (recipient), Theresa Antle (President 1615) and Ingrid Verbree-Barnes (Scholarship Committee).
Time to mark your calendar!

CUPE LABOUR DAY PICNIC

September 2012

Stay tuned! More information to come in next newsletter.
Sergeant-at-Arms steps aside temporarily

Upon recommendation of the local executive and with the endorsement of the local’s membership, Jesse Brazil has temporarily stepped aside as Sergeant-at-Arms. He will be replaced by Jerry Smith until he (Brazil) is in a position to resume his duties.

The change comes after Brazil accepted a secondment to the CREAT Network, the arms-length technical support group operating out of the Office of Research.

Following the secondment, the local was advised by our National staff rep, Brian Farwell, that Brazil’s secondment might put him in a conflict of interest with his executive duties.

After a lengthy discussion at the May 7 meeting of the executive committee, it was decided to ask Brazil to temporarily step away from the position. The committee was at great pains to assure Jesse he was not being “fired” or anything like it, simply that he was being asked to temporarily step down. Brazil was then extended the opportunity to bring the executive’s decision to the membership at the May 8 general meeting.

At the general meeting, several members spoke pro and con for the executive’s decision. In defending their decision, the executive took great pains to assure Mr. Brazil and the membership that the decision “was not personal”; it was only to ensure any accusation of conflict of interest be removed from the equation.

Mr Brazil told the membership that other than the situation of a strike, he couldn’t imagine another situation in which he might find himself in a conflict of interest. He also noted that he had taken an oath of confidentiality and was not about to violate that oath.

Recording Secretary, Patrick Tyler, pointed out that such a situation had never arisen before, and that it’s impossible to see what circumstance other than a strike might arise to create a conflict of interest. He argued, that rather than base a decision on hypotheticals, the pragmatic thing to do was to simply eliminate the possibility by having Brazil step aside.

A motion was put forward calling on the membership to allow Brazil to stay in the sergeant-at-arms position while on secondment. The motion was defeated, ratifying the executive’s initial decision.

Though visibly disappointed at the outcome, Brazil graciously accepted the decision of the membership and affirmed that he would return following the expiration of his secondment.
Training for Pension Trustees

CUPE National’s Union Development Department (UDD) has given notice that it will once again be offering its annual training program for union pension trustees.

The program will take place Sept. 9 - 14 at the CAW Education Centre, in Port Elgin, Ontario.

CUPE National is encouraging any pension trustees who have not attended a session to apply to participate. **The deadline for applying is June 22, 2012.**

The development department noted that the training is for members and staff who sit on boards of trustees for CUPE members’ pension plans.

The UDD said that other members and staff can speak to their regional education representative about pension education opportunities.

Notes from the Gander convention.
by Natalie Webber

When I was asked to say a few words about the CUPE convention held in Gander, I was shocked. Who would want to hear from me, an alternate, who was observing for the first time what the provincial convention was like? Then I thought, why not? I bring fresh eyes and ears, am eager to learn and to meet and chat with other Union activists throughout the province.

The first thing I noticed was the varied professions that CUPE encompasses; from all disciplines. Then there were the people: everyone had a welcoming smile and said they were a friend I hadn’t met! The days were filled with information on topics from lobbying the government for workers’ rights to supporting the striking students in Quebec. The evenings were awesome, with Meet and Greets and informal chat sessions throughout the venue.

On the convention floor, the speakers were well informed and made you feel like you were a part of something bigger than yourself ... like you could make a difference just by being there and listening. What a feeling of empowerment.

Resolutions were discussed regarding working alone, working safely, harassment and many other issues affecting us. The lesson for all: we need to stand strong together.

A stand-out moment for me was when the call came for donations for the Children’s Wish Foundation. By the hour’s end, a child’s wish would be granted! A bit over $10 thousand was raised through the locals and the dollar-for-dollar matching by National. Knowing we were supporting a child we didn’t know made it all the more powerful.

Looking back at my time at the convention—from a first timer’s point of view—I would recommend attendance to anyone who has the opportunity. There was hardly a time when I wasn’t learning something from my colleagues, networking or building friendships.

I learned that our union is well known and has a reputation for being strong and reliable. I learned that I’m part of a bigger concern that succeeds through the participation of informed members. Education is the key to power and what a powerful experience the convention was!

CUPE Local 1615 delegates to CUPE NL convention, April 30 - May 2 in Gander. (L to R): Jerry Smith, Keir Hiscock, Diane Johnson, Natalie Webber; Carol Kennedy, Theresa Antle and Bill Kavanagh.
CUPE Cares

Do you know of anyone in your department who, due to illness, is in hospital or confined to home two weeks or more?

Do you know of anyone who has just had a baby or had someone close to them pass away?

If you do, please let your CUPE Cares Committee know so they can acknowledge the occasion on the Local's behalf.

Members to contact are:

Carol Kennedy
St. John’s
864-3175
carolk@mun.ca

Kevin O’Leary
St. John’s
864-3085
kevino@mun.ca

Diane Johnson
Grenfell College
637-6200 ext. 6111
djohnson@swgc.mun.ca

Bowling season ends with CUPE Cup

Photo and story contributed by Jennifer Armstrong, HSIMS

The MUN bowling league is one of the longest running five pin bowling leagues in St. John’s. Though started as a MUN staff league, over the years it has welcomed non-staff bowlers from all over St. John’s, Mount Pearl and Paradise. Currently there are 10 teams of four bowlers competing from September to May ending with a two-week competition to win the CUPE CUP, an award donated by CUPE 1615.

The executive of the league consists of three MUN staff members, Evelyn Skinner (whose team took home the winning plaque this year!!), Mike Mooney and Jennifer Armstrong, all with the Faculty of Medicine.

LOOKING FOR NEW MEMBERS

If you are interested in joining the MUN bowling league or would like more information about the group, please contact Jennifer Armstrong at Jennifer.armstrong@med.mun.ca.

This co-ed league bowls every Thursday night during the bowling season with a break at Christmas. Bowlers of all skill levels are welcome.
Thoughts from the Armchair

Road Smarts = Driving Smarts

Sue Kearsey

I attended the Bread and Roses Brunch on March 4. While driving home via the outer ring-road that Sunday afternoon, I started thinking about the dangers of highway driving.

I am aware there will be some who will not agree or care about what I have to say but I am hoping the majority will keep reading. I don’t want to talk about the obvious dangers of talking on cell phones, texting or driving after drinking. I will simply plead with members to pull off the road to phone or text and never drink and drive.

I have often used the outer ring road to get to and from work, but recently I decided to use Harbour Drive instead. Why? The outer ring-road is crazy. If road conditions are good (meaning dry pavement) my speed is usually 100-110 kmh. I am frequently amazed at the number of drivers passing me going at least 120-130 kmh, lane hopping all the way. When this happens I keep my eyes glued to the road ahead of me, hoping there won’t be an accident. In addition to breaking the law, these fools are putting themselves and other drivers in danger. The posted speed limit you see is for dry pavement. If the pavement is wet or snow covered one should drive slower. Why? When driving at high speeds on wet/snow-covered pavement your stopping distance is drastically reduced. The rain, snow and/or slush between the tires and the pavement prevent the tires from gripping the pavement. A simple example is to run your hand over a wet table; your hand won’t grip and stop as quickly as it would if the table were dry. So if you are driving at a high speed and you have to stop quickly you could end up rear-ending the car in front of you and also putting all the cars around you in danger. If you are going 100kmh or more and have to stop suddenly you could “end up in the back seat” of the car in front of you. ALWAYS keep a safe distance behind the car in front of you (increase the number of car lengths depending on the speed).

A number of times while driving on the outer ring road or the Harbour Drive a driver comes up behind me and the distance between our cars is maybe a car length. One time a driver behind my car kept moving over in the lane giving me the impression that he was going to try and pass me by using the shoulder of the road.

cont’d. on pg.8
This was during the afternoon rush hour. Needless to say my mind was very quickly trying to work through what to do if this did happen. My stress level was very high. About a minute later he legally passed me but I realized that for those few minutes my complete attention was on that car and not on the other cars around me and this made me a threat to others as well.

Communicating your intentions to fellow drivers is very important. If you want to change lanes or make a turn, let other drivers know by indicating in plenty of time. It really doesn’t take much to put on your indicator. Also make sure the other driver is going to let you into the lane. Just because you have indicated you want to change lanes doesn’t mean the other driver is going to slow down. That one or two seconds you may have to wait is no big sacrifice.

I am not suggesting I’m a perfect driver. I have made mistakes but luckily I haven’t caused an accident. When I have been stupid while driving it is a big eye opener and makes me pay more attention to what I am doing. The thought of causing an accident, especially where someone is hurt, is not something I want to carry around for the rest of my life.

Last year a driver made a left turn on a yellow light and hit a very pregnant woman. I am glad to say that the mother and babies are fine. I still wonder: what if it had been worse? What if she or the babies were seriously injured? How would the driver feel if it had been a fatal accident and all because he didn’t want to wait through a red light?

One of my relatives was rear-ended by a truck towing a large trailer. The injuries she incurred will cause her to be in pain for the rest of her life. I am sure other members can give examples of injury and death because of broken or ignored traffic rules.

I love driving and most times I feel totally in control of my vehicle. I have to remember that one small mistake can mean I can lose control of a very heavy car that cannot stop on a dime. As a driver I have to accept responsibility for the safety of people in my car and all other cars.

**Message is a union-related topic**

After saying all this I am sure there are readers who are saying “I know all of this.” The point is, driving on our roads and highways has become dangerous. Why am I writing this when it is not a union related topic? Our Local has over 900 members and you all have family and friends. We are drivers, passengers and pedestrians. We are all concerned about safety at work and we should be just as concerned about safety in other parts of our lives. When you hear about a drunk driver causing an accident I am sure you are angry. So what is the difference between you and that drunk driver if you run a red light or speed and cause an accident? You are both equally at fault because both of you have broken the law.

The pace of our lives has increased over the years. This is evident by our driving habits: speeding, quick lane changing, tailgating, running red lights, not stopping for pedestrians, texting, phone calling etc., etc., etc....

**Slow down!** You will always get to where you are going. What does it matter if you are a few minutes late? There may be times when you have not been in an accident but you may have caused one. Car accidents result in injuries that can heal but they can result in permanent serious injuries or even death. I know people think “it will never happen to me” but the reality is that accidents can involve anyone who drives or walks. So I am going to leave you with a little homework. Over the next week, while you are driving or are a passenger in a car, observe the habits of your driver, of yourself as a driver, and other drivers. Take notice whether these habits are something to be proud of or to be worried about.

The summer season is upon us so **PLEASE...drive responsibly and stay safe.**