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August 7, 2012

Presidents
CUPE Ontario Locals

RE: Bill C-377

As Officers of CUPE Ontario we are writing to ask you, and your local union, to help us stop Bill C-377, a not-well-known federal private members bill which (with support from many Conservative Members of Parliament (MP)) poses a real threat to free speech in Canada.

How do we know that C-377, presented as a simple democratic financial reporting measure for unions, is really the first blow in a long term campaign to impose major restrictions on our right to free speech?

We know that because one of the key groups backing the bill said as much in a news release immediately after the legislation was introduced in the House of Commons. On October 3rd, 2011 the day the legislation was first tabled in parliament, the self described, "Conservative think tank" the Canadian Centre for Policy Studies (CCPS) issued a news release in which they applauded the bill as the "first-step" in a campaign to stop unions from legally spending money to speak out and campaign on issues like expanding the Canada Pension Plan (CPP), protecting Medicare or talking to our own union members about supporting NDP candidates in the next federal election.

Today, as C-377 works its way through the legislative process, CUPE is working with Canadian Labour Congress and unions across Canada to stop Bill C-377 from being passed into law.

Specifically, we want you to put this issue on the agenda of your next local membership meeting.

We need you to tell your members about Bill C-377, about CUPE's commitment to stop this Bill, and to ask your members to vote and pass the following resolution and to mail it (with a copy to Fred and Candace at the OD) to your federal MP.

"Be it resolved that the members of CUPE Local # _____ call upon their federal member of Parliament to protect free speech in Canada by asking the Stephen Harper government to allow a free vote on Bill C-377 when it comes to Third Reading and by using their individual vote to help defeat the Bill and prevent it from passing in to law."

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Fred Hahn
President

ONE STRONG VOICE

Candace Rennick
Secretary-Treasurer

If you can take a few minutes at your next general membership meeting to tell your members what C-377 is really about and how it's being backed by radical right wing groups with links to anti-abortion campaigners, we're sure they will be ready to vote to pass that resolution.

We believe that once MP's realize that C-377 will be used to take away our right to free speech they will not want to be seen supporting that kind of legislation.

And, if we can convince them to ask the government to allow a free vote on Bill C-377 where each individual MP is allowed to vote his or her conscience, this legislation can be defeated when it comes to a vote in October.

But we have to act now.

Along with this letter we're enclosing a briefing note, explaining what Bill C-377 is really about and who is behind it to help you explain the bill at your next membership meeting. In closing, let us both thank you again for working with us on this crucial campaign.

And let's all be really clear - Stopping **Bill C-377 could be one of the most important things you ever do to protect democracy in Canada.**

If you have any question please contact Chris Watson in our office at 905-739-9379 Ex.264.

In Solidarity,



Fred Hahn
President



Candace Rennick
Secretary-Treasurer

Cc Executive Board

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Fred Hahn
President

ONE STRONG VOICE

Candace Rennick
Secretary-Treasurer