

# Retirees Network

## Board Report

September 25<sup>th</sup> 2020



### COVID-19

Our Retirees Network, like all components of CUPE Ontario has been hit hard by this pandemic. We are forced to stay close to home and are disconnected from family and our former workmates. Our participation in the life of the union, at the local, district council and Ontario levels has been dramatically curtailed.

Retirees are of course really anxious about Long Term Care conditions. Many of us are likely heading to facilities where CUPE members form the frontline workforce facing COVID-19. We have been forced to worry about this a whole lot more thanks to the pandemic.

A good number of CUPE retirees are expected to join the Ontario Healthcare Coalition's October 8<sup>th</sup> car caledades in Ottawa, Peterborough, Kitchener-Waterloo, Hamilton, Toronto and Niagara. We are shocked by the abysmal state of affairs of our healthcare system.

### Communications

Despite this slowdown since March, the Network has been in touch with retirees and committees at locals 5167, 503, 5300, 79, 7800, 2316 and 1777. Their efforts to develop retiree structures and activism continue to be encouraging.

This fall and into the winter the Retirees Network will continue regular communication with CUPE retirees and with locals and district councils that have established or are in the process of organizing retiree committees.

### Human Rights

Many retirees believe that housing can no longer be treated as a commodity to be used for profit-making.

The search for housing for low-income workers, including CUPE members involves scrambling for shelter within an increasingly shrinking stock of affordable housing.

As Network Chair I've been invited to moderate a panel entitled *Housing as a Human Right*. This webinar will mark next month's International Day of Older Persons and is an initiative of the *Congress of Union Retirees of Canada* and the *Toronto and York Region Retirees Network*.

The seminar will take place against the backdrop of the Ontario Human Rights Commission's assertion that the province continues to be in violation of international Treaties that Canada has signed on to which address the right to housing and the "security of the person".

Until housing is treated as a public utility and delivered according to need, the lives of our own retirees and indeed all Ontarians will be in danger.



*Retired local 5167 municipal worker, Ed Thomas writes for his local's newsletter and has recently published articles on racism and the climate emergency.*