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Service Employees International Union Report to Membership 2012



A message from Sharleen Stewart

At SEIU Local 1 Canada's Convention in Huntsville in late 2011, SEIU members established the Local's strategic priorities for the next four years. They are:

- Achieve harmonization and equity for all SEIU members through political action and strength.
- Involve SEIU's membership through communication, education and empowerment.
- Strive to achieve maximum public awareness through education, outreach and networking.

I am proud to say that during the last year we have moved forward at light speed with all three of these goals!

Political advocacy is an important part of SEIU. SEIU members are doing everything they can to influence and shape the development of government laws and policies that have a direct impact on our universal healthcare system and healthcare jobs in Ontario.

SEIU wants to ensure that current government policies affecting the delivery of, and access to, quality healthcare are protected, upheld and strengthened. Equally important is ensuring we protect SEIU members, who provide these vital healthcare services.

We saw this in action when SEIU RPNs and PSWs met with senior political figures at Queen's Park to discuss the important role they play in our healthcare system.

But SEIU doesn't just talk - we also take action. SEIU helped elect worker-friendly candidates in two



Ontario by-elections held in Kitchener-Waterloo and Vaughan. Our political efforts are forcing Queen's Park to listen to the needs of our members and the people they care for.

Not only did we influence the outcome of these two by-elections in Ontario, we also moved full-speed ahead with member en-

gagement. We have launched a comprehensive member engagement plan that gets members involved in fighting for the rights of frontline workers and protecting the vital services they provide. Hundreds of SEIU members across Ontario are getting involved with Member Leadership Action Committees to create positive change in our communities.

The SEIU Multifaith and Community Network helped raise money to assist people who are less fortunate. We raised money for medical supplies for people living in Jamaica and Grenada. We also raised money to help victims of a fire. SEIU members are a compassionate group of people who help outside of their regular day-to-day activities. A union is only as strong as its members.

We have also reached some important milestones in education. In 2012 we trained more than 1,000 stewards and chief stewards. They are now better prepared to fight injustice in the workplace.

It's been a groundbreaking year for SEIU members. We accomplished a lot together in 2012. In 2013 we will accomplish even more!

Sharleen Stewart
President

A financial report from Cathy Carroll

2012 was a sound financial year for SEIU Local 1 Canada. Thanks to focused strategic planning and the leadership of our Executive Board, the Local continues to grow and prosper.

At our Convention last year, SEIU member delegates endorsed a new dues formula. This dues structure now has the same percentage formula for all members in our union. It is much simpler to understand than the previous one, and the standardized formula reflects fairness for everyone.

SEIU Local 1 has made strategic investments to improve our financial strength. In 2011 we now have transitioned to a new office building in Richmond Hill. This investment not only saves us money but also improves our financial stability. Our proud new home will be the centre for activism, engagement, learning and special events in 2013.

A critical issue for SEIU members is the maintenance of pay equity. As a union representing a predominantly female work force, we need to allocate resources and experts in our fight to ensure that the work done by women is properly assessed and compensated. We need to ensure our employers are following the terms of the Pay Equity Act in Ontario. This year saw the beginning of Pay Equity Tribunal hearings for nursing home workers. SEIU led the fight in the 1990's that made huge gains. Now

we are fighting to have those standards maintained. Nursing homes have not addressed pay equity maintenance since 1998, and the gap has re-emerged again. SEIU is launching a full legal fight once again to make sure that workers in our nursing homes are properly compensated.



We are also updating hospital pay equity plans to make sure that the proper rating systems are in place and that hospitals are forced to update their plans to reflect the ever-changing environment. Many plans have not been maintained, even though workers are required to have more skills and education to do the job. These new skills and responsibilities must be reflected in their pay equity plans.

Pay equity will continue to be a priority next year until we achieve recognition and value for the im-

portant work our women members do in their workplace.

Servicing SEIU members is always a priority. It's what we do naturally. SEIU is committed to providing the highest level of service to our members. We are always searching for new ways and innovations to improve the working lives of our members. The Member Resource Centre increasingly provides information and assistance for the membership, and a new centralized grievance process will improve the efficiency and methods of filing grievances. The tracking of issues will set strategies for negotiations and allow us to assess legal responsibilities to protect members against injustices in the workplace.

2012 was very busy year. But make no mistake about it - 2013 will be even busier as we ramp up our Fight4Ontario campaign and meet the constant challenges facing workers by right-wing agendas.

We are proud of our achievements, particularly the balancing of our budgets. In 2013 we will continue on our path to grow and build a stronger union together.

Cathy Carroll
Secretary Treasurer

The state of our union by Manny Carvalho

Over the last year I have had the privilege to serve as your Executive Vice-President. I continue to learn everyday about the struggles of working people. I have had the honour of representing SEIU local 1 Canada members in many different forms. Whether at Queens Park, bargaining with your employer, or working with other leaders in the labour movement, I am proud to be fighting on your behalf.

In the coming years SEIU will continue to win for you!

We must prepare our union for the future by organizing and mobilizing members like we've never done before. Our focus on organizing makes SEIU the fastest growing union in Canada. Organizing isn't just about bringing new members into SEIU. It also helps protect the many gains that SEIU has won for its members over the last 70 years. The more unionized a sector is, the stronger we are at the bargaining table.

SEIU will continue to organize in all three sectors: hospitals, long-term care and community care. Organizing new workers in home care will be a big focus for the Local in 2013.

Working in home care is not easy. Many home care employees live below the poverty line, are single mothers, and are new immigrants to this country.

That's why SEIU will be launching an ambitious home care advocacy campaign in 2013 to increase awareness of the importance and value of the care these sector employees provide, and



especially the challenges they and their clients face. Through the campaign, we will strive to organize all home care workers to give them a powerful voice. This is the best way they can begin to take control of their working lives and

begin to improve their working conditions.

Without unions like SEIU, workers, families and communities are left to the mercy of governments that balance budgets at the expense of frontline workers, the elderly and the sick. Organizing workers into unions is the only way to protect livelihoods in Canada. Fairly paid union jobs are what built Canada's middle class.

We must continue to defend healthcare workers from constant attacks from right-wing governments and their push to privatize public services and eliminate unions.

We must also bring attention to changes in the mental health sector, where the complex challenges faced by clients and mental health workers are not being addressed by governments. These workers continue to support clients and their families without the recognition they deserve.

Organizing is also educating members about the power of politics. Politics is power. We will continue to ramp up our political action in 2013 to bring about positive change for our members and the people they care for.

Emanuel Carvalho
Executive Vice President

Purple Skies at Queen's Park



RPNs networking with politicians at Queen's Park.

One of SEIU's strongest assets is its political strength. The union knows how to lobby and put pressure on governments to pass laws that are good for healthcare workers and the people they care for.

SEIU works with government officials to let them know about all the hard work SEIU members do on the job. In May SEIU RPNs met with many political figures at Queen's Park to discuss the important role RPNs play in Ontario's healthcare system.

RPNs weren't the only ones who got to meet with Ontario's top government officials. SEIU's PSWs visited Queens Park and spoke with MPPs about workplace issues, challenges and possible solutions. They met over lunch at a reception in the committee room at Queens Park, where Deb Matthews, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, spoke about the value of PSWs.

In the summer SEIU launched

a political campaign called Fight4Ontario. This campaign informed members about the Greedy Agenda. The Greedy Agenda is a coalition of wealthy Canadians, big business, corporations and conservative activists who want to create a laissez-faire economy that contains few rights for workers, a privatized healthcare system, and a weak social safety net. Even though the main goal of this agenda is to increase the incomes of the wealthiest 1% at the expense of the 99%, they will try to convince people that their Greedy Agenda will help all Ontarians.

The Fight4Ontario campaign was a huge success. The campaign mobilized members to take political action in their communities. SEIU members were looking for the union to take a political stance on their behalf. This political force took shape in the fall when members volunteered their time to elect

healthcare-friendly candidates in two provincial by-elections in Kitchener-Waterloo and Vaughan. They knocked on doors to get out the vote and encouraged people to elect the candidate they thought was best equipped to manage public services like education and healthcare. After the votes were counted, NDP candidate Catherine Fife in Kitchener-Waterloo and Liberal candidate Steven Del Duca in Vaughan won resounding victories. SEIU supported both winning candidates.

But political action didn't just happen in Ontario. SEIU members from Canada were also busy south of the border helping re-elect Barack Obama. They continued their Fight4Ontario to the Fight4Ohio! Dozens of members drove to Ohio to make phone calls, knock on doors, and talk to people about how President Obama had worked so hard during the previous four years to restore an American economy and society left in shambles by his Republican predecessor. Thanks to Canada's SEIU members, Ohio voted for Barack Obama, helping him win the presidency.

Politics is key to protecting the rights of frontline workers and the community at large. That's why SEIU will continue to fight hard to represent your voice in the chambers of power in 2013.

We have GROWN!



Workers at Avondale Retirement Residence.

SEIU Local 1 Canada is the fastest growing union in Ontario. Nearly 1,000 employees from 13 different workplaces joined SEIU in 2012. Few other unions can match that rate of growth.

Workers want SEIU to help them negotiate better wages, benefits, pensions, job security and working conditions. But it's not about money. It's about respect. Workers want their managers to treat them with dignity and fairness, recognizing the tremendously valuable care they provide.

Healthcare workers scored

some big wins this year. One big victory was at Vita Community Living in Toronto. It's a group home that takes care of people with intellectual disabilities. It was a difficult place to organize. There are about 350 employees who work in nearly a dozen different worksites throughout the Greater Toronto Area. But it was the employees at Vita who waved the purple flag by talking to their co-workers and signing up new members. Vita workers won this vote by 92%, a large margin.

Another big win in 2012 was

Tyndall Retirement Residence and Tyndall Long-Term Care. If there was a place that needed a union, it was here. Both of these homes had a reputation for being tough on their employees. Several workers alleged they were required to work many hours of unpaid overtime. If they didn't finish the job by the end of the day, they would show up one hour early the next day in fear of losing their job. They also said they didn't receive overtime pay when they worked holidays. But the good news is that they now have SEIU to protect them.

Healthcare staff at Avondale Retirement Residence in Toronto scored a very big victory. After the ballots were counted, SEIU won by 100%. That's a huge win! These employees are an incredible group of workers who have amazing drive and initiative. They now have power to negotiate a contract that will make their retirement home a much better place to work.

SEIU will not rest until every healthcare and community services worker gets representation that protects their rights and enables them to provide quality care for their patients and clients.

'U' are the 'U' in Union



Purple Day celebrations at Sunnybrook Hospital.

SEIU Local 1 Canada's mission is to engage members to empower a growing union. And that's exactly what the union has been doing this year. Not only do SEIU members fight for workers rights, they have also been improving the lives of people outside the workplace in their community and overseas.

SEIU members formed Member Leadership Action Committees in several communities across Ontario. The MLAC in Peterborough held a fundraiser for 38 people who lost their apartment home in a fire. The chili cook-off raised almost \$2,500 to help them build a new life.

"The MLA committee members put in a lot of hard work into the fundraiser and we helped 38 people," said Jill McEnaney, an MLAC member and an employee at Kawartha Participation Projects in Peterborough. "We are really proud of what we have accomplished."

Members in the Toronto area who take part in the SEIU Multifaith Community Network (SMCN) organized a fundraising gala to raise money to buy medical equipment for hospitals in Jamaica and Grenada. The gala raised \$15,000, a 50% increase from last year.

Purple Day was also a

spectacular success. SEIU members in many units wore their best purple clothes to show solidarity and their passion to work together to make people's lives better. The top 27 best-dressed units were chosen to participate in a Facebook contest. SEIU Facebook supporters got to vote for who had the best purple day festivities. After an intense round of voting, eight workplaces were declared the winners and were awarded with a Purple Day feast with SEIU's President Sharleen Stewart. Thanks to Purple Day, SEIU's Facebook support more than tripled!

SEIU's Caribbean Festival Members & Family BBO was a smashing success. More than 600 people from different backgrounds and communities came out on July 28 at High Park in Toronto to celebrate Canada's Caribbean cultural heritage. Everyone had a lot of fun, the weather was fantastic, and there was plenty of great food and entertainment.

SEIU is all about engaging members. SEIU will work with members in 2013 to spread the purple gospel!

SEIU stays the course



SEIU members at Women's College Hospital.

SEIU Local 1 Canada's ship sailed through some stormy waters in 2012. But the union made sure wages, benefits and working conditions for hospital workers were protected. The Local didn't give an inch!

Job security was an important issue this year. While many workers were worried about losing their jobs, SEIU invested a lot of time and energy protecting jobs from layoffs and outsourcing. SEIU is the only union in Ontario that has 10.01 staff planning language that obligates hospitals to work with SEIU with respect to the development of any operating or restructuring plan

that may affect the bargaining unit.

Not only does SEIU protect hospital workers on the job, it works to ensure they can retire with a healthy pension plan. Recently the Ontario government tried to increase pension premiums and/or reduce the value of retirement benefits. SEIU, HOOPP and several other unions started some serious discussions with the government. Thanks to SEIU, the government has left HOOPP's employee/employer contribution rates unchanged. And HOOPP has stabilized contribution amounts for the next five years, a win-win for hospitals and work-

ers. That's because SEIU was at the table fighting for members.

Another worrisome trend SEIU has noticed is that hospitals have been increasing employee health and dental benefit premiums. SEIU is demanding transparency from employers on this issue. Each time an employer increases health premiums, SEIU is asking hospitals for a financial justification for the increase. SEIU is doing everything it can to make sure member benefit plans are well administered.

Hospital bargaining for a central contract has been a long and tough fight. SEIU has been in negotiations with the Ontario Hospital Association (OHA) for months, but they have refused to budge from their position demanding a wage freeze. SEIU will present its case to arbitration on January 24, 2013. SEIU has a strong argument outlining why the wage freeze should not apply to hospital workers.

2013 looks to be another challenging year for hospital workers. On the bargaining agenda are big issues like Pay Equity, LHIN initiatives, threats of outsourcing, and hospital restructuring. Hospital workers need to be strong and united. That is how we will move forward in 2013!

New Ground in Home Care



Red Cross Provincial Labour Management Committee.

January marked the return of the Red Cross Provincial Labour Management (PLM) Committee meetings, which aim to resolve workplace issues and concerns. This year, SEIU has involved more members than ever before, with representation from all seven of our regions. Thanks to the dedicated work of the Committee, we saw great gains in workplace policies around mileage, vacation and seniority! These gains put SEIU in a great position in the New Year, when we negotiate new contracts for more than 60% of our home care members.

On May 19, SEIU proudly marked PSW Day. Over the last two years, SEIU has emerged as a PSW champion, leading the way to the official

recognition of PSW Day on Queen's Park and the announcement of a PSW registry at an SEIU-hosted event. Building on our past successes, a team of SEIU caregivers once again visited Queen's Park to highlight issues faced by caregivers.

In the fall, SEIU went to bat for hundreds of Victorian Order of Nurses Peel members, whose jobs were threatened when Ontario's Central West Community Care Access Centre announced it intended to cancel its contract with VON Peel. Home care members were going to lose their jobs, and their clients would have lost access to the high-quality caregivers they had grown to trust.

SEIU immediately sprung into

action. Working alongside community partners we held a successful Brampton town hall and sent a clear message: a cancelled contract would have a devastating impact on Brampton clients and their caregivers. The CCAC heard the voices of SEIU members and the community loud and clear. It retracted its intention to cancel the VON Peel contract, and announced that VON Peel would continue to provide service in Brampton, Caledon and Malton. This was a huge victory for clients and their caregivers!

Looking ahead, SEIU will be hosting a home care conference on January 16-17, 2013 in Richmond Hill. A group of home care stewards and members at large will attend the two-day conference to discuss contract negotiations, political action, and initiatives to advocate for home care workers. Home care members who are interested in participating in the conference should speak with their steward.

Indeed, 2012 was a stellar year for the home care sector. The union has even greater plans for 2013, as it continues to fight for home care workers and raise awareness of the important work they do!

Looking after Community Care



SEIU members at Kawartha Participation Projects in Peterborough.

Developmental Service Workers (DSW)s are a highly-specialized group of caregivers who work with society's most vulnerable, ensuring their basic necessities are met and that they flourish into adulthood. SEIU is proud to represent more than 3,000 DSWs across the province.

For years, the union has fought for the rights and recognition of this

special classification of caregivers.

On the bargaining front, SEIU was able to negotiate an impressive 8% wage increase over four years for Simcoe Community Services members. This represents important progress in ensuring DSWs are fairly paid for the incredibly challenging work they do. Thanks to the dedicated bargaining committee, this group of caregivers will enjoy raises every year for the next four years!

Though SEIU made progress in the sector in terms of wages and

benefits, there is still more work to be done.

There continues to be retention, standardization and workplace violence issues. This year, SEIU sat on a Shared Interest Committee with government officials, unions and employers to help create a set of core competencies for DSWs. The new standards will apply province-wide, ensuring everyone, regardless of their location, receives the same quality of care. Similarly, standardizing the profession will mean that caregivers are asked to perform the same tasks, and will limit job description variations across the province. If DSW job descriptions change as a result of the core competencies strategy, DSWs will receive training and educational materials to ensure they are able to perform all tasks.

This exercise will give the DSW profession a higher profile, which will provide SEIU with better leverage when lobbying government for workplace improvements. In February 2013, there will be a forum discussion after the results of the Shared Interest Committee are released.

SEIU fights the Good Fight



SEIU members at Thortonview Long-Term Care in Oshawa.

Central bargaining delivered some great rewards for SEIU nursing home members in 2011-2012.

2011 Bargaining

Despite government and employer insistence on a wage freeze, SEIU central nursing home bargaining committee won a 2% wage increase in an arbitrated award in late 2011. Other gains in the contract included:

- Dental plans covering dentures, crowns and braces
- Part-time employees getting vacation pay **when** they take their vacation
- Vision plan benefits going up from \$160 to \$200 for each two-year period

- Part-timers' in-lieu benefits going up from 40 cents to 50 cents an hour
- Gross earnings including all earnings from the previous year
- The Responsibility Allowance for nurses going up from \$7.50 to \$8.00 per shift

2012 Bargaining

The 2012 round of central bargaining was a lot tougher. But SEIU played an impressive round of defense and was able to stop the employer from significantly watering down the contract.

The arbitrator ruled the new contract would provide a lump-sum bonus of 15 cents per hour worked in the first two years

(2013-2014) of the agreement. The contract also gives all part-time SEIU members in Central Nursing Homes three sick days under the award.

Wage increases were not provided for in the first two years of the new agreement. The bargaining committee advocated strongly for wage increases to the end, but the arbitrator failed to recognize the union's wisdom.

The arbitrator did give SEIU the right to bargain for a raise and an improved benefit plan in the third year of the contract. This gives SEIU the opportunity to control and maximize benefits for members in the nursing home sector and enrol them in the SEIU Benefits Trust.

However, SEIU is disappointed with the arbitrator's decision, and is appealing the arbitrator's award.

SEIU was able to win contracts for about 1,200 members at a group of nursing homes whose employees are predominately Chinese. In their first contract they won a 2% wage increase for each year, job classification adjustments, and a better vacation plan.

SEIU will continue to fight for better long-term care standards in 2013.

Narrowing the GAP



Members from Schlegel Villages Retirement rally for a contract.

There has always been a gap between nursing and retirement homes. Even though the work is very similar, nursing home workers earn more money and have better benefits and superior pensions. But thanks to SEIU, retirement home workers are starting to catch up.

Every retirement home contract SEIU negotiated this year achieved a raise for their employees. The raises varied between 2-3%. Since retirement homes are mostly private and receive no government funding, employer calls for a wage freeze have always been a weak argument.

Many SEIU members also have improved pension and benefit

plans. An SEIU retirement home worker who has a pension is now becoming the norm.

When it comes to individual homes, SEIU scored a few big wins this year.

Hundreds of SEIU Members who work at Chartwell Seniors Living won a raise, as well as better benefits in their contract. This was the first time SEIU negotiated a central agreement, successfully standardizing Chartwell's contract language. This means the best contract language in individual homes was applied in a central agreement covering all Chartwell homes in Ontario. Now hundreds of Chartwell workers have one standard-

ized contract that provides uniform and consistent benefits.

Another big win was in Sunrise Senior Living in Markham. An arbitrator awarded sunrise workers with raises ranging from 6 – 20%! This was one of SEIU's biggest arbitration wins this year.

And workers at Kingsway arms took a stand after the company disciplined seven workers for participating in Purple Day. What was their crime? They wore purple clothing to work on SEIU's Purple Day. SEIU held a rally and the employer revoked all disciplinary letters.

Thanks to SEIU, retirement homes are becoming a better place to work.

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