



CUPE 1281 Statement on workplace closure at The Centre for Women & Trans People (York University) -- November 23, 2017

This statement is to inform the York University community of the current situation at the Centre for Women and Trans People (CWTP-York), to dispel inaccurate information or misinformed perceptions which may negatively impact our members. As the union representing the Centre's two staff, CUPE 1281's main concern is to defend these workers from negative repercussions resulting from the Employer's actions, including the Employer's failure to defend workers from (and active complicity in) campaigns targeting trans staff.

Background:

On October 11, the remaining two members of the CWTP-York Collective (the Employer) resigned, leaving nobody in place to assume their responsibilities as the governing representatives and as an employer. The resignations effectively ensured the closure of the Centre both as a valuable community resource and as a workplace for unionized staff who carry out the vital work of serving the community.

These resignations occurred as CUPE 1281 and our members were working in good faith with the Collective (in their capacity as the Employer) to find a mutually agreeable resolution to correct for violations of the Collective Agreement that had made the workplace unsafe for staff. The Union and the Employer had come to verbal agreement in principle on a Letter of Understanding that would have provided protections for our members and a process for both parties to address issues going forward.

Given this progress, the Union was surprised and deeply concerned to receive the news of the Employer's decision to resign. The Union met with the Employer on October 11 for the sole purpose of signing the Letter of Understanding to formalize the agreement. At that meeting, instead of signing, the Employer informed the Union of its resignation and refused to continue to work to address any remaining issues.

Union protection of workers

Main workplace issues identified included transphobia in the workplace, related harassment, and reprisals against staff for reporting issues of transphobia and harassment. These matters now form part of a union grievance on behalf of its members.

Going Forward

It is the Union's hope that the Centre for Women and Trans People at York returns to regular operations as soon as possible so that our members can return to a safe workplace and continue to do the valuable work that CWTP-York provides to the university community. We hope that community members step forward to reconstitute the Collective to continue working with the Union and its members to take proactive steps to address any remaining issues.