



### Open letter to the Membership of the Union of Environment Workers

I am pleased to be writing to you today in my capacity as National Human Rights Representative for the Union of Environment Workers.

I have recently returned from the Inaugural meeting of the newly formed Public Service Alliance of Canada's "Human Rights Committee" and my confidence in the Union of Environment Workers and the Public Service Alliance of Canada's willingness to embrace the "Common Standard of Achievement" and in "Equality in Dignity and Rights" for our members is well founded.

It is a given that we all believe as trade unionists in our right "to organize and to work" and that we all have the right to "just and favourable remuneration" for our work, as well as the "right of representation", and to be treated with dignity and respect but now more than ever I am convinced that as human rights advocates and trade unionists, we share the same fundamental values that it is our collective duty to protect the basic "Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms" not only of our members but of all of Human kind.

Steven Harper and the Conservative government's dictatorial governance style and their ongoing targeted attacks on our collective and individual rights as trade unionists, our sovereign and democratic rights as Canadians, and even our most basic of rights as human beings... are all designed to transfer ownership of our resources to corporations and keep the conservatives in power.

Even as I write this letter the greatest transfer of Canadian Public wealth and deepest erosion of Canadian sovereignty and individual rights is being penned away by our Prime Minister under a free trade agreement with China for carbon energy. This as the United Nations sounds the alarm on global climate change and the need for all of humanity to end its dependence on carbon fuels.

Human Rights in Canada and around the world are under attack. It is not an attack of any one individual or group or classification of citizens or humans. It is a system attack and a symptom of growing capitalism globally, often imposed under the guise of democracy, and with little consideration of human impact. A need to feed a growing and ever expanding consumption of extractive resources, and a world that sees Canada in the New World and Canadians as a model of how to live.

Human Rights are indivisible, interdependent, and interrelated and at their most basic are the right to clean breathable air, clean drinking water and safe and secure shelter. A basic right that even in a country as great and as rich as Canada some of our citizens do not enjoy. Many countries do not enjoy. Human rights violations related to corporate extractive industries are on the increase and as temperatures begin to rise globally many countries are advocating that without the protection of the earth and without bestowing the same fundamental rights as human beings to the earth that human rights for all humans on earth are not achievable.

As members of the Union of Environment Workers and as Canadians we all play some role in the protection and conservation of our environment. We all know how important our environment is to other Canadians. An environment under which, all Human Rights depend. Now more than ever it is time for all of us to think globally but act locally. We need to restore Canada's capacity to make scientific fact based decisions with respect to our environment and with respect equality and fairness in Canada.

Some will ask how does this address political, civil, social, cultural and economic inequality in the context of human rights. What does it do for workers rights in the context of human rights? But I say the bottom line is just this. If we cannot protect the basic right to clean air, clean water, and safe secure shelter for our most vulnerable, in a place like Canada, than we cannot be equal, none of our rights are truly protected, and only the privileged need apply.

To understand the depth and breadth of the impacts on Human Rights brought about by policy changes under the conservative government would takes a dozen professors the next 10 years. My goal for the next 12 months is simple. Do everything I can to defeat the Steven Harper Conservatives and do my part to restore democracy and fairness in a Canada that respects all human rights;

And whenever and wherever it is observed, fight against human injustice and stand-up for human rights no matter what.

Thank you for electing me as your new National Representative for Human Rights issues. I am overwhelmed with a sense of responsibility and it is only with your support that I am ready for the task. I look forward to a new era and to moving forward on human rights issues in a positive way together.

*Michael Ballard*  
*National Human Rights Representative*  
*Union of Environment Workers*