

Solidarity Movement - Who We Are

The purpose of a Local Union is to bring together the members to advance their common interests. The top leaders of Local 222 fail to do that in so many areas – they have lost their way.

We have poor communication, no membership meetings, two-tier contracts, constantly eroding wages and benefits, and retired members have been left behind.

It is outrageous that we pay our President and Financial Secretary almost \$150,000 a year each, and they see no reason for restraint even though our dues income is down substantially.

Here are some ideas for positive change. If you agree with them - join us. Be part of discussing and preparing proposals to membership meetings. Help support candidates that pledge to implement policies that will benefit all the members.

Bargain for Gains

- Commit to fighting concessionary and two-tier agreements. As former CAW President Bob White said, “Workers don’t need a union to go backwards”.
- Membership-driven bargaining.
- Full disclosure of everything in the tentative collective agreement before we vote.

Better Communication

- An effective social media presence.
- A monthly Oshaworker - online every second month, alternating with the paper version.
- Schedule union meetings when members can attend. Post the agenda and minutes.

Real Democracy

- Democracy is more than voting - it is the rank-and-file members taking control of the Local.
- The members must have easy access to all the information and make the decisions.
- Save money and increase participation by adding electronic voting to existing options.

Accountability

- Membership review of exorbitant salaries.
- No secret agreements or deals made behind closed doors.
- An annual Local budget presented, debated, and voted on by the members.

Solidarity and Participation

- Eliminate the bully culture.
- Action and education against racism and all forms of discrimination.
- Make sure everyone’s voice is heard, including in elected positions.

Solidarity Movement

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What’s Going Wrong with Local 222?

The Solidarity Movement is made up of Local 222 members organizing to fight for our rights in our workplaces and in our union.

The fundamental principle of equal pay for equal work has been abandoned. Our contracts are full of ridiculous wage progressions. Many dues-paying members are even worse off as long-term temps with no stability. Secure pensions and benefits in retirement seem a thing of the past.

Workers in full time jobs shouldn’t be struggling to pay rent or put food on the table. Having dignity at work and in retirement shouldn’t be a dream. We have to fight to make it a reality.

We are working in a time of unprecedented attacks upon the working class. We need strong local leadership that empowers the membership and organizes us to fight. We need to have clear goals and a strategy for doing better. We need to be building solidarity between all our units, with other Locals, and with workers in other unions,

if we want to win these fights. We won’t get these things unless the membership starts getting involved and starts holding the local leadership to account.

The simple fact is not that we have fought and lost... but that our leadership simply haven’t been fighting at all. It’s time to get started.

Democracy? 222 Leaders Told to Have Elections

Local 222 has had three vacancies on our Local Executive Board since January. Our Constitution requires filling any vacancies “promptly by election”, but the people running the Hall refused to call elections until they were told by the National Union that they had to.

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Nestle Strikers Win Equal Pay by Year 3 of Contract

Local 222 members showed solidarity with the strikers at the Toronto Nestle plant where Kit-Kat, Aero and Coffee Crisp bars are made. The workers were willing to stay out on strike for 3 weeks to win their demand that all workers be brought up to equal pay for equal work. At the time of the strike the so-called “supplemental workers” made more than \$7 per hour less than others who had been there longer, and had no seniority rights, guaranteed hours or pensions.

The new contract gives supplemental workers full-time status and gets them to equal pay in 3 years. To top it off, the Nestle workers also won significant pension increases for longer-term workers. That is real solidarity.



Did you know....

that the Women’s Committee of Local 222 fought and won improved rights not just for themselves – but for all women in Ontario?

The 1937 GM strike won union recognition, seniority, shorter hours, better pay, and a grievance system. But GM still maintained separate seniority lists for men and women. Women were denied the right to transfer to jobs of their choice, were paid less, and could be laid off before junior men.

In 1968 the Local 222 Women’s Committee was formed. Led by Bev McCloskey, they organized on the job, in the Local, and in the Ontario Legislature where they gained the support of NDP MPP Cliff Pilkey, a former Local 222 President. At their urging Pilkey put forward an amendment to the Human

Rights Code to add sex and marital status as prohibited grounds of discrimination, which passed in 1970. Separate seniority lists were eliminated, and all women workers in Ontario gained substantial rights thanks to the efforts of Bev McCloskey and the Local 222 Women’s Committee.

The lesson is clear – don’t wait for someone else to fix injustices – organize and fight.

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Contact: Rebecca Keetch
solidarity@solidaritymovement.ca

What are fair wages for top leadership at Local 222?

The members of Local 222 work hard for their money. We don’t begrudge paying dues to protect our rights as workers and union members. But we do expect our leadership to show respect for those dues, and ensure they are used for the benefit of the membership and not just to enrich themselves.

The President and Financial Secretary of Local 222 are taking in close to \$150,000 per year! They get a base salary of \$132,843.34 a year, and on top of that they receive a car allowance of \$875 per month (\$10,500 a year). They also get a “per diem” of \$20 per day, 5 days a week (an extra \$5,200 a year). **The total yearly compensation was \$148,543.34 in 2020!** This is exorbitant and out of touch with the realities of our membership in Local 222.

The salaries are based on Local 222 By-Law 15.01 which says, “The President and Financial Secretary shall be paid salaries and benefits equal to the Unifor National Representatives.” The By-Laws do not list the dollar figure, which is not transparent and makes it hard for the membership to get straight answers on how much leadership is earning. When Financial Secretary Rob Romano was asked for the actual 2021 figures, which any dues-paying member is entitled to, he would not provide the information and just said to refer to the Local By-Laws. Is he embarrassed by how much he makes?

Most union reps want to represent and fight for the members. But when leaders become too distanced financially from the rank and file the common sense of struggle and urgency is lost. They can lose sight of whose side they are on.

Local 222 has faced financial pressures due to declines in membership. Principled leaders would have been prepared to voluntarily show restraint – like the full-time officers of Unifor Local 1090 who reduced their own income when the pandemic hit, or the Unifor National Reps who stopped collecting the daily per diem. Instead, despite reduced services to members, appointment only use of the hall, and no membership meetings the Local 222 President and Financial Secretary have continued to collect the maximum amount of money. It’s wrong.

How do we fix this?

If enough members care, the By-Laws can be amended to reduce these exorbitant salaries. Our reps should be fairly compensated for the work that they do, but the key word is fairly. It’s time to revisit what is a fair wage for the top positions in our Local. If the members choose to show up, we have the power to make the changes we need.

“I want to rise with my class, not above my class,” – Eugene Debs, iconic labour leader.