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CUPE 79

November 19, 2010

Councillor John Filion,
Chair, Toronto Board of Health and
Members of the Board
City Hall 100 Queen Street West
Toronto, Ontario

RE: BOARD OF HEALTH MEETING, November 22, 2010
Item # HL34.4 – Toronto Bed Bug Project – 2010 Update

I am writing on behalf of CUPE Local 79 to support Toronto Public Health's call for the provincial government to provide adequate, dedicated resources to fight the serious public health threat that the insidious infestation of bedbugs poses to the residents of the City of Toronto, and people all across Ontario.

Many of our members, including those working in the Toronto Community Housing Corporation; Employment and Social Services; Toronto Public Health; Shelter, Support and Housing Administration; Long Term Care Homes and Services; Toronto Building; and Municipal Licensing and Standards run the on-going risk of coming in contact with bedbugs through their daily job responsibilities. Unfortunately, several of our members have already had their homes infested as a result of work related contact.

Bedbug infestations are dangerous. The World Health Organization (WHO) outlined the public health hazards associated with bedbugs in their publication, *The Public Health Significance of Urban Pests* (2008). The WHO's key findings identify bedbug infestation as posing great harm in terms of exposure risk and as a health hazard to individuals. The WHO's publication expressly notes the severe impact bedbug infestations pose to the quality of public housing.

The City of Toronto needs dedicated centralized resources, a system to track and monitor infestations, and additional resources for inspections, education and communication. More resources are urgently needed to provide increased support for our most vulnerable residents.

The City cannot solve this problem alone. The province's commitment to conduct surveys and develop a province-wide monitoring tool for bedbug infestations is simply not good enough. The Ontario government must take a leadership role to address this public health crisis.

Yours truly,

Ann Dembinski
President

c.c. Premier Dalton McGuinty

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