



**Canadian Union of
Public Employees**

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Units
- Service Units

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- Full-Time
- Long-Term Care Homes
& Services Part-Time
- Recreation Workers
Part-Time
- Unit B Part-Time

*Toronto Community
Housing Corporation*

**SERVING OUR
MEMBERS
SINCE
1942**

ED17.6.21

URGENT

DELIVERED BY FAX AND REGULAR MAIL

October 16, 2012

Councillor Michael Thompson, Chair
And Members, Economic Development Committee
100 Queen Street West
10th Floor, West Tower
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Dear Councillor Thompson,
And Members of the Economic Development Committee,

Re: Agenda Item ED17.6 Holiday Shopping

On behalf of CUPE Local 79, I wish to express concern about the recommendations contained in this agenda item, that retail operators be given the choice to open on four holidays: Victoria Day, Canada Day, Labour Day and Thanksgiving Day between the hours of 10:00 AM and 6:00 PM.

For many retail sector workers, holiday closures offer much needed time off the job to enjoy some planned leisure time with family and friends. In the hectic world of retail work, schedules change on a weekly (sometimes daily) basis, and it is increasingly hard to spend quality time away from work. Even if these work hours are considered optional, past practice suggests many workers will be scheduled to work anyway (without being asked) and face discipline if they do not. Local 79 firmly believes that a decent quality of life should be available to workers and their families, and workers in the retail sector should not be an exception.

Unfortunately, because retail workers are among the most underpaid workers in Canada, many will feel forced to take the hours simply to pick up additional pay, or for fear of employer reprisal and that is fundamentally unfair. An already exploited workforce does not deserve to be exposed to further exploitation!

I would also like to address those who say that Toronto's retail workers are protected by the Employment Standards Act, which should guarantee that they are fairly compensated for working during statutory holidays, and ensures that all work is voluntary. This is simply not the case. Ontario's Employment Standards enforcement system is in desperate need of repair. In many cases, it takes years before a claim is dealt with. Most retail workers are not represented by a union and will not be adequately protected should an employer break the rules.

In conclusion, I would like to remind you that in 2010, when City Council was faced with similar recommendations, Councillor Case Ootes stated in a television interview: *"it is important to have some days during the year that allow families to spend time together and most importantly people in the retail business – employees – that otherwise would have to work."*

CUPE Local 79 could not agree more and strongly urges you to vote against these proposed recommendations that would allow all retailers to open in the City of Toronto on Victoria Day, Canada Day, Labour Day and Thanksgiving Day.

Do not allow the business community to dictate public policy that will further erode the standards of its most vulnerable workforce!

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Maguire', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Tim Maguire
President