

Revolution for Rights and Social Services

Laying the Groundwork for Successful Community Campaigns and Collective Bargaining

Thank you so much for this invitation this morning. I am truly honoured to be here.

I have entitled my speech to you "Laying the groundwork for successful community campaigns and collective bargaining".

I certainly feel that I am speaking to a kindred audience:

- female-dominated workplaces,
- helping professions,
- no support or respect from our funding providers or our administrators, and,
- members who are overworked, underpaid, and feeling pretty hopeless these days

As you can see, I brought along a pillow and a picture. By the end of my presentation, you will know what the significance of these two items is.

Now, it's my personal belief that libraries don't fair very well because our administrators are not political people. The reality is that public libraries are still run by obedient ladies.

If Rob Ford says, Jane give me a 10% cut, Jane delivers that 10% cut on a silver platter. **She never seems to stand up for us!** (Sound familiar?)

So what's a girl like me to do? Did someone mention a revolution?!

A **revolution** in this case is no more than entering into the political arena, taking ownership of it, and, having a long term strategy to "change the conversation" about your workplace.

- I'm not saying that it will simple.
- I'm not saying that you will win every time.
- I'm not saying that it won't take a huge amount of money or effort.
- I'm not saying everyone will support you or even like you at times

But it's something each and every one of us in this room needs to do.

And the one lesson I want you to take away today is this: we can't effect change **overnight** and we can't do it based on **one action**. **So don't get discouraged.**

Change comes about by a long term strategy based on hundreds of actions, both big and small. And your strategy or actions don't suddenly come to an end when you have "**won**". You must be in a **constant state of readiness to act** and to **seize opportunities** to forward your agendas.

So where do we start?

We start with our own members. We need to **politicize** them.

They are going to tell you that they are too busy, they have families and lots of other commitments and couldn't possibly help out, and besides they'll say, what's the point because no one is going to care anyway. **Don't be discouraged.**

You begin by proving to your members that you know and understand the work that they do and that you respect the work that they do. (view us like employer sometimes – political campaigns) So you create a website and you tell the story of your members.

You send out flyers from time to time that address issues of concern in the workplace so that the members know you are on the same page as them. These flyers express the views of your local – not information only. Like an editorial.

You visit the workplaces and talk to members. **And then you visit the workplaces and talk to members.** And not just at bargaining **but especially at bargaining.**

Other tools like telephone town halls can help you reach more members at once. You just need to keep talking. Let's face it no one goes to union meetings anymore so you can't just rely on this.

You monitor your funding sources, your boards, city council, whoever. You report back to your members on how those people are performing including the politicians. (Example: Jaye Robinson and voting) You get to know the players and how they operate, and soon, **they begin to notice who you are too.**

You can push this information out on social media. I have found Twitter is a good tool for this. We have 2 twitter accounts, one under the local's name for labour news, and one for me, which reports on my day to day activities and provides a commentary to recent events.

You then give deputations. Not hard to do. 3 minute speech and keep it simple. Again, you are not going to effect change overnight. **Remember, it's the product of a series of actions building upon one another.** So go book a timeslot and get up there. Go talk to the politicians too, at whatever level of government. **Lobby them.** Such a sophisticated term for just talking to someone. You know your issues. It's not hard. (Example I used to be afraid of making a mistake).

Soon more and more people are noticing. **Your members are noticing too.** They are starting to take more interest. You can run an internal workshop. We did one this year entitled: Working in Ford Nation. Members found it fascinating.

You can run a small campaign. It doesn't have to be big. Involve other locals. We did this for the closure surrounding the Urban Affairs Library. We had Fred Hahn and John Cartwright from Labour Council speak. None of our members were there – it was during work time. But that's okay. (Rabble.ca video)

You can create a flying squad to mobilize the membership and the public. Again, small actions, small successes build on one another. You only need a handful of people. We had six. Pick a location like the Reference Library. Have some handouts. Pick a limited time like lunch hour. You want to start a dialogue with your constituents so don't focus heavily all the time on what is wrong.

And you need to have some fun. Labour Day for us seems to be our big draw. It's something that is positive and successful and the members share in that. Social activities seem to flop in our local. What you are trying to do by these actions is instill union pride in your members.

You need to get involved with your community too. Library workers personally are big supporters of the United Way so the local became one too. (Example: corporate agenda) Our other big community event is WOTS. The first year we had a focus. We were in the thick of our campaign and we wanted people to sign our petition. This year we didn't have a big issue but we were there giving away merchandise and being friendly. **Torontonians actually came back this year to see how we were doing.** Unbelievable!

What you are doing all the time is laying the groundwork. **Building your credibility. You are in that state of readiness, remember.** So when an opportunity presents itself, you can seize it.

And the biggest opportunity of all dropped in our laps when Rob Ford said cut the gravy by 10%. KPMG says close libraries, slash hours, buy less books and do fewer programmes. Well, we were off and running.

Doug Ford speaks, Margaret Atwood tweets and we are into a new phase again. We didn't plan that big campaign with all these elements but we were able to take advantage of the opportunities as they presented themselves. By the end of it, we had captured the attention of a city, and put a stop to library cuts. **Not a bad days work.**

Everyone thought we were this big huge entity running this campaign. (They thought we were TPL!) There was only a handful of us that were involved in the day to day. Often I felt like the Wizard of Oz. Remember when Toto pulls back the curtain, there is just this old man speaking into a megaphone. **The great and powerful Oz. 1 guy.**

You are really fortunate if you get media attention. Before anything gets big, you need to know the reporters and what their interests are. Make time for them – they like that. They'll come calling eventually. For members seeing the leadership so ably representing them inspires their confidence and support and their participation.

That was essentially Phase I of our campaign bringing us up to January 2012.

But now we are fast approaching collective bargaining. This is never a good dynamic with the public who pay your salaries, as they will tell you! And we were up against Rob Ford's austerity agenda.

Again, what's a girl to do? Call a strike of course.

It was a very successful strike. We were the only municipal local to take on the Ford regime - the librarians of all people. We won back every concession going, and on the face of it we won on the job security issue too. We had the media talking about part time issues. Unheard of. They had been prepped by our previous work in 2009. In fact, our members were ticked when we settled the strike because they had another big event planned – the teddy bear's picket! The response of the membership on our picket lines was huge.

That was Phase II of the Campaign.

I don't **think for a minute** we would have had the public support for collective bargaining, **if**, we had not run our campaign to show that we were the defenders of the library service. When members of the public say, "**give the librarians whatever they want**", you know you are in a good place.

So we won at this point.

Toronto now knows who the library workers are. We stopped the budget cuts in 2011 – 2012, and, we had a successful strike.

Time to rest on our laurels, right?

But does the story end there? Of course not.

The budget is upon us again. But it's different this time. **The campaign totally changed the way politicians and the library board approached the budget this year.** Many times we heard the comment, "**We don't want to go through what we did last year**". So this year, TPL got a budget increase, albeit modest, no staff cuts, no threats of closure, no hours cut, no programme cuts.

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This fall a report just happens to come out from the CCPA that chronicles a 20 year history of cuts to TPL. It is subtitled: **A case to invest in TPL**. This is the next stage of our campaign. And now those same **slashers** from last year are starting to talk about investing too.

Phase III will be on investing in the library so that when the budget cycle rolls around again in fall 2013, we will have **changed the conversation from "cuts to investment"**.

And then there are the municipal elections in 2014.

I am **crazy enough** to think that we can influence those elections. **Do you want a mayor who supports libraries or one who wants to close libraries?** Again, I couldn't pose that question to you seriously if we hadn't had all of that run up.

So the pillow and the picture.

Last year, a female pundit of the ultra-right win Toronto Sun named me "Mad Mo" (supposedly an insult) and suggested that instead of trying to hold municipal councillors accountable to their constituents on the library vote, I should just shut up!

Show picture.

But when has being quiet ever won us any gains? History has repeatedly demonstrated that real change only comes when people come together and demand more of their politicians.

Show pillow.

Sounds something like a revolution, doesn't it? You are on the right track with your conference.

Solidarity everyone, thank you.