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Community BBQ at Windsor Salt picket line June 3, 2023

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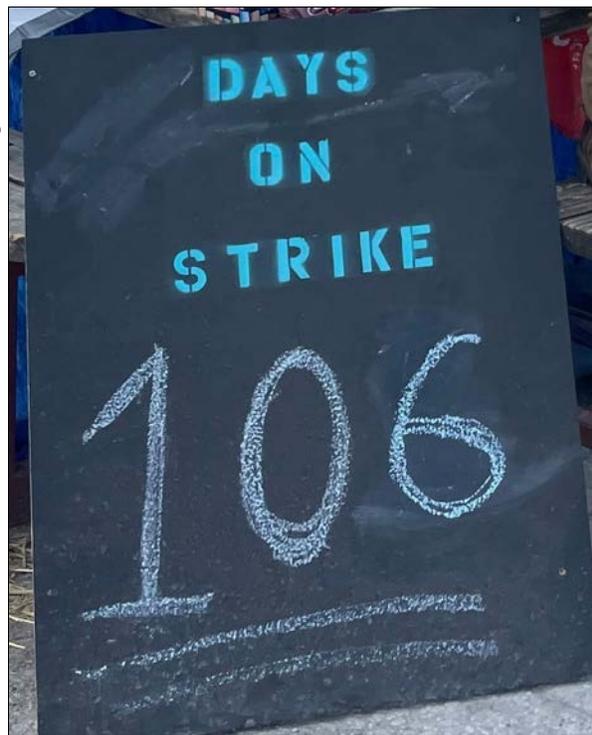
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Windsor Salt Strike Enters 17th Week
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As the strike at Windsor Salt enters its 17th week, word about the strike and its significance is spreading. The company, governments, and the media are doing their best to disinform everyone about what is at stake. They try to paint the resistance of the workers to attacks on their rights as an impediment to negotiations, even though everyone knows it is the company that is not engaging in negotiations and just wants the workers to accept their dictate by threatening them with a scenario that the only alternative is to stay out on strike forever.

To date, no media other than *Empower Yourself Now* and *Workers' Forum* explain what is going on. The company has issued one statement concerning an alleged assault, which they used to then talk about how they are the victims in the strike and simply want a fair deal. Showing the company's true colours, the workers inform that negotiations are now conducted with the union via e-mail after the company broke off face-to-face negotiations at the end of April. The union sends e-mails and the company's lawyer will respond much later by e-mail. This makes the statement that the company thinks it can do whatever it wants. In fact, it reveals for all to see its arrogance and the disrespect in which it holds its workers, their union, and the entire city of Windsor.



Where are the governments of Canada and Ontario to hold the company to account? Nowhere to be seen. Unfortunately, the CBC has joined the lament that the future for the salt workers is grim so long as they don't settle.

On May 30, CBC News printed an article on the occasion of day 101 of the strike.[1] Titled "Workers feeling the pinch as Windsor Salt strike stretches on," under the guise of a news story, the article says how financially difficult the strike is. As if that is news! It then insinuates that the workers' resistance is to blame for lost revenue of the Windsor Port Authority. Citing a water picket line the workers established that prevented a shipment of salt from leaving the port for a short time, it said this is why the Port Authority decided "not to try to bring in any other ships because it was too dangerous." This is a crass attempt to isolate and blame the workers for the financial hardships of other workers, whether it be those at the port or in industries that rely on shipping to transport goods or materials they produce or need.



Surely, CBC Windsor could help lift the pressure on the workers by seeking truth from facts and reporting with integrity, not indulging in an essentially anti-worker propagandist campaign.

Meanwhile, there is incessant talk from all sides about the panacea of new jobs from the Green Energy boom funded by the public purse. On June 1, Premier Doug Ford came to Windsor-Essex to make announcements about highway widening and skilled trades training for high school students, all in the context of ongoing negotiations between the Ontario and federal governments and Stellantis in which both levels of government are working out how much more they will pay Stellantis to continue building their battery factory in Windsor. Following the government giveaways to Volkswagen in St. Thomas, Stellantis stopped construction in Windsor until they get matching funds.

In Kingsville, Ontario, Ford called on all levels of government to "come together to protect tens of thousands of jobs." He praised the Carpenters' Union and the Labourers' International Union of North America (LIUNA) for their training of young people in skilled trades and his "great partnership" with Unifor Local 444. Meanwhile, when it comes to 250 workers and members of Unifor Locals 1959 and 240, who are defending their jobs from an anti-union assault by a foreign holding company, Ford did not say a word. He did not visit their picket lines and no media asked him why he does not support the salt workers as well.

The Ford government is only interested in claiming that public subsidies for critical mineral extraction and battery making will benefit Ontario workers, while the salt miners who are also engaged in mining and processing of a critical mineral, count for nothing.

Attempts to isolate the salt workers, blame them for allegedly not doing the right thing by coming under the dictate of the union-busting U.S. company that owns Windsor Salt, and to divide the community by inciting people against them, will not fly. The working people of Windsor-Essex and the community of Windsor-Essex are one. The one does not exist without the other. The one is the other. The CBC and others should get that into their heads.

To the chagrin of those who want the workers to capitulate, the workers are clear that they are defending themselves, the community, and the country itself from a vicious assault by a U.S. holding company hell bent on attacking what Canadian workers have established over generations. In this, they have the support of fellow workers everywhere because it is one fight for the rights of all.

Entering the 17th week of the strike, a major matter of concern for the workers is how to collectively oppose the disinformation campaign. *Empower Yourself Now* has full confidence that it is by fighting for a just cause that solutions can be found.

Note

1. For CBC News article [click here](#)

(*Empower Yourself Now*)



Active and Retired Teachers and Their Unions Expand Support

On May 31, the President-elect of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA) René Jansen in de Wal, as well as the presidents of the three OECTA units in Windsor-Essex and a number of OECTA retirees came to the picket line to let the striking workers at Windsor Salt in

Windsor, Ontario know that teachers have their backs. The members of OECTA were joined by members of other local teacher affiliates. In his speech at the line, Jansen in de Wal made it crystal clear that teachers do not support the investments of their pension fund in the strikebreaking and union-busting activities of Stone Canyon Industries Holdings Inc. and are trying to find ways to hold the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan to account despite its officials' mealy-mouthed responses about being unable to interfere in the operation of the business while they sit on its management board.



President-elect of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA) René Jansen in de Wal, presidents of OECTA units in Windsor-Essex and OECTA retirees visit Windsor Salt picket line

Jansen in de Wal raised the issue of the Environmental, Social and Governance filters that are supposed to prevent the fund from investing in companies that are against the values of the plan's members. "How does a company like Stone Canyon, a union busting company, get through your filters? That's completely unacceptable. They don't have a good answer for that. But, we made clear to say someone on their watch didn't do their job, because that's not supposed to happen. Companies like that shouldn't be in the portfolio because it reflects on teachers. It doesn't reflect our values. It doesn't reflect what we care about," he said.



On June 2, all the presidents, chief negotiators, and other delegates to the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF) Provincial Council from the Federation's 37 districts across Ontario rose in solidarity with the Windsor Salt workers at a regular meeting of the Council and did a financial collection of those gathered to send to the workers. Representatives of OSSTF District 9 from Windsor-Essex have consistently made the strike a matter of concern for the provincial union as D9 members are actively calling on the union to divest from Stone Canyon Industries Holdings Inc. as expressed in motions at their annual meeting, which were passed unanimously.



OSSTF provincial council rises in support of Windsor Salt workers, June 2, 2023

The same day, retired members of OSSTF in Windsor-Essex invited the president of Unifor Local 240 to their monthly breakfast to get updated on the strike and find out how best they could support. At the Active Retired Members' (ARM) breakfast, the retirees passed the hat and, on the spot, raised over \$400 for the workers' strike fund and presented it along with a second donation from their organization, OSSTF-ARM Chapter 9, to Jodi Nesbitt, the president of Unifor Local 240. After the breakfast, OSSTF-ARM members led by their president, Bruce Awad, joined the striking salt workers on their picket line. There, they were able to witness firsthand some of the company's antics -- in this case, the sending of some 15 trucks to drive into and out of the evaporation facility's shipping and receiving area that particular day, which the workers say is merely to taunt them, given that little, if any, salt is being processed by the handful of managers inside.



Unifor Local 240 President Jodi Nesbitt speaks at OSSTF Active Retired Members' breakfast, following which ARM members joined salt workers on their picket line.



Workers' Community BBQ a Great Success



On June 3, Unifor Locals 1959 and 240 held community barbecues that brought out the great social solidarity that exists in Windsor-Essex for workers in a fight. The picket line was turned into a banquet hall with tables set up café-style, a wading pool, bouncy castle, face painting and games for kids, and lots of camaraderie. The warm spirit amongst the salt workers, their families, and members of the community who joined them, reflected the fact that the community is one in opposition to attacks on the workers' rights and in defence of such a critical Canadian resource.



New York Salt Workers Reach Tentative Agreement



Salt workers in Silver Springs, New York, whose contract expired May 31, have reached a tentative agreement with Morton Salt, also owned by Stone Canyon Industries Holdings Inc. and held a ratification vote on the weekend of June 10-11. Details of the agreement have not been released. The company is well aware that having two evaporation facilities out on strike at the same time would hamper its abilities to co-pack salt products from the U.S. and sell it in Canada under the Windsor Salt label -- something it has been doing to prolong the strike in Windsor, Ontario.



Salt Workers Across Canada Learning Together Another Windsor Salt Operation on the Magdalen Islands, Quebec



Opération Mines Seleine on Grosse-Île in the Magdalen Islands, Quebec

Workers from another Windsor Salt mine owned by Stone Canyon Industries Holdings Inc. have informed *Empower Yourself Now* about their concerns with this union-busting company. Opération Mines Seleine on Grosse-Île in the Magdalen Islands, Quebec, are rock salt mines with seven salt domes, a type of structural dome formed when salt (or other evaporite minerals) intrudes into overlying rocks in a process known as diapirism. Salt domes are important in petroleum geology as they can function as petroleum traps for both oil and natural gas, which is one of the reasons that

many salt deposits have been discovered while surveying for oil.

The Mines Seleine opened in 1982 and was sold to Windsor Salt in 1988. It produces road salt to be used in Quebec and Atlantic Canada. In 2009, it was taken over by K+S, a German company that bought Windsor Salt. K+S was later bought by Stone Canyon in its bid to become the largest salt producer in North America. Workers in Pugwash, Nova Scotia reported that salt from the Mines Seleine was brought in during their strike, the first with Stone Canyon and its union-busting law firm in Canada, to force the salt workers in Pugwash to accept a concessionary contract.

Mines Seleine produces more than 1,300,000 metric tonnes of rock salt each year. It is currently expected that activities at the mine will be able to continue for another 30 years. Around 145 people work at Mines Seleine, most of them residents of the Magdalen Islands. After 30 years of activity, Mines Seleine now has a second generation of Magdalen Islanders working as miners.

The workers point out that they can barely meet their production targets now, meaning that there is no way they can be pushed into doing more overtime to meet the quotas that Windsor's Ojibway rock salt mine produces while the workers there are on strike. The contract of the Mines Seleine workers expires in October 2024, so they are following closely what takes place in Windsor to see how they can be effective.



Pugwash Salt Workers Facing Layoffs Together



Pugwash salt workers express support for Windsor salt workers, March 25, 2023

Salt workers in Pugwash Nova Scotia are facing layoffs from Windsor Salt. They inform that four workers will be laid off and that like the salt workers in Mines Seleine Quebec they are not in a position to run overtime to produce rock salt to make up for Windsor's Ojibway rock salt mine shutdown as a result of the company's demands for contracting out which provoked the strike. They also report that workers are finding ways to support one another in the face of the situation with older workers stepping forward to take "voluntary" layoff in order for younger workers to keep working. This shows that in the face of the difficulties they experience dealing with Windsor Salt, they are finding ways to stick together and solve problems in a manner that favours building their unity.

