



# MEDIA RELEASE

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OPEIU 378 News Release

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## **OPEIU Local 378 calls U.S. International union's attempt to stop Canadian autonomy drive in BC Supreme Court "outrageous" and vows OPEIU will become 100% Canadian-controlled**

VANCOUVER – OPEIU Local 378 is calling "outrageous" an attempt by U.S. International OPEIU executives to stop a Canadian autonomy drive through legal action in B.C. Supreme Court.

Jerri New, President of the Office & Professional Employees' International Union (OPEIU) Local 378 said the move by the U.S. OPEIU International is an unprecedented and outrageous effort to stop OPEIU's Canadian members from exercising their democratic rights to national autonomy, as guaranteed by the union's constitution.

New, who is also Canadian Director for 35,000 OPEIU members across the country, said the legal action started by the International asks the Court to stop OPEIU 378 from continuing to seek authorization from its members to separate from the International and create a Canadian-controlled union.

"It's outrageous that the International union would try to use the courts to stop Canadian OPEIU members from democratically exercising their rights to national autonomy," said New. "But we firmly believe that our members will strongly support Canadian autonomy and will reject the bullying tactics of the American OPEIU executive and we will continue to seek the approval of our Canadian members to establish a Canadian union."

"We also firmly believe that our Canadian courts will reject the International's claim that union members exercising their democratic rights under the union constitution is in any way against the law," New said.

OPEIU Local 378 represents about 11,000 members in British Columbia, including workers at ICBC, BC Hydro, Terasen, Accenture, Hastings Racecourse, TransLink and other employers.

The dispute came to a head after the union's Canadian National Committee rejected the International executive's proposal to increase dues by \$2 a month. The Canadian members then decided to exercise their national autonomy rights under section XIV of the OPEIU constitution, triggering the International's legal attack, as well as an International plan to remove Canadian OPEIU delegates' right to vote for the International President and Secretary-Treasurer or to have any say over how their members' dues money is spent in the United States.

"We find it insulting that the International American union executive has rejected a negotiated resolution and rejected Canadian autonomy," New said. "But nothing could make it clearer that OPEIU members need to establish our own Canadian-controlled union than to see the International go to court to try to stop our democratic rights."