

## CEU awards eight bursaries in 2008 competition

The CEU received eight submissions eligible for bursaries in its 2008 bursary competition. Applicants were required to write two short essays:

- The first essay was based on an interview with a union activist in a union or other labour organization.
- The second essay discussed this statement: "The mainstream media does not cover labour issues fairly or adequately."

The rating committee decided to award a bursary to each applicant. Two applicants will each receive bursaries of \$750. One will receive a bursary of \$350. Five applicants will receive bursaries of \$230. To receive their bursaries, applicants must provide proof of enrollment in a college, university, vocational institute, or apprenticeship program of their choice.

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### Essay excerpts

"I learned that in a union an individual worker gives up his right to individually bargain with the employer, and instead bargains collectively through the union. I realized that there is a variety of areas a union activist can be involved in, both locally and nationally; and a union activist has an important role to play in both the social conscience and economic arenas of our society. Now I am much more aware of the broad issues of social justice and fairness that are addressed by union activists and members, and that they do more for our society than just administer their own collective agreements. I believe that fighting for fairness for the underprivileged is social activism that benefits all citizens, not just unionized workers. I see trade unionism as a very important part of our democratic society."

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| <i>Bursary Recipient: Bradley Hall</i> |
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| <i>CEU Relative: Raymond Hall</i> |
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"In a country where approximately 31% of the Canadian workforce is unionized, one would expect that mainstream media would consider the values and issues affecting this large section of their target audience in their reporting. Sadly, this is not the case, and I believe that coverage is both unfair and inadequate. ... mainstream media does not exhibit much sympathy or support of labour issues, nor do they proactively report on political issues and improvements that organized labour lobby for on behalf of all workers, such as increasing the minimum wage in this province. ... Although this may be the "information age" it is clear that mainstream media does not provide "all" the information. The onus is on the reader to seek out independent sources of information, such as the Tyee, that will help them form their own opinion, rather than adopting the one spun by mainstream media."

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| <i>Bursary recipient: Kate Boswell</i> |
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| <i>CEU relative: Leona Lalonde</i> |
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"My Grandfather, as president of his union, attended many international union conventions. He felt it was very important to support and meet with other trade union activists from other locals to discuss how to support each other. They would also go over bargaining techniques and how to create more general support for his and other unions. As president of his union he also attended many ministry and labour meetings in support of apprenticeship training. His view on trade union activism is that it is the only way a worker is able to have substantial protection for fair wages as well as fair working conditions. My Grandfather is a second generation union supporter and member. His father was a member in good standing in the Winnipeg local jewelry workers union and even took part in the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919."

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| <i>Bursary recipient: Rebecca Clark</i> |
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| <i>CEU relatives: Geoff Clark</i> |
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"Trade unions are great because they allow a group of workers to band together to achieve common goals and to maintain or strengthen their working conditions. When the BC teacher strike occurred in 2005, as a young student, I saw this situation solely as a week and a half of no school. Now, as I look back on the event, I realize its importance for teachers who are being treated unfairly by the government. To keep up with the changing world, it is important that unions maintain their efforts in achieving the highest quality working conditions possible."

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| <i>Bursary Recipient: Maryland Ukpabi</i> |
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| <i>CEU Relative: Sandra Ukpabi</i> |
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"In summary, it appears that the media paints a picture of our government today as being more favourable towards the "financially able" than the working middle class, whether the broadcast be through television, newsprint, radio or the Internet. Therefore, it is vital that the average working person has the Unions to fight and represent their concerns to the government. The phrase, "...when united, we prevail..." is a perfect example that describes the Union. We need the Unions in today's society in order to ensure a balance of workers' rights to fair and just treatment by a government who tends to favour big business over the middle working class."

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| <i>Bursary Recipient: Nicholas Wong</i> |
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| <i>CEU Relative: Lily Wong</i> |
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"The truly significant effect of media on the general population is over the long term. For example, while a one time reporting on a union will most likely do nothing more than inform people of the facts, it's when tiny biases are applied over a long period of time that people are affected. This may be as simple as interviewing more people who are opposed to actions of unions, and then directing minimal attention to the union's side. Over time, this conditioning influences distinct opinions in the general public."

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| <i>Bursary Recipient: Michael James Rogers</i> |
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| <i>CEU Relative: David Rogers</i> |
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"This...can be seen in my job as an electrical apprentice. Many non-union electricians call the International Brotherhood of Electricians useless and a waste of money, sighting the perceived possibility of higher wages in their non-union company. Usually these comments are quickly proven wrong when they join the union. As a collective unit, we have benefits, better working conditions, more job security and the right to consistent pay, which is generally higher than non-union jobs. As an apprentice, the union ensures that I attend school when the required work hours have been met, that my employer exposes me to more aspects of the industry than other non-union apprentices receive and that continued investment is placed in me to make me a highly skilled and in demand asset to the employers that work with the union to get the job done right."

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| <i>Bursary Recipient: Thomas Jewett</i> |
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| <i>CEU Relative: Brenda Jewett</i> |
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"As the president of his sector... he is... like the voice of all those employees that he is representing, so he has to meet with his fellow workers and talk to them regularly to see what is on their minds. He needs to know if they are happy or unhappy with pay, working conditions or benefits and then figure out ways to get the most for the workers."

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| <i>Bursary Recipient: Michael Longsworth</i> |
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| <i>CEU Relative: Geri Longsworth</i> |
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