

CUPE at work



This booklet is about CUPE – the members, staff, resources and commitment to quality public services that make our union great.

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Welcome to **CUPE**

Everyday, everywhere
you'll find CUPE members –
and CUPE – at work.

Across the country, CUPE members are doing important work, providing vital public services around the clock. And where you find CUPE members, you'll also see the big impact their union has made on wages, benefits and working conditions – and the quality of life in the communities where they live.



The **union** advantage

It's a fact. Joining a union makes a big difference for workers. Unionized workers enjoy better wages and working conditions.

Union members are less likely to suffer harassment or discrimination. They have more rights, get more respect and their workplaces are safer.

As a union member, you have more control over your working conditions. You never have to go it alone with your employer because you're part of a team.

Together with your co-workers, you can negotiate collective agreements that improve your wages and benefits while guaranteeing rights well above minimum standards. A union contract ensures workers get fair, consistent treatment making employer favouritism and management whims a thing of the past.

The union agreement spells out in writing the relationship between workers and employer. It is a legally binding contract. You know your rights and have a process for enforcing them.

It's been a busy day but now Anne-Marie is on her way to a meeting of her CUPE local union. Tonight she and her co-workers will be planning for their next round of contract negotiations. Their first CUPE contract got Anne-Marie her first real raise since she started working at the community clinic. With two children at home, she's got some ideas for improving their benefits plan. She'll share them with the negotiating committee and get her ideas on the agenda.



The **CUPE** advantage

Our half-million members make CUPE a strong union – Canada’s largest and fastest-growing.

CUPE members live and work in almost every Canadian town and city. They are in health care, education, municipalities, universities, utilities, social services, libraries, child care, transportation, communications, airlines, emergency services, and other services vital to Canadians.



CUPE was built by workers just like you. In group after group, they got together to form local unions. They did so to have a collective voice – a strong, united voice – in their workplaces and in their communities.

Since 1963, CUPE has built a rich history of experience and successes. This solid foundation ensures a wealth of public sector expertise and resources second to none. Whether it's a workplace with 20 members or 20,000, CUPE delivers professional representation to its 2,200 local unions.

In CUPE, members call the shots. Members set bargaining priorities, elect leaders, decide on union dues and policies, and determine how their own local union operates. CUPE's strength is its members.

Gabriel landed his recycling job three years ago. When the city tried to cut costs by cutting workers, his job was on the line. Gabriel's CUPE local stepped into action, using rights in his contract, while at the same time building public support. Local environmental groups got involved, putting pressure on city councillors. Being a CUPE member meant Gabriel was backed by a strong contract – and the respect CUPE has in the community. The result? No jobs were lost and a valuable public service was protected.

Power at the bargaining table

Bargaining – negotiating good contracts that improve CUPE members' standard of living – is central to what unions do. To get better pay, benefits and working conditions, members need power to meet or beat the employer at the bargaining table.

CUPE's strength in numbers, experience and resources ensures our members have collective clout. Not only is there a CUPE staff representative with you when you sit down to negotiate but you're backed by a powerful team of specialists and the resources of the whole union.

Long before talks begin, CUPE's experts are working with you. The best contract language, wage comparisons, job evaluation analysis, bargaining surveys – CUPE is there with the facts and figures you need.

Members get the training and information they need through CUPE's workshops and bargaining conferences. CUPE's campaigns and communications support help get your membership and community on side.

Your negotiating team meets the employer prepared. Armed with the best strategy, they're ready to achieve their members' goals and get a good contract.



Caring for seniors in the nursing home where Luisa works is like caring for family. As a licensed practical nurse, she comforts and heals every day. She's proud of her work – and glad to be in CUPE. As a CUPE member, she knows first-hand the strength of the union. By joining together all the nursing home workers in her province, CUPE had the power to negotiate a pay raise. And the workers made a big breakthrough with their first pension plan.

Talks for their new contract took almost a year. University workers like Dave were holding out for a decent pay increase after years of freezes. CUPE's expert research with wage comparisons from other provinces was what finally convinced the university to raise its offer. Now that members have accepted the deal, Dave and his co-workers will get everything they are owed. Their CUPE local negotiated a retroactive settlement so the pay increase covers the past year.

Power in the workplace

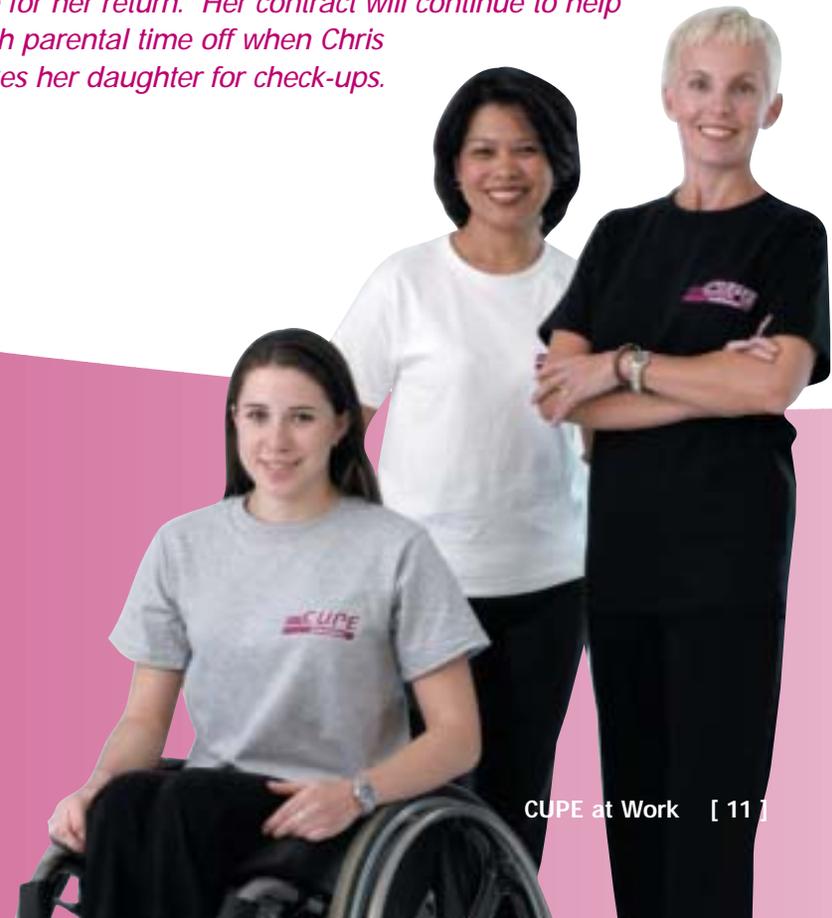
A CUPE contract is the best on-the-job protection there is. It's a tool for action that guarantees members control over their working lives.

It assures respect for your rights and protects you from being fired without reason. It gives you a grievance and arbitration system to resolve workplace disputes. Promotions are based on experience, not who the boss likes best. Members are entitled to respect on the job and freedom from harassment or discrimination.

Kelly's phone never seems to stop ringing. Keeping patient records in a busy hospital, there's always a question to answer or a problem to solve. It's interesting work that keeps her on her toes. When Kelly had a problem, CUPE was there to back her up. Her shop steward helped her file a complaint about harassment. Her union had good contract language that backed up her concerns – and gave her solutions. Now Kelly has what her CUPE contract promises: a safe and comfortable workplace.

Whether it's job security and layoff protection or maternity leave top up and special leave for family emergencies, CUPE has the best contract language. Dealing with workload or a health and safety hazard? CUPE has expertise members can count on. Need professional campaign materials or help dealing with the local news media? CUPE has the know-how members need to succeed.

Chris has said good-bye to her special needs students for the day. Now she's on her way home to her own family and new baby. It's her second week back on the job as a teaching assistant. Her CUPE contract guaranteed her extended maternity leave and benefits coverage – and secured her job for her return. Her contract will continue to help with parental time off when Chris takes her daughter for check-ups.





CUPE Power at work

At the bargaining table and in the workplace,
you're backed by a half million members and a wealth of experience and expertise.

Your **CUPE** support system

From staff expertise and a vast membership network to professional materials and an award-winning web site, CUPE's immense resources are second to none. We're always working to strengthen our members. More than 80 per cent of the dues local unions send to CUPE National go to providing staff and services to members.

Across Canada, CUPE has an experienced, well-trained staff of more than 600 representatives who work directly with local unions. In addition, staff specialists help members in the regions or through the national office in Ottawa. CUPE's experts in research, health and safety, equality, communications, the law, organizing and membership education provide in-depth support where it's needed most.

Job evaluation, bargaining surveys, plans to eliminate violence, model contract language, pensions data, anti-racism materials, special issue conferences, women's wages updates, safety audits, advice in handling news media, leadership training, briefs to governments, lobbying for increased funding, member workshops, benefits analysis, advocacy for human rights, campaigns that build member solidarity and community support – all this and more is what CUPE provides our members.

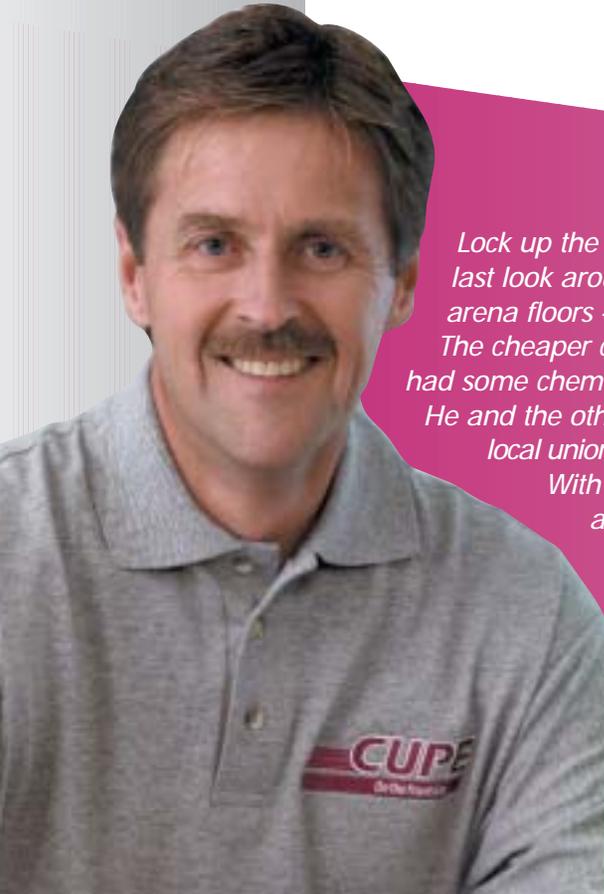
For years Langston worked through his lunch. These days, he's trying to take his breaks and deal with stress. In an understaffed group home, that's a big deal. Workload overload is a huge problem – and CUPE's backing members like Langston in their struggle. A province-wide campaign that draws on CUPE's research, communication and organizing resources has spread like wildfire among social workers. And it's getting results.



When the library introduced new technology Ming was worried. She hadn't been offered any training and wasn't sure how to handle the change. Ming's local union looked to CUPE for solutions. CUPE's specialists drew on the latest research and health and safety guidelines, providing expertise on everything from protecting jobs to better work stations. The CUPE local succeeded beyond Ming's dreams. She's now part of a union-management tech change committee making decisions about an employer-funded training program.

How **CUPE** works — your local union

When a group of workers choose CUPE to represent them, they form their own CUPE local or join an existing one.



Lock up the doors and Bill has time for one last look around. He's finished mopping the arena floors – with a new cleaning agent. The cheaper cleaner his employer supplied had some chemicals Bill had never heard of. He and the other custodian contacted their local union's health and safety committee. With the help of CUPE's experts and resources, the members found out the chemicals were dangerous for workers and the kids who use the arena. CUPE's evidence got Bill's employer to change cleaning products and made the arena a healthier place.

With more than 2,200 local unions, CUPE is a union that thrives on diversity. Some locals have members all in one workplace, while others span a region or province. Each local controls their own union business, guided by CUPE's constitution.

Working with their CUPE staff rep, members determine their bargaining and workplace priorities. They elect an executive to lead their local union. They set their dues and decide how money is spent. Whatever the issue, members always have a say.

Members decide whether to accept the employer's offer, or reject it and vote to strike. Most often CUPE's clout helps members get good contracts without strikes.

But whenever a member or local is under attack, CUPE is there. Our massive resources and multi-million dollar strike and defence funds help members fight and win. Our successes send a clear message to employers and governments that CUPE members will settle for nothing less than what they're worth.



How **CUPE** works – the big picture

Every two years, CUPE local unions elect delegates to attend the CUPE national convention. At this week-long event, CUPE members from across the country determine priorities, set policy for the union and elect leaders.

CUPE has two full-time elected officers – a National President and a National Secretary-Treasurer. They ensure CUPE's voice is heard on the national stage, and direct the union's staff and resources to meet members' needs.



The top officers, together with five general vice-presidents, 14 regional vice-presidents, and two diversity vice-presidents, form CUPE's 23-member National Executive Board. The Board ensures members' decisions at national convention are put into practice.

As well, there are provincial divisions and in some cases district or bargaining councils that help coordinate CUPE's efforts within a province, community or sector.

In addition, CUPE members from across the country serve on national committees and working groups. These activists provide input and valuable feedback on CUPE campaigns and actions on a wide variety of issues – contracting out and privatization; women's equality; health and safety; anti-racism; the environment; pensions; rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered workers; Aboriginal concerns; workers with disabilities; child care; health care; and young workers.

Her head swimming with ideas, Camille is heading home after her first CUPE national convention. She was surprised how at ease she felt among the huge convention crowd. Members and staff welcomed her warmly and showed her how convention works. Now Camille can't wait to tell her co-workers at the women's shelter about the resolutions she helped pass. She got so wrapped up in the debate, she stepped up to a microphone to share their experiences. Camille will tell them all about CUPE's campaign to raise women's wages. She knows they made the right decision when they chose CUPE.

On the front line — defending public services

CUPE is Canada's most powerful defender of our vital public services.

Our health care, our water, our schools and universities, our communities – CUPE members who are on the front line delivering services to the public know just how important their work is. And they're proud of it.

Carlos reviews his notes one last time. He's up next to make a presentation to city council about keeping water services public. He knows the importance of safe, clean drinking water – he works in the water treatment plant. His CUPE local set up a Water Watch committee, and connected with environmentalists and other community groups. When they got wind that council was considering privatizing their water systems, they swung into action. CUPE's research and communications helped Carlos fine-tune his speech and plan the community mobilization. He's confident they can convince council that public is the best choice.

CUPE members care for people. Our members' work adds to the quality of life in our neighbourhoods, towns and cities. And helps ensure that all Canadians, women and men, young and old, of different races and backgrounds, have equal access to opportunity.

In the workplace and at the legislature, in the courts and in the streets, CUPE is at the forefront, speaking out against cutbacks and privatization, speaking up for quality public services.

Everyday in every way, CUPE is there standing up for our members, our jobs and our Canadian way of life.



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largest union
has an office
near you.

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