

# Counterpoint



## SOLIDARITY AND STRONG LEADERSHIP AT CUPE NATIONAL CONVENTION

CUPE ACTIVISTS USE ONLINE TOOLS TO ORGANIZE AND CAMPAIGN

The fight to keep public services *public*

FOCUS: WHAT'S UP ON THE HILL

**CUPE donation bolsters Slave Lake community**

*"Don't let them tell you it can't be done."*

 @cupenat

SOMETHING TO TWEET ABOUT!

# HE SAID

*"Don't let them tell you it can't be done."*



## PRIVATIZATION TORONTO UPDATE

# From books to garbage CUPE Toronto locals defend services



It's a busy time for members of CUPE 416, CUPE 79 and CUPE 4948 as they prepare for bargaining and work to fend off the cuts and privatization of services proposed by Mayor Rob Ford. From books to garbage, Ford's attack on public services sees no end in sight. Despite a massive public outcry, Ford continues to forge ahead with his destructive plans to slash and privatize services. Hundreds of people waited

for hours to speak against the planned cuts. So far, Mayor Ford is not listening. Toronto is a great place to live, largely due to the quality of public services provided to residents. The city's outside municipal workers (CUPE 416), inside municipal workers (CUPE 79) and library workers (CUPE 4948) are ramping up pressure with online campaigns to protect public services. Visitors to CUPE 79's web site are writing letters to their city councilor, and on CUPE 416's site they are

signing an online petition. CUPE 4948's campaign also includes an online petition, and draws on the star power of the city's literary greats, including Margaret Atwood. As the locals begin bargaining they pledge to continue fighting the cuts and stand up for quality public services. All three locals are focused on negotiating fair settlements that maintain services and jobs. **CUPELOCAL79.ORG**  
**LOCAL416.COM**  
**OURPUBLICLIBRARY.TO**  
■ Janet Szliske

# ELDERLY BEING PUSHED OUT OF BEDS

Desperate to free up acute care beds after years of funding cuts, hospitals are pushing seniors out whether they're healthy or not, says Michael Hurley, president of the Ontario Council of Hospital Unions (OCHU).

Over the last 15 years, Ontario government cuts have reduced the number of acute care beds by 18,500. With an occupancy rate of nearly 98 per cent, the province has the smallest number of available beds in the developed world.

"One way the ministry has coped is to suggest elderly patients could just move to homes," Hurley said. "There are cases where people are being pushed out of hospitals while still acutely ill."

Those pushed out often end up in unregulated, for-profit retirement homes without standards for care. Hurley pointed to one Toronto case in which a man who was unable to feed himself was released into such a facility, where he died of starvation. This summer, OCHU introduced a hotline at 888-599-0770 so people



can report their experience. The council will be organizing media conferences with people who call and are willing to share their stories and is also supporting a legal challenge claiming age discrimination. Since its launch, Hurley said the hotline has been "swamped with calls."

Over the spring and summer, OCHU also toured 35 communities in northern and central Ontario with a theatre set replica of a hospital room. On the tour a nurse explained how to avoid the thousands of hospital-acquired illnesses that affect Ontarians every year.

For more information visit: **OCHU.ON.CA**

■ Craig Saunders

CUPE'S QUARTERLY PUBLICATION FALL 2011

# Counterpoint

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# Shop Steward profile

*Irene Romero and her family were forced to flee Guatemala because of her husband's involvement in a trade union. Now she is getting involved in CUPE. Here's why:*

Imagine a civic workplace where one of every three unionized workers is paid \$10 (or less) an hour, receives no benefits and is considered a "block of



hours" instead of an employee.

That's the reality of working life for many CUPE 2669 members at the Saskatoon Public Library. "The pages are the manual labourers at the library," explains local vice-president Dolores Douglas. "They are the people who sort the books, CDs and other materials and stock the shelves. The library could not exist without them, but they are treated as second-class and get no recognition."

It's a situation that motivated Irene Romero and Deanna Jenkin to get more involved in CUPE by becoming union stewards.

"We have a lot of women and students working as pages at the library," says Irene, who worked as a page for 12 years before getting a position as library clerk.

"It is very heavy work. Most of the pages have to stand all day and don't get any sick leave, yet they struggle to get

extra hours so they can make ends meet. It really bothers me."

Irene decided to become a CUPE steward so she can advocate for better pay and working conditions for the pages and other members of the local. "My hope is to get more of my co-workers interested in the union so we can make a difference," she says.

Deanna Jenkin, another new CUPE steward at the library, also wants to improve the situation for pages. "It is a shame they are paid so low," she says, adding the need for more full-time positions is another priority. Nearly 70 per cent of the 251 members at the library work part-time.

Deanna also would like to see more support and recognition from library managers. "The library is not a large organization. It would be great to see library managers come out of their offices and walk for a while in our shoes."

■ Beth Smillie



## PRIDE 2011: A COAST TO COAST CELEBRATION OF DIVERSITY

Decked out in colourful outfits, and sporting their union flags, CUPE members across the country came out in great numbers to celebrate Pride in their communities. From Halifax to Vancouver and many places in between, LGBTT activists celebrated diversity in gender identity and sexual orientation.

CUPE members joined parades in Halifax, Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Edmonton, and in many other cities across the country.

Check out:

[CUPE.BC.CA/NEWS/VIDEOS](http://CUPE.BC.CA/NEWS/VIDEOS)  
[PRIDEINOURWORK.CA](http://PRIDEINOURWORK.CA)

■ Wes Payne

### NATIONAL PRESIDENT PAUL MOIST

## Gone—never forgotten

This summer ended with some heart breaking losses that have struck all of us at CUPE particularly hard.

We lost two Sisters, Ann-Marie Chassie and Ute Meritt, in the crash of First Air flight 6560 in Resolute, Nunavut in late August. The pilot, Captain Blair Rutherford, was husband to Sister Tatiana Rutherford, secretary-treasurer of the First Air component.

This tragedy has touched us all deeply, and our heartfelt condolences go out to their families, and to those of the eight passengers also lost in the crash.

It was my honour to attend a candlelight vigil held in Ottawa in memory of crew and passengers. Vigils were also held in Edmonton and Yellowknife. Seeing CUPE Brothers and Sisters coming together to comfort the families, and each other, offered a bit of light at a truly dark time.

Just a few days after the crash, CUPE and the entire country were struck with another devastating loss.

Like many Canadians I was shocked when I heard my good friend – my brother – Jack Layton had died. Words can hardly describe the sadness from losing this inspirational and visionary leader.

It has been hard to go from the emotional high of seeing Jack lead the New Democrats to the best ever election result, to a few short months later seeing him bravely stepping aside as leader of the NDP and the

federal opposition to fight a new cancer. Then on August 22 along with hundreds of thousands of Canadians, I felt tremendous sorrow with the news of his passing and the hole left in the political heart of our country.

Once again, however, there was a small light for us in our mourning: a letter to all of us from Jack. In it, he offered us comfort. He displayed his limitless compassion and gave us the path to best honour his memory by asking us to continue the work he so deeply believed in – making Canada a better, fairer, more equitable country by working together.

At the upcoming CUPE National Convention, we will honour Jack with a special tribute. We will also honour him, and Sisters Ann-Marie and Ute, by forging ahead with building a better Canada for all. In Jack's words, we will be loving, hopeful and optimistic. And we'll change the world.

PAUL MOIST ONLINE [twitter.com/CUPENatPres](https://twitter.com/CUPENatPres)



Follow Paul Moist on Twitter



### Thank you to Brother Claude

After 10 years of dedicated service as national secretary-treasurer, we will be wishing Brother Claude G n reux a heartfelt good luck and best wishes at the CUPE National Convention. Brother Claude has decided not to run for re-election.

It has been a pleasure to work with Brother Claude, and he has done a truly remarkable job for all CUPE members. During his tenure he helped make CUPE stronger than ever, and I owe him a sincere thank you for his service and friendship.

# FOCUS:

WHAT'S UP ON THE HILL



## PUSH TO EXPAND PUBLIC PENSIONS FAR FROM OVER

The best and most effective way to address the retirement income security crisis in Canada is to expand public pensions.

More than 11 million Canadians are without a workplace pension, and it is widely acknowledged the current benefits from the Canada Pension Plan and Quebec Pension Plan are not enough to meet the

needs of retired Canadians.

Despite these stunning facts, the federal Conservative government continues to choose to put the interests of banks and the finance industry before those of Canadians. Claiming there is no consensus among the provinces for a CPP / QPP expansion, federal Finance Minister Jim Flaherty is backing

an ineffective private Pooled Registered Pension Plan (PRPP).

In fact, six of the ten provinces support the expansion of CPP / QPP. Eighty per cent of Canadians believe expanding public pensions should be the Harper Conservative government's priority in addressing retirement income security.

Before the New Year, Canada's finance ministers will meet to discuss public pensions and other issues.

In conjunction with the Canadian Labour Congress *Retirement Security for Everyone* campaign, and working with the New Democrats, CUPE will ensure the interest of workers, and the wishes of Canadians, are heard

leading up to this important meeting.

*To find out more, and to learn how you can help get the message to Canadian government, visit the CLC Retirement Security for Everyone page at* **CANADIANLABOUR.CA.**

■ **Greg Taylor**

## WHAT'S AHEAD FOR PARLIAMENT?

**O**n Sept. 19 Parliament resumed and a new political season began in Ottawa. Prime Minister Harper says he intends to focus on the economy and the fragile global economic situation. But what does that mean? Does he mean more tax cuts for corporations or will he focus on measures that will create good jobs through strong public services and strategic investments?

CUPE will be on the Hill – talking to government and opposition MPs about the issues that matter to our members. We will work closely with the official opposition to make sure that those issues are front and centre in Parliament.

Issues like trade agreements, health care, pensions and a federal budget that put the needs of working people ahead of corporate interests will be at the forefront.

We'll continue our national tour on CETA – the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement Canada is negotiating with the European Union.

We'll work to broaden the debate about health care to focus on improving our public health care system to meet the needs of families now and in the future.

And we'll keep up the work we've been doing with our brothers and sisters across the labour movement to support the Canadian Labour Congress campaign on retirement security for all.

New Democrats will be working hard to keep Jack Layton's vision of a better country alive. They will elect a new leader and chart a course to make our shared vision a reality. The Liberal Party and the Bloc Quebecois will also look for new leaders.

In this context it's more important than ever that CUPE members are aware and involved in the issues that matter to all of us. Get involved. Your voice matters.

Sign up for CUPE Today to stay informed.

**CUPE.CA/SUBSCRIBE**

■ **Heather Fraser**



## POLLS SAY

When Canadians find out about the impact of CETA, they oppose it.

**77%**

 oppose the deal if it causes prescription drug prices to rise

**60%**

oppose the deal if it opens up government purchasing to EU corporations

**52%**

oppose the deal if it opens up water treatment services to competition from European corporations 

Source:  
CUPE/Envionics  
Research poll May 2011



Research shows public services provide an annual benefit equivalent to \$41,000 for the average Canadian family

## BALANCED APPROACH NEEDED IN NEXT FEDERAL BUDGET

Canada's economic recovery is facing significant challenges from within and outside our borders. Measures taken in the 2012 federal budget will be critical to ensuring the interests of Canadians workers are being protected.

While immediate short-term concerns need to be addressed, CUPE is advocating an approach that tackles long-term weaknesses, including stagnant productivity, slow wage growth, and an inequitable economy.

In its budget consultation submission, CUPE

made three main recommendations which would shift economic efforts from public service cuts and corporate tax cuts to a more balanced and productive approach.

Quality public services are critical for sustaining shared prosperity and a high standard of living for all Canadians. In its submission, CUPE calls for the federal government to *sustain and expand public services, jobs and spending*. This includes maintaining current levels of program spending, with a priority on protecting current rates

of increases of provincial transfers for health care, education, social services and equalization payments. The damaging federal program spending cuts mandated in the 2011 budget need to be canceled.

Research shows public services provide an annual benefit equivalent to \$41,000 for the average Canadian family. Cuts to public spending damage the economy and lower the standard of living for Canadians — particularly the most vulnerable.

Over the past two decades Canada's tax system

has provided the greatest benefits to the wealthiest. To address this inequity, CUPE is advocating for *implementation of fair tax reform* by restoring corporate tax rates, eliminating wasteful tax loopholes, increasing taxes on the financial sector, and introducing a new tax bracket for individuals making over \$250,000. Together, these measures could generate over \$29 billion a year, more than enough to eliminate the deficit, stop the damaging spending cuts and fund important new programs.

The federal government

must *promote investment in sustainable growth and job creation*, starting with a revitalized public infrastructure funding program. The federal government must replace its laissez-faire attitude to industry development with a coordinated strategic sectoral development approach that promotes private investment and creates quality sustainable jobs.

*The complete 2012 federal budget consultation submission can be found at*

**CUPE.CA**

■ **Greg Taylor**

## CETA THREATENS CANADIAN COMMUNITIES

The Harper Conservative government wants to sign the Comprehensive Economic Trade Agreement (CETA) with the European Union early next year.

This is the first time a trade deal puts local procurement on the table, putting democracy and the rights of municipal government to buy locally at risk. "Canadians recognize the importance of international trade, but they want trade agreements to be responsible and in the best interests of their communities," says Paul Moist, national president of CUPE.

Under CETA, large multinational corporations could take over the delivery of vital public services — like water, transit, energy and health care — whether local communities want it or not. Health care costs will increase by \$2.8 billion as the deal extends intellectual property rights on pharmaceuticals. This means longer waits for generic drugs and increased costs to Canadians. The CETA trade deal is bad for communities.

CUPE and the Council of Canadians are talking about the dangers of CETA with four stops in every province. We are also reaching out to Members of the European Parliament. CUPE representatives attended trade talks in Europe with the Trade Justice Network. They connected with European allies and Members of Parliament, and monitored the talks.

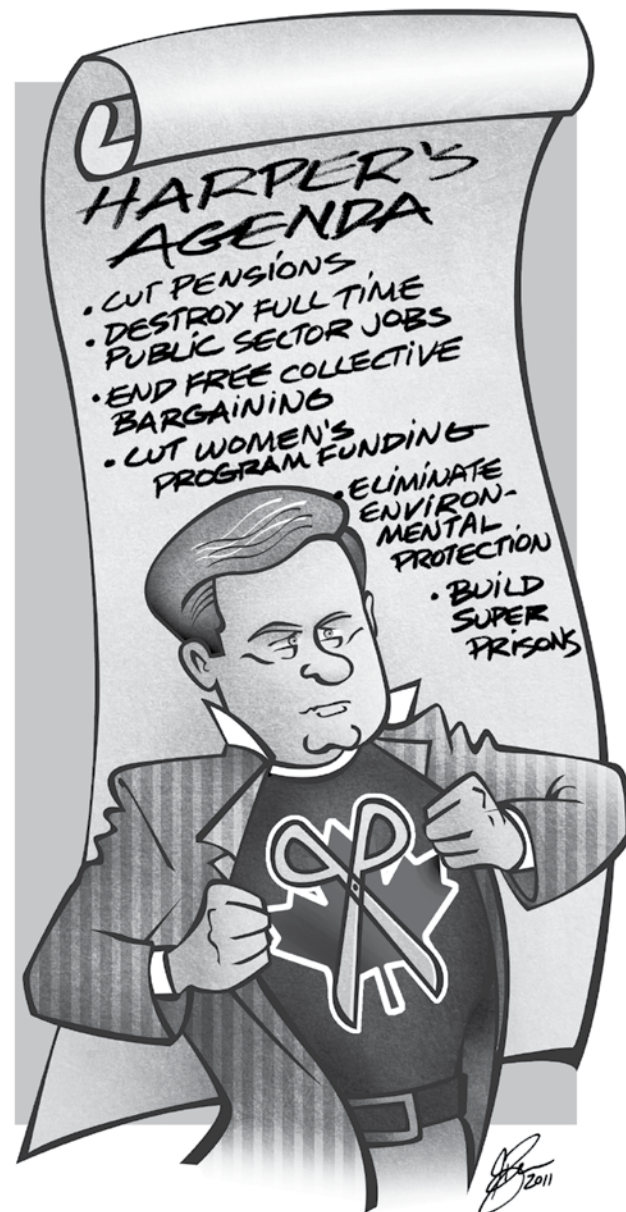
CUPE will work closely with newly elected NDP Member of Parliament Robert Chisholm, opposition trade critic, to ensure that Canadians are able to have a full and open discussion on this deal.

■ **Janet Szliske**

**This is the first time a trade deal puts local procurement on the table, putting democracy and the rights of municipal government to buy locally at risk.**



## Têtes-à-têtes!



**As my car inched into the smoke,** mostly I could only see the bumper in front of me. I could hear a house explode and knew that the houses were burning around us. The twenty minutes it took to get to the main street was the longest twenty minutes of my life. Because of the smoke, I couldn't see my daughter's car and didn't know that my kids were all right.

— Elaine Ulm, School bus driver, CUPE 1038 member

## CUPE donations support communities coping with disaster

CUPE 1038 member Elaine Ulm shared her experience with *Counterpoint* of fleeing her home in Slave Lake on May 15. Two wildfires, fueled by 100mph winds, converged on the town when the wind changed direction.

Ulm and her family drove to Calgary that night to stay with relatives. Now, like many others who lost their homes, she is living in a campground near Slave Lake and hopes to have suitable accommodation before winter.

The fires displaced 15,000 people from Slave Lake and surrounding area.

"The community of Slave Lake really pulled together to make the best of a disastrous situation," said CUPE Alberta Division president Marle Roberts.

Roberts was in Slave Lake to present a donation of \$20,000 to the Alberta

Red Cross Fire Relief on behalf of CUPE members and CUPE's national executive board.

Five homes belonging to CUPE 1038 members, bus drivers for the High Prairie school district, were lost in the fire. **To donate directly to CUPE 1038, please mail your cheque to Box 1735, High Prairie, Alberta T0G 1E0.**

In addition to the fires of Slave Lake, there were devastating floods in Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Quebec. Following requests from both Manitoba and Saskatchewan CUPE donated \$20,000 for disaster relief efforts – and CUPE locals added another \$20,000 dollars – in support of people in Saskatchewan affected by this summer's devastating floods across the province. Manitobans also suffered the worst flooding in decades and



received a \$20,000 donation.

"I hope these donations will help rebuild communities and offer some measure of comfort to those whose lives have been disrupted," said CUPE National President Paul Moist.

"CUPE members have suffered in these disasters like so many in their communities," said Claude Généreux, national secretary-treasurer of CUPE. "Our members are extremely proud of their communities, and all CUPE members from coast-to-coast-to-coast will do what they can to help them rebuild and recover."

■ Janet Szliske



## NB PAY EQUITY COALITION

With the slogan "Making Pay Equity work," Vallie Stearns was elected Chair of the NB Coalition for Pay Equity during its annual general meeting, held in June.

"I am both honoured and excited to take on this position with the Coalition, said Vallie Stearns a CUPE servicing representative who formerly worked in a women's transition shelter, one of the sectors targeted for pay equity. "I believe that it's high time that women receive fair pay."

During the 2011 AGM, the coalition members were invited to think about renewing their strategies to move forward, with keynote speaker, Leah Levac, who talked about shared leadership and collective impact.

"There are important challenges ahead but I am sure we can take them on together. Pay equity legislation for the private sector is seriously needed in New Brunswick. The fact that home support workers and early childhood educators are being told they will have to wait at least another year before recommendations for pay equity adjustments are presented to government departments indicates that "voluntary measures are not working," said Stearns.

The new Chair also wants the Coalition to monitor the implementation of the *Pay Equity Act, 2009*, which applies to the public sector, so that job evaluations and pay equity calculations are completed properly during the time prescribed by the Act – by the end of March 2012 – after which the necessary adjustments should begin.

**EQUITE-EQUITY.COM**

## in brief

### Letters to the Editor

I was happy to read that so many present and past CUPE members have been elected to the House of Commons. I wanted to point out that you missed one in your article (Counterpoint issue Summer 2011), Mathieu Ravnignat, newly elected NDP MP for Pontiac (Quebec) was one of the founders of CUPE 2626.

**Fida Abou-Nassif  
CUPE 1281**

**Counterpoint:**

**Congratulations to Mathieu Ravnignat, newly elected NDP MP for Pontiac (Quebec).**



### Enter to win an iPad 2 or BlackBerry Playbook



CUPE members can enter to win an iPad2 or a BlackBerry PlayBook by "Liking" the CUPE Facebook page! The winners will be announced on the last day of National Convention, Nov. 4, 2011. Stay tuned for details and contest rules.

**CUPE.CA  
FACEBOOK.COM/CUPESCFP  
TWITTER.COM/CUPENAT  
YOUTUBE.COM/CUPESCFP**

### Health and Safety and collective bargaining resources

Have you seen *The Canary*? CUPE's quarterly health and safety resource has a new name and a new look! Find the latest news from the field, and important health and safety information.

Check it out online at **CUPE.CA/CANARY**

While you're at it, check out our latest issue of *Tabletalk*, CUPE's bargaining resource, with a brand new look.

To sign up, head over to **CUPE.CA/SUBSCRIPTIONS.**

### Something to tweet about! National Convention 2011 goes online

**twitter**

Social media offers many ways for CUPE members to participate in National Convention 2011, whether you're at the Vancouver Convention Centre in person or from the comfort of your own home. Thousands of individuals and groups will participate in the convention remotely, through Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and cupe.ca.

Follow the official CUPE Twitter account **@cupenat** and the convention hashtag **#CUPE2011** to keep track of the discussion in real time.

# VIGILS FOR VICTIMS OF FIRST AIR CRASH

Twelve people, including eight passengers and four crew members were killed in the First Air crash near Resolute, Nunavut on Aug. 20.

The tragedy claimed the lives of two flight attendants, Ann-Marie Chassie and Ute Meritt, both CUPE members. Pilot Blair Rutherford, whose wife is a First Air flight attendant, and co-pilot Dave Hare also perished.

Close to 1,000 people attended a vigil held in Yellowknife. The event, held in a hangar, showed how deeply the whole community was affected. Ryan Peters, a local pastor who is also a part-time First Air flight attendant, led the vigil. The ceremony included a fly-past of fifteen air craft from different

airlines and helicopter companies.

Hundreds of people also came together in Ottawa, for a candlelight vigil, held at the workers' monument in Vincent Massey Park.

Many CUPE members showed support and solidarity, along with CUPE National President Paul Moist and Secretary-Treasurer Claude Généreux. "First Air is a family. It's a family that's been hit hard... At times like this, we close ranks, and offer our solidarity to the families of the victims, to the First Air family, and to the broader flight attendant family as well," said Moist.

The ceremony ended with a touching display, as 12 balloons were released into the sky one at a time in honour of each victim.

■ Pierre Ducas



## THE FUTURE OF MANITOBA HYDRO IS AN ELECTION ISSUE

**The survey showed that nine out of ten Manitobans are in favour of keeping Manitoba Hydro publicly-owned.**

It's unanimous - CUPE Manitoba delegates voted to launch an anti-privatization campaign focused on the future of Manitoba Hydro. The campaign is in full swing in the run up to the Manitoba provincial election set for October.

Privatization is an important issue for Manitobans as former Progressive Conservative Premier Gary Filmon sold Manitoba's telephone system shortly after winning the 1995 election during which he promised to not sell MTS.

In June, CUPE Manitoba, along with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) local 2034 and the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada (CEP) commissioned Probe Research to conduct a public opinion survey on issues about Manitoba Hydro.

The survey showed that nine out of ten Manitobans are in favour of keeping

Manitoba Hydro publicly-owned. Two out of three Manitobans feel that the privatization of Manitoba Hydro is an important issue that should be debated during the election.

Across Manitoba, there are billboards encouraging voters to ask party leaders where they stand on the hydro privatization issue. The billboards, combined with a comprehensive report by the CCPA, *Power Struggle: Manitoba Hydro and the Spectre of Privatization* have successfully established energy privatization as a key issue in the provincial election.

**CUPE.CA/MANITOBA**

■ Liam Martin

### INTERVIEW

## A final interview with Claude Généreux, as National Secretary-Treasurer of CUPE

**PIERRE DUCASSE:** Claude, very soon you will be leaving your duties as National Secretary-Treasurer. Looking to the future, what do you see as the major challenges CUPE must prepare for?

**CLAUDE GÉNÉREUX:** First of all, as a union, we can no longer take anything for granted. As we have seen in the case of Canada Post and Air Canada, the federal government with its threats of special legislation, does not accept the principle of collective bargaining. This calls to mind the 1981 strike in the United States by air traffic controllers, who were crushed by Reagan—it was a major setback for union rights. We must counter the decline and continuous waning of the union movement that we have witnessed for close to thirty years.

It is also disturbing to see the disproportionate role of the speculative economy. We have a kind of "financial hyperreality" that is adversely affecting real jobs. The crisis we experienced and the public debt are the consequences of the folly of certain "financial engineers" who wanted to make billions through mere speculation, not through the creation of real wealth.

Thirdly, I would underscore the dangers of free-trade agreements, such as those with various Latin American

and European countries. These agreements signify a return to a quasi-feudal, inequalitarian society. For example, in Mexico, ten people own ten per cent of the wealth of the entire country. Many private corporations would like to be able to use these trade agreements to get their hands on our public services. Also we need to continue the struggle against the privatization of resources, such as water.

Finally, I would mention the climate challenge. Social and economic justice implies that we are duty bound to protect our planet. Investments will need to be made to ensure a just transition to a green economy, while creating jobs. Our union must continue its actions to that end.

**PD:** In looking at the union movement generally and its challenges, what advice could you give for what lies ahead?

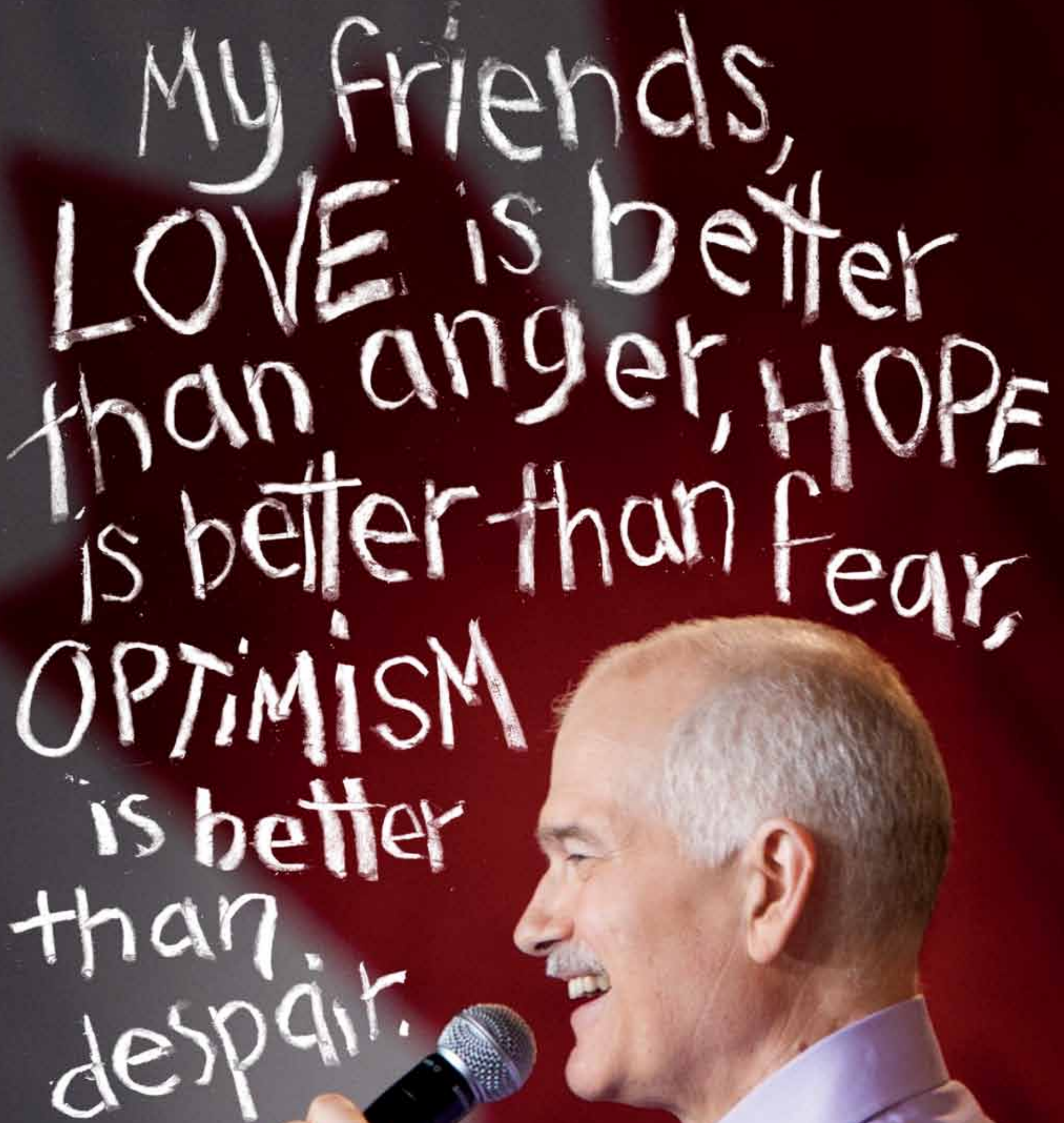
**CG:** First of all, the union movement must seriously think about ways to organize and communicate differently with its members. There are fewer "typical" jobs, such as industrial 9 to 5 jobs. More and more workers are in atypical, part-time or on-call jobs. Consider, for example, those who work in the area of home care. The union movement must adapt to these new realities.

Secondly, unions must not be reluctant to work closely with other allies of civil society, notably on issues of privatization. For example, private-sector unions undoubtedly gain from the existence of good public services.

Finally, the union movement has a duty to concern itself with issues that are not always confined to the immediate interests of its members. There are much broader social issues on which the union movement must act. I am thinking, for example, of tax justice, pensions and the lessening of social inequalities. The union must fight for everyone.

**CUPE.CA/PODCASTS**





My friends,  
LOVE is better  
than anger, HOPE  
is better than fear,  
OPTIMISM  
is better  
than  
despair.

SO LET US BE LOVING, HOPEFUL AND OPTIMISTIC.  
AND WE'LL CHANGE THE WORLD.

*Jack Layton – 1950-2011*