



Education support staff in New Brunswick went on a five-day hunger strike in May to bring attention to the lack of fairness and respect they receive from their employer. CUPE 2745 represents nearly 3,300 members who are educational support staff in New Brunswick schools and school district offices for the Department of Education. For more news from the regions, see *Work bytes*.

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CUPE National's quarterly publication

cupe.ca

Summer 2010

# Counterpoint

## Major win for public sewage treatment in B.C.



Keith Reynolds

Rally in front of the Capital Regional District offices in Victoria, before the key meeting where the elected directors made the final decision on sewage treatment. Kim Manton, far right, CUPE 1978 campaign coordinator and to her immediate left Randall Garrison, an elected councillor in Esquimalt who supports public sewage treatment.

BY ROSEANNE MORAN

The campaign for public sewage treatment in Greater Victoria had a major victory this spring. Despite intense pressure from the Campbell Liberal provincial government, which has a strong privatization agenda, local politicians adopted a plan that will see most sewage treatment and resource recovery be publicly delivered.

CUPE worked with local activists and community groups to raise the issue of how new treatment would be financed and operated. Mauricio Navarette, president of CUPE 1978, which represents Capital Regional

District (CRD) workers, said that CUPE's "Keep it Public" campaign, working with the Greater Victoria Water Watch Coalition and the Council of Canadians, went a long way to ensure public and environmentally sound sewage treatment.

The February 2010 business case developed by consultants Ernst & Young Orenda Inc. found that full public operation was slightly cheaper – even with a methodology skewed in favour of public-private partnerships (P3s). Local politicians also drew on the work of highly respected forensic accountant Ron Parks who CUPE

commissioned to analyse the business case. Parks' analysis used balanced assumptions, based on government's rate of borrowing and found that public procurement is much more affordable than a public-private partnership.

Throughout February and March, citizens and local businesses came out strongly in support of public sewage treatment, saying they would not be bullied by the provincial government. Many local contractors came forward with a message that "local business is good business," saying that P3 deals don't source locally and

often leave a mess in their wake. Local councillors heard them.

The next steps will see CUPE and community activists working to keep the issue of public operation on the agenda of the two Westshore communities of Langford and Colwood that have the option of adopting a P3 model.

"We know there is more to do, but it is important to acknowledge the residents and community activists who have made their voices heard, and the elected officials in the CRD who really listened," said CUPE BC president Barry O'Neill.

[cupe.ca/privatization](http://cupe.ca/privatization)

**CUPE** / Canadian Union  
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## Counterpoint

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# On hand to help re-build Haiti



**CUPE is working with the Confederation of Public and Private Sector Workers (CTSP), an affiliate of the Public Services International (PSI), to provide solidarity and support to the people of Haiti.**

BY S EBASTIEN GOULET

On May 7, National Secretary-Treasurer Claude G en ereux concluded a seven-day mission to support our Haitian counterparts with the Confederation of Public and Private Sector Workers (CTSP). He shares his observations on the situation in Port-au-Prince after the earthquake of January 12, 2010 and the trade union solidarity on the ground.

### **SG: What is life like in Port-au-Prince almost four months after the earthquake?**

CG: Life is very, very difficult. There is a lack of public services, which is a principle concern for CUPE. Here is a revealing example: the Champ-de-Mars is located directly in front of the ruins of the presidential palace and there, just like on much of the flat-lying terrain in the city, one observes an atrocious scene. There is an immense camp that is completely disorganized and anarchic. It is said that a picture is worth a thousand words, but in this case, no picture can fully capture the calamity.

Fortunately, I also noticed electricity-sector unions in the process of building a community. Of course, these were only temporary shelters, but they formed a well-organized little settlement of 700 to 800 persons. They set up community kitchens and a system for washing clothes; it's a start... a budding social order. This is why CUPE went there, along with many other unions from all over the Americas: in our own humble way, we all wanted to support Haitian unions.

### **SG: What circumstances do Haitian unions currently face?**

CG: I could see that union work, right there and then, was quite unique – and hard to understand from a Canadian perspective. It was not like the work we usually perform at the local level, which is, defending and negotiating working conditions. Instead, it involved trying to meet the basic needs of a society in which, due to the earthquake, 90,000 jobs have disappeared overnight. Thus, 90,000 members who had held good jobs were now

without work, most of them had no accommodation, and their children had no school.

### **SG: How will CUPE continue to support its counterparts?**

CG: We would like to support Haitian unions directly, on the ground, to generate local Haitian solutions taking into account the input provided by workers themselves. In this way, they will be able to develop a just and equitable society with high-quality public services.

Concretely, with the support of our global justice program and local unions, we intend to make available highly skilled CUPE members who, over the course of several months, will support Haitian unions on the ground. While maintaining contact with Canada, these experts will help the CTSP equip themselves with new offices, become functional again as an organization and amply provide its members with the assistance they need: food, housing, medical clinics and so on. Stay tuned!

[cupe.ca/video/genereux-haiti](http://cupe.ca/video/genereux-haiti)



# It's time to fix Canada's pension crisis



BY ALLISON GIFFORD

"Retiring with dignity is something everyone should be entitled to," says CUPE National President Paul Moist. "But across the country, millions of people are facing an uncertain future in retirement."

Right now in Canada, 11 million workers have no workplace pension plan. In the

the Canadian Labour Congress, CUPE is running a long-range campaign to push for national pension reform.

"Our current retirement system assumes that people will fend for themselves, and the results have been disastrous. But if our members and activists work hard to put pensions on the front burner, and if our political leaders

is secure through 2085, long after the current wave of baby boomers retire," says Moist.

A next step is to raise the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS). Over 200,000 seniors continue to struggle in poverty, and some 1.6 million have such low incomes that they are eligible for the GIS. Even with the GIS, many seniors are living just above the poverty line. An increase to the GIS would lift hundreds of thousands of pensioners out of poverty.

Finally, Moist says our federal and provincial leaders should work to enact tougher laws to protect existing pension plans. "We need better regulations to protect workers' pensions from bankruptcy, high-risk investments and employer underfunding. Working people – like those at Nortel – should never again have to pay for employer bankruptcies with their pensions."

Moist says Finance Minister Jim Flaherty is taking a positive step by holding consultations across the country regarding pensions. However, these meetings have largely excluded workers, and the minister has not committed to taking any concrete action.

"What is needed is swift action on pension reform. The retirement future of this generation and the next depends on it."

## For a more secure future please:

- Go to [cupe.ca/pensions/campaign](http://cupe.ca/pensions/campaign).
- Speak with your family and friends and ask them to sign the petition.
- Urge your CUPE local to endorse the pension campaign.
- Visit [canadianlabour.ca/action-center](http://canadianlabour.ca/action-center).

## Right now in Canada, 11 million workers have no workplace pension plan. In the private sector, just one in five workers belongs to an employer pension plan.

private sector, just one in five workers belongs to an employer pension plan.

Within CUPE, 30 per cent of the membership is not part of any pension plan. "Those who oppose decent pensions go out of their way to misrepresent public sector workers' pensions. But public sector workers make significant contributions to their plans, and in the end, they're hardly gold-plated. An average pension for a 30-year employee would be around \$17,900 a year."

CUPE has made it a priority to lobby for better pensions for all Canadians. Working with

have the will, we can start fixing Canada's pension crisis right away," says Moist.

A first step is to expand the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) to help Canadians save more. An expanded CPP would mean improved benefits for the 93 per cent of Canadians who make CPP contributions, and it would not penalize workers who change jobs.

"Perhaps most importantly, the CPP is safe, easy and secure. Management and administrative costs are a fraction of those charged by mutual fund companies. And the CPP

### Positive first step on pensions

At time of press both Federal Finance Minister Flaherty and Ontario's Finance Minister Duncan praised the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) as a secure, portable and well-managed retirement system. They acknowledged that government has a major role to play in ensuring retirement security for Canadians, and that an expansion of the CPP is the best way to do it.

Right now, CPP payments are only \$6,000 to \$11,000 per year. CUPE recommends benefits be expanded to a maximum of \$22,000 per year.

# Poll shows strong support for health care providers

## 70 per cent fear bad contracts will make health care provider shortage worse.



BY BETH SMILLIE

A new poll shows strong public support for health care providers in their contract dispute with the Saskatchewan government and health employers.

The Viewpoints Research Survey commissioned by CUPE and two partner unions, shows 61 per cent of Saskatchewan residents support health care providers, while only 22 per cent

support the government and health employers.

The poll also shows 70 per cent worry the shortage of health care providers will get even worse unless contract improvements are made.

Saskatchewan's 25,000 health care providers have been without new collective agreements for more than two years. The province's health care providers include special

care aides, licensed practical nurses, food services workers, laundry, housekeeping and activity personnel, maintenance, administrative, clerical, therapeutic and recreational workers, and medical technologists and technicians.



# Work bytes



**Saskatchewan's 25,000 health care providers have been without new collective agreements for more than two years. Thousands of health care workers came out to protest at the legislature.**

## British Columbia

CUPE locals in K-12 served notice to bargain with employers on June 1<sup>st</sup> and a number of university locals served notice on March 31. Both sectors are working in a tightly coordinated manner and are continuing public awareness campaigns. CUPE's community social services workers began negotiations through their bargaining association on May 13.

In the municipal sector, CUPE locals continued to fight contracting out efforts, including community arenas where some municipalities are trying to hire private food services. Also of concern is the "backdoor privatization" of corporations such as Catalyst Paper, which has cut a deal with Powell River to process the municipality's wastewater and be paid enough for the service to cover their corporate tax burden.

Meanwhile, the B.C. government continues its attack on public ambulance services by cutting the equivalent of 36 full-time CUPE 873 paramedics and 14 ambulances in the Greater Vancouver area, despite a forecast of 29,000 more 911 calls over the next year.

[cupe.ca/britishcolumbia](http://cupe.ca/britishcolumbia)

## Alberta

With the race to replace retiring Calgary Mayor Dave Bronconnier gearing up, CUPE 38 (Calgary inside workers) is getting involved.

"There's one candidate in particular who's made it clear he wants to sell off public services if he becomes mayor," said CUPE 38 president Peter Marsden. "Our members care about the public services we deliver, and we want to make sure they are preserved for all Calgarians to enjoy."

The local has launched a radio ad campaign designed to raise issues and get supporters of public services active in the municipal election, set for October 18.

However, CUPE 38 is not the only local getting involved in Alberta's municipal election race. Other Calgary locals (as part of the Calgary Civic Coalition) are also taking a keen interest in the elections. CUPE 474 and CUPE 3550 are both working to elect better public school trustees in Edmonton (candidates include former CUPE 3550 president Tina Jardine) and Alberta regional director Dianne Wyntjes is seeking a seat on the Red Deer City Council.

[cupe.ca/alberta](http://cupe.ca/alberta)

## Saskatchewan

A campaign by CUPE school workers in Saskatchewan to stop the cuts to teaching assistants is gathering steam. The government's controversial plan proposes to cut 75 per cent of the province's education assistants (EAs) over the next seven years, as it implements a new model for special needs students. The proposal calls for fewer education assistants in the classroom, but more professionals such as psychologists and social workers in the school system.

Increasing the number of professionals would improve access, but they are no substitute for EAs, who work with students on a daily basis in the classroom. Last month, the Education Ministry requested a meeting with the CUPE Education Workers' Steering Committee, after the union organized a public forum in Regina and circulated a leaflet to 40,000 households.

This is the first time the Saskatchewan Party wants to meet with CUPE!

[cupe.ca/saskatchewan](http://cupe.ca/saskatchewan)

## Manitoba

CUPE activists received assurances that the Winnipeg water utility will remain publically

owned, financed and operated. The Manitoba government assured CUPE that it has no intention of permitting the privatization of Winnipeg's water supply under any circumstance.

The same cannot be said of the Winnipeg sewage plants. Winnipeg City Council has voted to sign a 30-year deal that gives water multinational Veolia a say in managing and operating two sewage plants.

The deal, which is shrouded in secrecy, is seen by many as a covert P3.

City council approved the contract without councillors or the public seeing the details. CUPE and other citizens' groups criticized the move to privatize and highlighted Veolia's environmental and social track record in other communities.

[cupe.ca/manitoba](http://cupe.ca/manitoba)

## Ontario

Across the province, CUPE members are confronting governments determined to use tough economic times to extract concessions from workers.

In spite of this challenging environment, CUPE members and their local union leaders aren't giving up on communities. All over Ontario, members are





**The Common Front, representing unions in the public and parapublic sectors, rallied 75,000 people to support its demands in a massive demonstration in downtown Montreal.**

organizing, speaking out and making progress.

In early April in Windsor, hundreds of concerned citizens attended a public forum sponsored by CUPE, the labour council and the Council of Canadians. Speakers, including CUPE National President Paul Moist, discussed the city's direction under anti-union Mayor Eddie Francis.

Major campaigns across virtually every sector continue to draw interest. A recent tour highlighting competitive bidding in the home care sector generated public interest wherever it stopped.

[cupe.ca/ontario](http://cupe.ca/ontario)

#### Quebec

At time of press, negotiations continue between the Charest government and the Common Front – representing unions in the public and parapublic sectors including CUPE. Discussions went on beyond the target date of March 31, and on April 20, the labour unions requested the intervention of a mediator.

The Common Front represents 475,000 employees. It is demanding a three-year work contract with annual increments of 3.75 per cent. On March 20,

it rallied 75,000 people to support its demands in a massive demonstration in downtown Montreal.

[cupe.ca/quebec](http://cupe.ca/quebec)

#### New Brunswick

After months of rallies and demonstrations in front of the New Brunswick legislature, the New Brunswick government finally backed away from the sale of NB Power to Hydro-Québec. CUPE members across the province actively participated in this lobby against the sale of New Brunswick's public asset. This is a major victory for labour and community activists who worked together to fight off the sale of NB Power. The "Don't sell NB Power" campaign is a prime example of how unions can motivate members around major issues.

[cupe.ca/newbrunswick](http://cupe.ca/newbrunswick)

#### Prince Edward Island

CUPE PEI organized its first ever Wage Summit last March. The summit helped to mobilize members on the right to free collective bargaining and the importance to fight back collectively against the wave of wage freeze policies. The members came out of the

summit with a plan of action that includes working with our allies in labour to push back on any attempt by the government to freeze public sector wages.

[cupe.ca/pei](http://cupe.ca/pei)

#### Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia Premier Darrell Dexter used the CUPE Nova Scotia convention to announce his government is committed to a ban on the purchasing of bottled water for provincial facilities that have potable water. This makes Nova Scotia the first province to adopt such a measure.

More than 200 delegates and guests from the convention, including the two national officers, joined community members in Sydney to commemorate April 28, the National Day of Mourning. The event was held at the Whitney Pier Legion – near the infamous Sydney Tar Ponds.

[cupe.ca/novascotia](http://cupe.ca/novascotia)

#### Newfoundland and Labrador

CUPE NL amended its constitution to ensure women are represented on its executive board. The amendment ensures that if a male is elected president then the vice-president shall be female and vice-versa. It also

stipulates that at least one of the three executive officers shall be female.

Ten months into a strike against Vale-Inco, steelworkers in Labrador have received a \$25,000 boost from their sister union, CUPE. Delegates to the CUPE NL convention in Corner Brook dug deep into their pockets and locals pledged \$12,855 for the strikers. National President Paul Moist, who was attending convention, pledged to match that amount to bring it over the \$25,000 mark.

[cupe.ca/newfoundland](http://cupe.ca/newfoundland)

#### Hospital Employees' Union

The Hospital Employees' Union (HEU) says B.C.'s health authorities will be hard-pressed to deliver services to the public at current levels this year because of continued underfunding.

Funding contained in the March 2 provincial budget barely covers the \$360 million in service cuts health authorities were forced to make over the last year.

Since 2001, B.C. has fallen from second to eighth place among Canadian provinces in its per capita support for health care.

[heu.org](http://heu.org)





John Swansburg

**CUPE Nova Scotia equity vice-president Liz Paris stands outside the Roseland Theatre, where Viola Desmond made history in 1946.**

## CUPE activist fights racism

By JOHN MCCrackEN

CUPE Nova Scotia's equity vice-president, Liz Paris, says the Dexter government's pardoning of Viola Desmond on trumped up, racist-based charges from 1946 is long overdue and welcomed by all African Nova Scotians.

Paris, a nursing home worker in the town of New Glasgow where the now infamous event took place, is a distant cousin of Desmond on her grandfather, John Jack Desmond's side.

The family settled in Guysborough County as Empire Loyalists. In more recent times, the Paris family is well known for its annual March 21 "Run Against Racism" event in Pictou County.

On November 8, 1946, Viola Desmond refused to sit in the balcony designated exclusively for blacks in the Roseland Theatre in New Glasgow. Instead, she took her seat on the ground floor where only white people

were allowed to sit. After being forcibly removed from the theatre and arrested, Desmond was eventually found guilty of not paying the one-cent difference in tax on the balcony ticket from the main floor theatre ticket. She was fined \$20 and court costs of six dollars. She paid the fine but decided to fight the charge in court.

During subsequent trials the government insisted on arguing this was a case of tax evasion. For her crime of so-called tax evasion, she was removed from the theatre, thrown in jail overnight, tried without counsel, convicted and fined.

Paris believes the historic move by the Dexter government will now give Viola Desmond her rightful place in history. But Paris cautions much more anti-racism work needs to be done, starting with the school system and in the broader community.

## National Executive Board highlights from June meeting

### National Chief Shawn-A-In-Chut Atleo

The Board was honoured to have the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations meet with us. National Chief Atleo shared his vision of ensuring education at all levels in Aboriginal communities as the primary way out of poverty. He expressed a commitment to working with CUPE as we share fundamental values of justice, respect and solidarity. We spoke with him about our shared commitment to the environment, water, economic justice, education and prevention of violence against women. We are looking forward to many collaborations with the Assembly of First Nations.

### Solidarity with Haitian Unions

A very moving report was received from Brother Claude Généreux on his visit to Haiti from April 30 to May 6, 2010. He described conditions of the devastation which remains months after the earthquake, including almost two million people left homeless, food and water shortages, and women and children left particularly vulnerable. Our union is committed to working with our sister union (Confederation of Public and Private Sector Workers) to respond and assist, based on the principles of solidarity (not charity), dignity and respect for our Haitian sisters and brothers.

### Call for Bank Taxes/Financial Transaction Taxes

Working people are paying for the costs of the economic crisis through cuts to public services, cuts to public wages and increases to user fees, and regressive taxes in Canada and around the world. At the same time, the profits of the financial sector continue to skyrocket, and their contributions to taxes decreases.

The National Executive Board adopted a resolution which commits CUPE to campaigning and lobbying for the introduction of new financial transaction taxes on the banking and financial industry.

### Economic Climate for Bargaining – The New Grecian Formula – Still Toxic

In the wake of the financial crisis, there is growing alarmism about a public debt crisis rocking Greece and other countries in Europe. These overblown concerns are being used as an excuse to introduce long-planned cuts to public spending, structural reforms and increases to the retirement age. We must not let our guard down in Canada if we want to prevent that agenda from taking hold here.

You can check out where your province sits in terms of wage adjustments as the Canadian economy grows faster than expected coming out of the recession. Find out details on all this and more by accessing the quarterly report at [www.cupe.ca](http://www.cupe.ca).

## Tweets for justice

By COLLEEN REYNOLDS

On May 11, CUPE participated in the first ever Tweet-In at Parliament Hill. The Tweet-In for Colombia was a huge success, with 25 labour people attending inside the Commons trade committee to hear witnesses on Bill C-2 for the Canada-Colombia Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

With our allies who oppose the controversial deal, we

reached 25,000 people and made the Canada-Colombia FTA the number two trending issue on Twitter during the event. The successful electronic lobby stopped Harper's Conservatives from shutting down debate on the agreement.

Twitter allows us to send (tweet) messages up to 140 characters long. For example, each time a story is posted to

the front page of [cupe.ca](http://cupe.ca) we tweet a caption with a link to the story.

One of the advantages of Twitter is the ability to create "communities" of people interested in the same topics. Twitter also allows us to re-tweet messages sent out by others, a huge advantage when trying to quickly grow an audience around an issue or event. In essence,

each tweet becomes part of a conversation.

The CUPE Twitter account is [cupenat](https://twitter.com/cupenat) and judging by the success of the first Tweet-In, CUPE is part of many important "conversations" and Twitter is a valuable communications tool for our action campaigns.

Join the CUPE Twitter feed at [twitter.com/cupenat](https://twitter.com/cupenat).



## Days to celebrate

### June

National Aboriginal Day on June 21 is a day of celebration where all nations within Canada recognize the important contributions that the First Peoples (First Nations, Métis and Inuit) have made to Canada. While June 21 is a day of celebration, we must not forget that governments and the corporate interests they serve have not taken into consideration the deplorable conditions faced by First Peoples. First Peoples communities across Canada are currently involved in actions aimed at increasing awareness. [cupe.ca/aboriginal](http://cupe.ca/aboriginal)



### Summer Pride

CUPE is committed to fighting injustice and strives for equality for all of its members, regardless of gender, race, ethnic origin, disability or sexual orientation. This summer the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) community will show their pride across Canada.

[xtra.ca/public/National/Pride](http://xtra.ca/public/National/Pride)

### Labour Day

Labour Day is a great time for workers and employers to stop and consider where we came from, where we stand, and how we can continue to move forward. Despite all the work we have done together, and how far we have come, workers continue to fight to protect fundamental democratic values, traditions and institutions. September 6 is Labour Day, contact your CUPE local to find out how you can participate in the celebrations.



David Smiley

## Toronto paramedic makes list of 100 most influential people in the world

By PAT DALEY

Toronto paramedic Rahul Singh is one of the 100 people who have most affected the world, according to *Time* magazine.

But, says the founder of GlobalMedic, "the honour is not about me. The honour is about the team."

Singh, a member of CUPE 416 in Toronto for the last eight years, founded GlobalMedic in 1998. Members of his team were among the first disaster responders on the ground after a massive earthquake hit Haiti. An essay

by Haitian Prime Minister Jean-Max Bellerive praising Singh and GlobalMedic will appear in *Time* magazine.

GlobalMedic is made up of paramedics, police and firefighters who provide rescue and water purification services in disasters and are involved in capacity building at other times. Teams have travelled to countries like Iraq and Sri Lanka at the request of the United Nations to train medics as part of projects like landmine removal.

"Paramedics are the crux of the organization because, with

their medical background, it is easier to train them in rescue and water purification," said Singh, noting that many of GlobalMedic's volunteers from around Ontario are CUPE members. "If you look at unions across the board, this is another form of union members working on social justice. They're out there helping people who might otherwise die."

For CUPE members who would like to support the organization, Singh suggests directing United Way contributions to GlobalMedic. [globalmedic.ca](http://globalmedic.ca)

## Celebrating 10 years of workplace literacy

By CATHERINE LOULI

International Literacy Day is September 8 and CUPE has a long history of direct involvement in workplace literacy, including our national literacy program established in 2000. This year we celebrate 10 years of literacy activism in CUPE. Literacy has been a union issue for a long time as part of the struggle for workers' rights. Literacy continues to be an issue for workers today – four in ten working age Canadians do not have the

literacy skills they need to meet the ever-increasing demands of today's world. Over the past 10 years, thousands of CUPE members have participated in workplace literacy programs across the country.

Literacy is more than reading and writing. To keep working, workers are increasingly required to be "computer literate," to handle new technology and new quality and safety standards. These needs are generally not being met. "A workplace skills

program says that our union is about more than bargaining and servicing. It makes the union relevant to more people and strengthens our union as a whole," said CUPE National President Paul Moist.

CUPE's literacy program has maintained two goals over the years. The first goal is to create learning opportunities for workers and the second is to make unions and workplaces more accessible through clear language. [cupe.ca/literacy](http://cupe.ca/literacy)



# FTT, FAT, Robin Hood Tax – an idea whose time has come



Canadians pay tax on most things they buy. We're not arguing with that. Taxes fund a lot of important public services that we all depend on and benefit from. But when banks, stock brokers and speculators buy and sell financial products in Canada, they don't pay a cent of tax on those transactions. A tiny tax of 0.05 per cent – only \$500 on a \$1 million transaction – could raise an estimated \$500 billion a year globally. This could be used to better regulate global finance, help the poorest in the world and fight climate change.

## BY TOBY SANGER

Prime Minister Harper and Finance Minister Flaherty continue to block efforts to make banks pay for some of the costs of the global meltdown.

Now, with Canada hosting major world powers at the G20 meetings in Toronto in late June, they are doing everything in their power to derail international efforts to reach an agreement on any form of new tax on banks and the financial sector.

Most other major world leaders—including President Obama and the leaders of France, Germany and the U.K.—have spoken out in favour of new taxes or levies on banks and finance. These taxes would both help to pay for some of the costs of the financial crisis and help prevent another financial crisis from happening.

Many countries already have taxes like these within their own borders but they tend to be small and limited. Because finance

is so mobile, it is essential to have international agreement to introduce a more effective tax.

There are a few different proposals out there. One of the most popular has been dubbed the "Robin Hood Tax." It would be a very small tax on financial transactions—only 0.05 per cent, or \$500 on a \$1 million transaction—but because trillions of dollars are traded by banks and speculators every day, it could raise about \$500 billion or more every year around the world.

The Robin Hood Tax proposal would have half the revenue going to each country's national needs, with one quarter going to fight poverty around the world and the other quarter to address climate change. Environmental groups such as the David Suzuki Foundation and many international aid organizations are strongly in support—including CUPE members at Oxfam who are leading the Robin Hood Tax Campaign.

Many prominent economists also support this type of tax, including Nobel Prize winners Joseph Stiglitz, Paul Krugman, James Tobin and many others. The idea has been around since at least the 1930s when John Maynard Keynes, the greatest economist of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, proposed a financial transactions tax to reduce speculation.

There's wide agreement that the financial industry needs to be reined in: both better regulated and most think it should face higher taxes. Harper and Flaherty are obstructing a global deal on this because they claim it would be unfair to "penalize" Canadian banks with higher taxes.

Instead, their government is forcing public sector workers and ordinary Canadians to pay for the costs of the financial crisis through public service cutbacks and wage freezes.

How fair is that?

**Check out the great videos and other material at:**

[robinhoodtax.org.uk](http://robinhoodtax.org.uk)

[robinhoodtax.ca](http://robinhoodtax.ca)

[makefinancework.org](http://makefinancework.org)



## The communities we want

In May, CUPE took its vision for strong, healthy and green communities to the annual Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) conference. CUPE's delegation took part in plenaries, workshops and social events, and handed out information to municipal leaders.

CUPE's materials highlighted the central role public services, green jobs, expanded pensions and strong local democracy play in building the communities we all want.

Download CUPE's FCM materials at [cupe.ca/fcm](http://cupe.ca/fcm).