

ORGANIZE

LABOUR RIGHTS, HUMAN RIGHTS

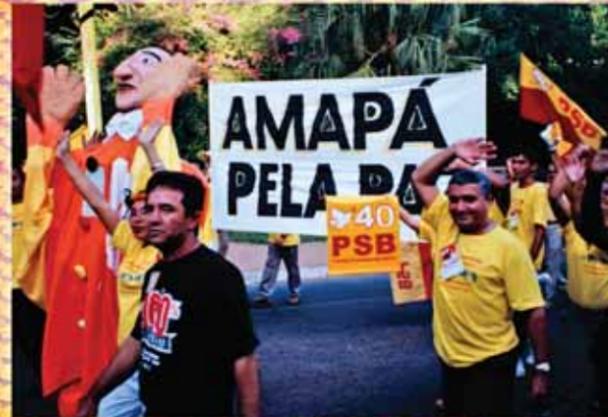


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“What we desire for ourselves, we wish for all.”



Paul Moist at a medicare rally in Regina in October.

This issue of Organize coincides with our union's first National Human Rights Conference in Vancouver.

CUPE has always been about much more than organizing, bargaining and servicing the membership. Throughout our history, we have espoused the broadest principles of social trade unionism.

Today, more than ever, our beliefs reflect concern for the rights and interests of a broad spectrum of people in Canada and abroad. Political, economic, social,

cultural and religious rights around the world have and continue to be CUPE struggles.

CUPE workplace contracts have changed significantly to reflect human rights concerns in recent years. Today, many agreements contain comprehensive “no discrimination” clauses. Legislated pay equity plans are a reality in some jurisdictions and remain a priority as we seek to end discriminatory pay practices. Meanwhile, many pension and benefit plans now recognize the rights of same-sex partners. Human rights are at the core of these breakthroughs.

I often hear our members on picket lines and in demonstrations chanting, “health care is a human right”. We share that view, which is why CUPE is fighting for quality public services that are available to all, regardless of wealth.

In a world where millions of workers are denied basic human dignity, let alone trade union rights, we have an obligation to support our sisters and brothers in other countries. That's why CUPE helps South American health care and factory workers. It's why we are committed to combating

the HIV/AIDS pandemic. It's why we provide financial aid to places hit by devastating natural disasters. It's why, with our allies, we demand clean, affordable water for all. And it's why we want peace in the Middle East. Each of these activities has its basis in fundamental human rights.

At CUPE, “human rights” isn't a fashionable catch phrase. It's something we practice in the workplace, in our lobbying and in our global justice work. In the famous words of Canadian social reformer and politician J. S. Woodsworth, “What we desire for ourselves, we wish for all. To this end, may we take our share in the world's work and the world's struggles.”

In solidarity,

Paul Moist

Paul Moist
National President

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By Anne Marie Aikins



ORGANIZE

Renewing the fight for public health care

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National Secretary-Treasurer Claude Généreux handed out cake at a Charlottetown hospital to celebrate Tommy Douglas' birthday Oct. 20.



CUPE NS president Danny Cavanagh with Debbie Kelly, Chair of the N.S. Citizen's Health Care Network.

If the Stephen Harper's government has done one good thing for Canada, it's that their policies have revitalized major lobby groups like the Canadian Health Coalition (CHC).

CUPE National's health care issues committee has developed an action plan aimed at protecting, improving and expanding public health care in the lead-up to the next federal election.

"Stephen Harper's Conservatives are vulnerable on health care," National President Paul Moist said in a recent letter to CUPE division leaders "Their only health care priority was to introduce wait time guarantees."

Since February 2006, CUPE and other unions and social groups have been meeting to lobby for the protection, expansion and improvement of public health care in Canada. The new campaign is called "Medicare Works".

The level of cooperation is almost unprecedented. After signing a solidarity statement in May of 2006 under CUPE's leadership, more than 14 major unions and social groups began to organize town hall meetings across the country together with provincial health coalitions (click on www.medicare.ca for the details about town halls in your area).

At the town hall meetings, workers and community members hear about how the public health care system works, but also how large corporate interests are attacking it.

The gatherings also encourage organizing for local lobbies and actions. The coalition also distributes flyers and action kits. (Click on www.cupe.ca to download your copy of the flyer and Action Kit.)

Among other recent initiatives, health coalition activists celebrated Tommy Douglas' birthday on Oct. 20 with events in cities across Canada. They also lobbied their Members of Parliament during National Medicare Week, Nov. 13-18.

Public health care is under attack in Canada. Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec and parts of the east coast have suffered the most. The federal government has allowed provinces to contract out health care jobs such as food delivery, cleaning, maintenance, laundry, administration and other services. CUPE members held many of these positions.

When they find themselves working for private companies, they can expect their wages to drop, sometimes by as much as 50 per cent. In addition, private corporation employees are often poorly trained and work in unsafe conditions, compromising the quality services so essential to good health care.

"Medicare works and we need to keep it public and keep it fair," says Moist, who in September spoke on a panel on health care and privatization organized by the CHC at the federal New Democrats' convention in Quebec City.

"We are saying that innovation and improvement can be done within the public system. We are not going to let any government dismantle this country's most cherished social program. Our voices will be heard whenever and wherever politicians and vested economic interests gather to undermine our country's best expression of democracy and compassion." ■



CUPE Quebec president Mario Gervais, CUPE BC president Barry O'Neill, CUPE PEI president Donalda MacDonald, Claude Généreux, Paul Moist, and general VP Rick MacMillan.

Building for our future

The gold-painted shovels that CUPE's national officers sunk into the ground on Sept. 19, 2006, marked the start of construction on CUPE's new national headquarters, scheduled to open in late 2007. The groundbreaking ceremony also marked a brand new chapter in our union's history.

Claude Généreux, national secretary-treasurer, is extremely proud of the project and of the process behind its development.

"This project represents several years of planning to accommodate our growing organization and look to the future while building our members' financial equity," he says.

CUPE National has outgrown its downtown Ottawa location at 21 Florence Street, which it has occupied since 1980. After studying several options, including retrofitting, expanding the existing space and even leasing, it was decided that purchasing land and erecting a new, custom-designed building would be the most practical and economically-sound solution.

"We wanted a building that would be environmentally friendly, safe in every way and an excellent investment of our

members' money," explains Généreux. "This one meets all our requirements and more. And opting for purchasing instead of leasing will result in long term savings."

The projected \$20-million headquarters, which is being built using unions labour, will be located in the city's east end, close to public transit. The building was planned with, and will be built on, the solid foundation of CUPE's values of progressive social unionism and its commitment to being a progressive employer.

"For example, when completed, the building will be one of the greenest buildings in Ottawa, constructed according to the highest environmental standards for heating, lighting and land use," notes Généreux. "But it won't just be green – we'll be taking into consideration all the technology and construction techniques that will ensure it's safe and durable, too."

The new building will also feature ample work and meeting space to allow the union to accommodate future growth.

"CUPE has always prided itself on being a community leader," says Généreux. "With this building, we are providing a strong example to the public sector and business." ■

Patterns emerging as NWTTF investigates barriers in the workplace

Clear patterns in women's activism and union participation are emerging from initial national women's task force consultations with members.

NWTF member Lucie Levasseur says that while it's still early in the process, the Quebec working group has noticed certain trends.

"We'd always suspected that the reasons women aren't more active in their locals are very different from why there aren't more women leaders at the provincial and national levels," Levasseur says.

"As we talk to more women, our suspicions are being confirmed. At the local level, the barriers tend to be more systemic.

Women have a limited amount of time and they tend to spend that time with their families. It's a question of values and priorities. Either they're not interested in attending union meetings in the evenings, or they can't because they have to take care of the kids. In the vast majority of cases, women are still the primary caregivers, especially in the evenings."

Levasseur says locals can address this problem by holding meetings at different times or by providing child care. The solutions may not be so simple at the higher levels of the union, where the barriers become more structural and perceptual.

"The problem is that the provincial and national leadership right now is visibly very male," says Levasseur. "Women see this and think it's a man's world. It's the same thing on our convention floors, which tend to be dominated by men. Women just don't feel welcome."

She says women also have uneasy, complex relationships with positions of power and authority, especially as they are set up in the union. The NWTTF consultations and survey will be examining these and other issues throughout the fall.

■ **Natasha Gauthier**

CUPE remembers departed family members

CUPE is mourning the recent loss of several members of its family.

In August, **Tom O'Leary**, past president of CUPE Newfoundland and Labrador, died in hospital at the age of 67. A municipal worker in St. John's, Nfld., O'Leary rose through the ranks to become a member of CUPE's national executive board, where he served for 12 years. A fiery defendant of workers' rights, he was also the president of his own local, CUPE 569, for more than 20 years.

In September, former Hospital Employees' Union president **W.D. ("Bill") Black** passed away peacefully at the age of 90. A former tradesman at Royal Columbian Hospital in British Columbia, Black was president from 1968-80.

In October, **Beverly Smale**, a national servicing representative, died suddenly at the age of 47. Only a few days later, Quebec regional director **Lucie Richard** lost her battle with cancer. She was 56.

Smale joined CUPE in 1979 as a nurses' aide at the Stratford General Hospital. In 1982 she was elected president of her local, CUPE 424. She also served as an area vice-president for the Ontario Council of Hospital Unions. She became a national rep in 1990, joining the Ottawa office in 1997.

Richard became involved with the union at Laval University in Quebec City

in the 1960s. In 1981, she was elected president of her local, CUPE 2500, representing workers at the university. In 1984, she was elected president of CUPE Quebec. Two years later she became a union representative. In 1993, she became the union's public sector co-ordinator. In 2002, she was named assistant director of CUPE Quebec and became director in February 2006. She was also a vice-president of the Quebec Federation of Labour.

National President Paul Moist and National Secretary-Treasurer Claude Généreux express their condolences on behalf of the executive and all members. ■



Giving back

United Way labour representative Ken Clavette presented CUPE National President Paul Moist with a plaque recognizing our members' generosity. CUPE members gave more than \$1 million to the United Way this year through their workplaces, their locals and other organizations.

National reps in training



Twelve new national servicing representatives from across Canada recently underwent an intensive three-week training course in Ottawa. The popular "Trainee Rep" program is offered by the national organizing and regional services department.

Front row, L to R: Laura Delhenty, Cheryl Colborne, Marta Posada, Sharon Small, Greg Ingram. Back row, L to R: Tina Meadows, Louise Firlotte, Kim Cail, Rob Jandric, Kim Aschenbrenner, Suanne Hawkins, Lee McLeod.

Flight staff ratio to remain at 1:40

Airline passengers in Canada can feel a little more secure, thanks in part to a vigorous four-year CUPE campaign.

On Sept. 22, the federal government announced that it will not cut flight attendant minimum crews on aircraft with more than 50 seats, something the industry has been lobbying for.

"This has been a long struggle," said Pamela Sachs, president of CUPE's Air Canada component, representing 8,750 cabin personnel.

Canadian airline safety standards dictate that aircraft operate with a minimum of one flight attendant for every 40 passengers on board. Airlines fought hard in 1995 to win the right to fly the 50-seat Bombardier

regional jet and similar aircraft with only one flight attendant. Ever since, airlines have been pushing to expand the 1:50 ratio to include other aircraft in the fleet.

"This victory shows the power we have when we work together," said National President Paul Moist. "Over the past four years, CUPE has exerted a full court press to make our case heard in Ottawa. All levels of the union worked together in this campaign: at the component level, at the local level, with our health and safety representatives, with our other airline division members and with the financial assistance and resources of CUPE National."

"We are convinced that our efforts to reach Members of Parliament about how

this rule change would hurt passenger safety helped the government to make the right decision," added National Secretary-Treasurer Claude Généreux. "We had the support of all three opposition parties. Even members of the Conservative caucus supported us."

"This became a grassroots safety issue that could not be ignored by the government", said Sachs. "We will need to be vigilant and continue to defend passenger safety against renewed attempts to cut crew minimums and harmonize with American standards."

■ **Sandra Sorensen**

Campaigning for communities

Whether running for office or working behind the scenes, many CUPE members and staff were involved in this fall's municipal elections. **Karin Jordan** speaks to a few.

CUPE members were on the campaign trail this fall, working to elect progressive municipal and school board representatives in Ontario, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Prince Edward Island and the Northwest Territories.

Changing who's in charge on a city council or school board can make a difference for CUPE members and for communities.

"I look at this election as me choosing my bosses," says Gerry Flood, a school board worker who chairs CUPE Manitoba's political action committee.

Some CUPE members took the most direct route to change by running for office. In Yellowknife, NWT, First Air flight attendant and CUPE member Mary Lou Cherwaty has been acclaimed a school board trustee. Cherwaty is also the president of the Northern Territories Federation of Labour.

In Ontario, Shawn Wilson, from CUPE 1287 in the Niagara region, was one of several members who ran for a position on their town council.

In July, CUPE national representative Greg Mandzuk was re-elected as one of four town councillors for Winnipeg Beach.

In Yorkton, Sask., nursing home special care aide Kerry Bewcyk made his first bid for city council.

"I'd like to be part of how things run, and get things right," says Bewcyk, a CUPE 4980 member. "I want to protect public services, improve labour relations and stop the mishandling of tax dollars. He points to outsourced city jobs that could be done cheaper and better by municipal workers.



Municipal government is all about community, which makes it the ideal spot for Marlene Hunt. She ran for town council in Cornwall, PEI. It was her first run at council, but the education assistant and CUPE 3260 member has run for the provincial New Democrats before.

"It's such an important and responsive place for social activists to get involved," she says. "You take on local issues, and you get things done."

Strong coalition building is key to electing worker-friendly municipal representatives. In Regina, CUPE is part of the Coalition for a Citizen Friendly Regina (CCFR). The coalition was formed last October with a strategic eye on the upcoming municipal elections.

A year later, the CCFR had a solid platform and a slate of council and school board candidates including former CUPE Saskatchewan regional director Jim Holmes, who was running for mayor.

"For a real shoestring coalition driven by volunteer workers, I think we've done a lot. Things have really taken off," he says.

In Saskatchewan, these elections were seen as a good dress rehearsal for future campaigns.

"We're building for next time," says CUPE staff representative Aina Kagis, who's been deeply involved in the coalition from the start. "We're not just a one-election organization, this is a process of building."

"Regina has a big and growing aboriginal population," Holmes notes. "Yet the city has done poor job in terms of employment. When we talked with First Nations and Métis people, we found out they have a terrible relationship with city hall. There's a feeling that no-one will talk to them, no-one will address their concerns."

Hand-in-hand with the coalition's outreach, aboriginal CUPE members in Regina worked to get out the aboriginal vote. An August barbecue aimed at upping First Nations and Métis participation drew almost 650 people, says organizer Miranda Moran.

"The aboriginal participation rate is really low," she says. "Most people focus on elections on reserve and don't participate in municipal elections. "We're working to show them why it

matters, and get them involved." Moran is a Métis dietary worker at the Regina General Hospital and a member of CUPE 3967.

"In order to change the future, you need to vote," she says. "A lot of people complain about what happens afterward, but they have a chance to change things now." She adds that word is spreading to reserves and smaller communities across the province.

In Ontario, school board workers were organizing to elect trustees who'll stand up to a provincial funding formula that's created a crisis in education.

"We keep being asked to do more with less, but we can't do any more," says Frank Ventresca, chair of CUPE's Ontario school board coordinating committee and president of CUPE 4156.

"It's hurting the kids – whether it's cleaning, library support or education assistants, everything's been cut," says Ventresca, head caretaker at a Niagara elementary school.

Ventresca and other workers planned to educate trustees about the impact of cuts by bringing them to work for a day. He hopes the visit will inspire trustees to refuse provincial edicts to balance school budgets on the backs of workers and students. He's also clear the campaign doesn't stop after the school board elections – it just shifts targets to the provincial government.

The campaigns weren't easy. In Winnipeg, Gerry Flood tried to pump up the energy among members and combat what he sees as voter apathy.

"It's because we haven't experienced [privatization] as hard and fast [as other cities]," he admits. "But the writing on the wall shows it's coming unless we get it together."

While CUPE Manitoba members didn't get the results they wanted in Winnipeg, CUPE-supported trustees now hold the balance of power in the Turtle River School Division, including three spouses of CUPE support workers.

In PEI, Marlene Hunt had other concerns. She was trying to stay safe going door-to-door at night.

"It's one of the challenges being a woman candidate, for sure," she says. CUPE members and her 20-year-old son accompanied her as she tried to visit all 1,600 households before election day. She says running would be difficult without CUPE support, which included sponsoring her attendance to a campaign school for women candidates.

The Regina coalition had difficulty finding women to run for office this year. They're planning to improve next time and also want to increase participation from aboriginal people and people with disabilities.

"We have to figure out how people put their life on hold, in particular women," says Holmes. "To take on not just a double but a triple day." ■



All photos: CUPE 3967 in Regina held a BBQ to encourage aboriginal members to vote. Top left: Hitomi Suzuta, of the national women's task force. Bottom left: Aboriginal organizers Don Moran and his daughter, Miranda.





A new action plan for LGBT workers

In the summer edition of *Organize*, we reported on the Workers Out! conference for lesbian, gay, bi and trans workers and their unions. CUPE delegates came back from the event ready to make a difference thanks to a new global union action plan for LGBT workers.

Workers Out! was organized by Canadian and Quebec labour organizations, including the Canadian Labour Congress, the Quebec Labour Federation, the *Confédération des syndicats nationaux* and the *Centrale des syndicats du Québec*. It was part of a broader conference on LGBT human rights, which in turn was a major component of the 1st World Outgames, an international gathering of LGBT athletes and artists and their supporters being held in Montreal at the same time.

Here is an excerpt from the action plan:

The delegates to the third "Workers Out!" conference held in Montreal are:

- Aware that trade union conditions in each country may be very different, ranging from the right to organize recognized by charter, to imprisonment and death for anyone attempting to form a trade union;
- Aware that religious fundamentalism is a major obstacle to the progress of LGBT rights and that we need to take this into account in their work;
- Aware that the advancement of human rights and particularly those involving sexual orientation, sexual diversity and gender identity may be very different, ranging from full and complete recognition in some countries, to imprisonment and death in others;
- Aware that the notion of work can differ from one country to another, but unanimous that persecution, intimidation, harassment and criminalization are unacceptable for all LGBT communities, including sex workers;
- Aware that the specific reality in each country can have a significant positive or negative influence on the progress that the trade union movement can make in achieving the rights for lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgenders, transsexuals, transvestites and intersexuals.

The delegates recommend:

- The promotion of education concerning human rights and trade union rights to create awareness, prevention and elimination of prejudices and problems caused by discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and sexual diversity;
- The recognition by the Labour movement of LGBT rights and the fight against homophobia, lesbophobia and transphobia;
- The establishment of LGBT rights committees or groups within each local, national or international union structure;
- The negotiation of collective agreement clauses prohibiting any form of discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and sexual diversity, and ensuring that LGBT issues are included in the contents of collective bargaining, notably the recognition of same sex partners and their families, and by addressing the issue of harassment and bullying in the workplace;

- The establishment of HIV-AIDS policies in the workplace that respect the rights of infected and affected workers, and to recognize the double discrimination experienced by LGBT people living with HIV-AIDS;
- The involvement in political action targeting all levels of government in support of legislation and policy changes that recognize full equality and respect for LGBT people;
- The development of different forms of cooperation between unions in countries from the global north and those from the global south in order to reinforce the fight for recognition of LGBT rights in the workplace and in wider society.

The delegates recommend that the global unions, in particular the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, the World Congress of Labour, the forthcoming International Trade Union Confederation, the Global Union Federations and their respective regional organisations:

- Draw upon and distribute guidelines concerning the elimination of discrimination based on sexual orientation, sexual diversity and gender identity in the workplace;
- Distribute the guides and the best practices already in existence among unions throughout the world.

Also, the delegates request that their labour organisations require the International Labour Organization:

- To offer technical assistance to union and social partners in order to abolish discrimination against LGBTs in hiring, at work and on retirement;
- To develop and disseminate guidelines related to the elimination of discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity.

They also recommend that their respective unions ensure the follow-up of this work. ■

Labour Rights are Human Rights

In honour of CUPE's first Human Rights Conference, *Organize* takes a closer look at our union's history of human rights and equality work in Canada and around the world.

Anne Marie Aikins reports.

The guiding principle behind the work of the Canadian labour movement is well known: what we desire for ourselves, we wish for all.

This ideology supports CUPE's commitment to Canadian and international solidarity work, which has addressed every human rights issue from racism, gender discrimination and pay equity to homophobia and the rights of people with disabilities. But although we have made many advances, we know it's more important than ever before to fight for collective rights, both in Canada and abroad. It's why CUPE is hosting its first National Human Rights Conference in Vancouver, Nov. 23-26.

There's a natural fit between labour rights and human rights. Toronto civil rights lawyer Kiké Roach, a conference keynote speaker, explains that each time an individual's human rights are violated, it becomes easier for collective rights to be diminished.

"If there are people in our communities or around the world being exploited, especially vulnerable people, who are usually the first to be robbed of their rights, it affects us all," says Roach. "It erodes our values and beliefs and creeps into our workforces."

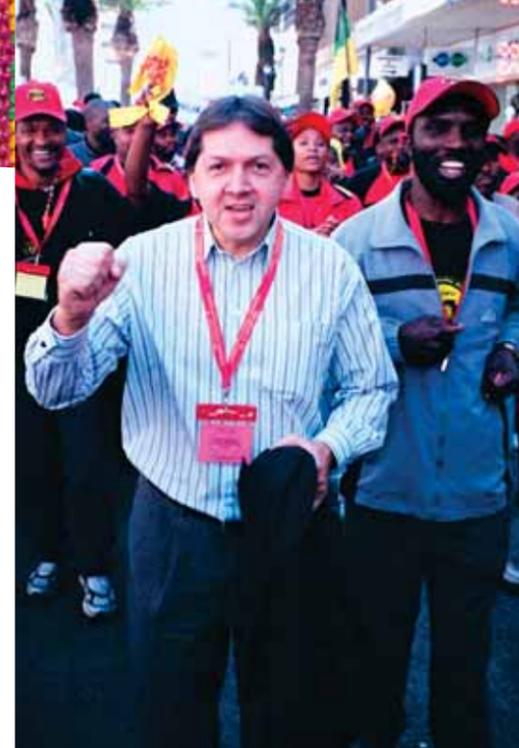


Lawyer Kiké Roach.

Ken Davidson chairs the CUPE BC international solidarity committee and is co-chair of the national global justice committee. Davidson has a standard reply whenever CUPE members ask why resources are spent on global justice when there are so many pressing local issues.

"If you allow other countries to erode their working conditions, to let them sink to a standard lower than our own, it won't be long before our own employers try to force those standards on us or, worse, send our work offshore," he says.

Roach agrees. "In Canada, we like to think that we are a society that is all about the law, human rights and due process. But people in the Canadian labour movement know all too well just how easy it is for governments to erode workers' rights."



Claude Généreux at the South African Municipal Workers' Union Congress.

Our basic rights and freedoms

Human rights are defined as basic rights and freedoms to which all humans are entitled. These include the right to life and liberty, freedom of thought and expression, and equality before the law.

In Canada, our human rights are guaranteed by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which is in turn entrenched in the Canadian Constitution. The Charter has clear language about equality provisions. But Vancouver human rights lawyer Anita Braha notes that while Canada is often held up as an example, those rights have often not translated on the ground.

"Canada is often seen as an example of equality rights—Canadians even helped South Africa draft its own progressive constitution post-Apartheid," says Braha, who is also speaking at CUPE's human rights conference. "Although our own Constitution has disappointed us at times on a practical level, I shudder to think of the state we would be in without it."

In Canada, the labour movement has always been in the vanguard of groups seeking legislation that protect workers' rights, including their pensions and health insurance, their right to a living wage and the right to organize.

"The battles the trade union movement has fought over the years were for the benefit of all, including non-unionized workers," says CUPE National President Paul Moist.

However, the unions' sphere of influence extends far beyond workplace issues. The labour movement also has a long history of galvanizing people's dissatisfaction with government. For example, our ability to organize has helped shape fairer immigration laws, Roach says.

"Political forces are taking aim at our equality provisions and at our agencies that promote and protect equal rights," adds Braha. For example, in their September round of cuts, Stephen Harper's Conservatives axed or drastically reduced funding to a number of social programs, including the court challenges program and Status of Women.

"The government is essentially saying that any voice given to addressing gender inequality in this country will be silenced," says Moist. "Furthermore, any voices wanting to challenge the current status of the laws of this land will be muzzled. We find that very disturbing."

Helping Canadians by helping our members

"Unions have been on the forefront of equality initiatives in Canada," says Braha, who is often hired by unions to represent workers in sexual harassment, equal pay and duty to accommodate challenges.

"Although we realize there is always be work to be done, CUPE is proud of the equality and human rights victories it has won over the years for our members and staff," says Sandi Howell-Solc, director of CUPE's equality branch, which organized the Vancouver human rights conference. "Our tenacity in several cases has led to significant changes that benefit all Canadians." As a notable example, Howell-Solc points to the Rosenberg case.

Two CUPE staff members, Nancy Rosenberg and Margaret Evans, had both received the employee benefits offered by CUPE for their same-sex partners. In 1995, when CUPE was unable to register its plan to include same-sex survivor benefits, the two women challenged the *Income Tax Act's* definition of "spouse".



With CUPE's full support, Evans and Rosenberg argued that they were being discriminated against under Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which guarantees that every individual has the right to equal benefit of the law without discrimination. In a unanimous decision, the Ontario Court of Appeal overturned a lower court's decision and found that the restrictive definition of "spouse" in the *Income Tax Act* violated the Charter. The Court determined that the appropriate remedy was the immediate reading in of same-sex partners into the definition of "spouse" as it relates to private pension plans. The federal government decided not to appeal this decision.

Howell-Solc notes that this case, which led to amendments to the Act recognising same-sex common-law spouses, was successfully argued thanks to the now cancelled court challenges program.

A more recent landmark case involved Meredith Clements, a member of CUPE 338 working at a B.C. RCMP detachment. Clements first asked her employer, the City of Kelowna, for same-sex spousal benefits when she was hired in 1999. The employer turned her down. Clements reapplied in 2001 and 2003, and was denied both times (same-sex spousal benefits have been available in most municipal contracts in B.C. since 2000).

After B.C. marriage law changed in the summer of 2003 and benefits were legally extended to same-sex partners, CUPE filed a grievance with the employer on Clements' behalf. The grievance was settled in the fall of 2004 before the case went to arbitration. Shortly afterward, Clements filed a complaint with the B.C. Human Rights Tribunal. The City of Kelowna finally reached an undisclosed settlement with her in July 2006, less than a week before her complaint was to go before tribunal.

In Ontario, CUPE has written numerous letters in support of member Gary Freeman, an African-American Toronto librarian in prison fighting extradition orders by the U.S. over an incident that took place more than 35 years ago. And in 2005, a case CUPE brought before the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal resulted in a ruling that the provincial government must pay for sex reassignment surgery for Martine Stonehouse, a transsexual member of CUPE 4400 (Toronto school board workers).

CUPE has been publicly recognized for its contributions to human rights and equality activism. In 2004, we received a Canadian Association of Labour Media award for its work developing the "Bargaining Equality Binder", which shows CUPE locals how to get a broad range of equality issues to the bargaining table and negotiate agreements

that protect members' rights. And in 2005, the University of Toronto's Centre for Sexual Diversity Studies presented CUPE with an award for being an international leader among labour unions in advocacy on sexual diversity.

Privatization eroding human rights

Not content with taking up the cause of human rights at home, CUPE has an impressive track record of international solidarity work that has been guided by convention policy.

In 2001, the members adopted the slogan "On the front line locally and globally." Two years later, CUPE's strategic directions policy integrated international campaigns and strategic alliances as a core element of its work.

"Not a week goes by when we don't receive a letter, petition or other urgent action on international affairs," notes National Secretary-Treasurer Claude Généreux.

One of the issues close to CUPE's heart is the global push to privatize basic services, like water.

"Privatization has led us into a lot of these countries, especially in Latin America," says Davidson. "Whenever the multinationals move in on public services, human rights and basic individual rights are the first things under attack."

According to a report by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, privatization is eliminating and eroding public services, including child care, health care, and education.

CUPE works to build a strong resistance to corporations and governments that want to privatize public services. Success in the fight against privatization is firmly rooted in community struggles, which benefit from provincial, national and international links. In March 2006, CUPE and its partner unions organized and funded a successful Public Services International conference in Ottawa on new forms of privatization. Participants shared experiences and strategies about privatization struggles and identified ways to work together.

Solidarity without borders

One of the tools CUPE has to advance its international solidarity work is the Global Justice Mondiale fund (formerly known as the union aid fund), which was first established in 1993. The fund's primary sources of revenue are from CUPE National, the Canadian Labour Congress and the Canadian International Development Agency and donations from CUPE locals, members and staff (contributions can now be made online securely through www.cupe.ca). The fund has annual revenues of about \$100,000.

To be considered for funding, a project must meet certain criteria.

"The first thing we look at is who is involved," says Davidson. "Are there union-to-union links? Are women involved? Do they share our concern and commitment? Can we grow stronger by working together? Whatever country we're looking at, we want a trade union in that country to be our partner. If that union happens to have coalition partners, that's advantageous."

Projects funded this year include a third health care workers' exchange in Cuba, a community radio and communications strategy in Guatemala, and two exchanges between Colombian and Canadian public sector workers.

Most CUPE divisions have standing international committees that initiate projects and solidarity work locally. Many CUPE locals also maintain their own international links, often associated with their occupations. And many members work directly for international agencies providing support and services on an international level.

Supporting our sisters and brothers in other countries is a responsibility CUPE's leaders take seriously. Recently, CUPE National Secretary-Treasurer Claude Généreux and CUPE Alberta president D'Arcy Lanovaz were part of a delegation representing more than 10 countries at the 8th annual congress of the South African Municipal Workers' Union (SAMWU).

"It was important for us to consolidate the support our two groups bring to each other," says Généreux. "We may be thousands of miles apart, but we are all fighting for jobs, for communities, for equality and against privatization and globalization."

CUPE has a long history of relationship with SAMWU. SAMWU's first vice-president, Xolile Nxu, was an honoured guest the 2005 CUPE national convention. However, the partnership goes much deeper than simply attending each others' conventions.

"SAMWU clearly indicates that bilateral relations with CUPE, as developed

through the Municipal Services Project (a research project looking at the impact of privatization on key sectors), are the most successful link that SAMWU has developed," Généreux and Lanovaz reported to the national executive board. "In fact, SAMWU holds the MSP as a model for future research networks."

Other international campaigns supported by CUPE include the "Make Poverty History" campaign, which is lobbying the Canadian government to increase its international aid contribution to 0.07 per cent of gross domestic product. CUPE also provided financial support for the World Peace Forum in Vancouver in June 2006.

Making human rights truly universal

In his study, *Labour Left Out: Canada's Failure to Protect and Promote Collective Bargaining as a Human Right*, Roy Adams explains that while there has been a human rights revolution in Canada over the last half century, workers' rights have diminished.

Published by the CCPA, Adams' study found that Canadian governments have "consciously and repeatedly offended international labour standards they have solemnly promised to respect, protect and promote."

"If Canada chooses to deny the human rights character of collective bargaining then other nations may claim that their local customs allow them to discriminate against women, children and ethnic minorities," the report stated.

"Human rights are universal," says Anita Braha. "We do not pick and choose to whom they apply. The fight for global human rights and equality requires the energy and efforts of each and every one of us." ■

Anne Marie Aikins is a Toronto writer and committed human rights and social justice advocate.



John Humphrey: father of the UN Declaration of Human Rights

Nearly 60 years have passed since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the United Nations. The Declaration was one of the UN's first major achievements, and remains a powerful instrument and symbol worldwide. Yet few people know that the historic document's first draft was authored by a Canadian, John Peters Humphrey.

Humphrey was born in 1905 in Hampton, New Brunswick. His childhood was marked by tragedy. His father died before his first birthday. When he was six, his left arm had to be amputated because of severe burns. When he was eleven, he lost his mother. These setbacks, along with the experiences of living through two world wars and the Depression, had a profound effect on Humphrey's values and world view.

Humphrey pursued his studies at Mount Allison University in Sackville, N.B. and then at McGill University in Montreal. He earned four degrees at McGill and later became a professor and dean of law.

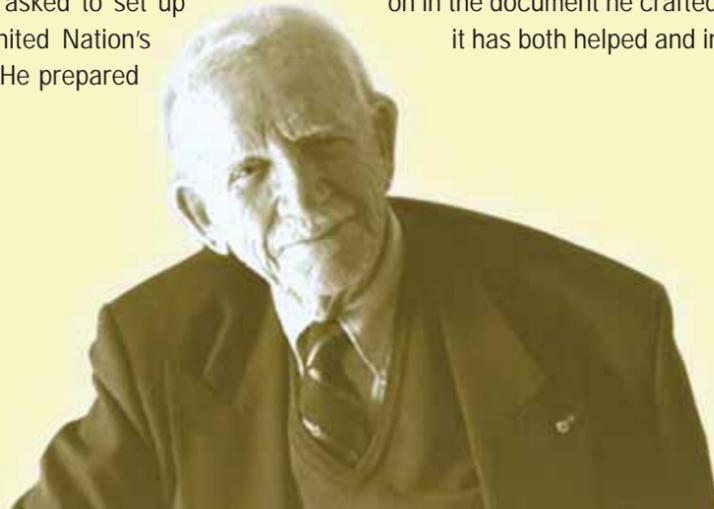
In 1946, Humphrey was asked to set up and direct the fledgling United Nations Division for Human Rights. He prepared

a 400-page background paper for the proposed Universal Declaration and wrote its first draft in 1947. After further drafts and revisions by various UN officials and committees, the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* was unanimously passed by the UN General Assembly on Dec. 10, 1948. To mark this milestone, Dec. 10 is recognized worldwide as Human Rights Day.

Humphrey headed the Human Rights Division until 1966. He then returned to McGill, where he devoted himself to teaching human rights law and advocacy. Among other achievements, he helped establish Amnesty International Canada and the Canadian Human Rights Foundation.

On 1992, the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development established the \$25,000 John Humphrey Freedom Award, which is presented each year to an organization or individual from any country or region of the world for exceptional achievement in the promotion of human rights and democratic development.

John Humphrey died in 1995 in Montreal. His legacy lives on in the document he crafted and in the millions of people it has both helped and inspired.



"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood."

– Article 1, Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Making contact: B.C. women with disabilities find common ground



Sheryl Burns, a member of the national women's task force, facilitated the meeting.

Eight CUPE women with disabilities recently enjoyed a rare opportunity to discuss common issues.

"There was some nervousness when the meeting began, but a lot of positive energy by the end," said CUPE 2950 (University of British Columbia support services) president Natalie Lisik, who has hearing loss.

Facilitating was national women's task force member Sheryl Burns, who is also a member of CUPE BC's workers with disabilities working group. Real-time captioning and sign language translation ensured that everyone could understand and be understood.

CUPE 1091 (Delta school district) member Carolyn Becker said the meeting offered welcome relief from the isolation she feels as a deaf school custodian.

"It felt good to be able to explain how things are in my workplace," she said, through a sign language interpreter. "I'm very isolated at work because no one talks to me."

Becker was one of several women who said that, despite advances in labour relations law, they find their disability is the biggest barrier to advancement.

"It's difficult to get a promotion or do another job, because the employer simply says I can't do it, that I wouldn't be able to do it," said Becker, who served on the board of directors for the B.C. Deaf Sports Federation. "Even if I wanted to work as a teacher's aide, I can't, because the employer won't provide interpretation."

One idea that came out of the meeting was to allow self-identification of disability on union membership cards.

"Why not?" said Carrie Bishop of CUPE 2262 (Castlegar civic workers), who has difficulty writing. "For federal government jobs, you have the option of self-identifying as having a disability. If the union could do it, that would help us find more of our disabled members. Think about the difference that would make for their first contact with the union."

Lisik said the meeting strengthened her own work as a union activist.

"There's a real need to educate co-workers, and for employers to know what accommodation is required of them," she said. "But employers often don't know what to do because they don't have the resources. A lot of the time, things can be done that don't cost money."

CUPE 2950 member Karin More, a fundraising secretary for UBC's faculty of medicine, has chronic depression. She said she came to the meeting to learn about other disabilities and to spread awareness about her own.

"Listening to women with other types of disabilities, getting that alternative perspective, really helps," she said.

■ Dan Gawthrop

B.C. facing P3 juggernaut

CUPE locals in British Columbia are facing an onslaught of public private partnerships. Whether it's water, recreation, administration or waste management, private companies are eager to muscle in on public services.

This summer, Penticton City Council announced its intention to build a new event centre as a P3. An American company would take over the management of the new facility, along with two existing facilities where CUPE 608 members work. The provincial government promised close to \$50 million towards the projected \$56 million cost of the project.

(cont. on page 16)

(cont. from page 15)

On Sept. 16, residents were asked to vote on the scheme in a referendum. The proposed scheme for joint public private financing passed with 80 per cent approval. On the question of private operation, however, voters were more sceptical, with just over 54 per cent voting yes.

CUPE's Penticton locals were active in the Coalition for an Affordable Public Event Centre. CUPE 608 president Carolae Donoghue credits their efforts with the lower approval rate on private operation.

"We made some headway here, but we clearly have work to do with elected people and the public on privatization and P3s," said Donoghue, who also chairs CUPE BC's anti contracting out committee.

Many B.C. municipalities are in the process of upgrading aging civic facilities and are considering P3s.

In the Capital Regional District (CRD) on south Vancouver Island, a major public debate is heating up over an expensive sewage treatment proposal. The B.C. government is actively promoting a P3, encouraging the CRD "to consider new technologies and alternative financing and delivery options, including the potential for private sector involvement."

CUPE 1978, which represents CRD workers, will work with the Island Water Watch campaign and other CUPE locals

to advocate for a public sewage treatment solution.

■ Roseanne Moran

Alberta job boom brings good and bad news for workers



Alberta's job boom is good news for workers, bad news for cash-strapped public services.

Fifteen dollars an hour to serve double-doubles at Tim Hortons?

Welcome to Alberta.

With oil prices well above \$60/barrel, Alberta's energy economy is white hot.

And that's leading to opportunities – and problems – for unionized workers.

If you're able bodied, you won't have much trouble finding work in Alberta. Almost every fast food outlet has help



Successful aboriginal gathering in Victoria

CUPE BC held its second aboriginal gathering on First Nations land in Victoria, Oct. 13-15. Close to 80 members attended the "Creating the Inner Warrior-Empowering our Aboriginal Members" conference.

wanted signs in their window. Most pay \$5-\$7 above the \$7 minimum wage.

The labour shortage is good for unionized workers – but only up to a point.

"Employers who have some control over their revenue can compete for workers," says CUPE Alberta president D'Arcy Lanovaz. "But school boards and long term care facilities – who rely heavily on stagnant provincial funding – can't hire and retain staff."

Across the province, staff at long-term care facilities – underpaid and overworked before the boom – are stretched to the limit. Linda Joyce, a personal care aide at Capital Care in Edmonton, says vacancies at her workplace are increasing, leading to heavier loads for those left behind.

"The government has to pay us a decent wage or no one will be left to care for our seniors," says Joyce. "Who needs back-breaking work, double shifts and limited pay when everyone else is begging for workers?"

The competition for staffing is most ferocious in Fort McMurray, the heart of Alberta's oil patch. The city is growing at an astounding rate and employers are struggling to keep up by offering plum incentives.

"The municipality recently increased its living allowance to \$750/month for all employees," says Debb Grimaldi, a CUPE representative assigned to Fort McMurray. "The local college agreed to a similar plan for \$500."

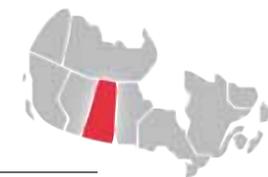
"The boom presents some opportunities for workers," adds Lanovaz. "But it presents problems too. Until the province wakes up and addresses the labour shortage, we've got a problem. Public services, and by extension the public, are getting short-changed."

■ Lou Arab



Receiving an award for "Supporting the Local Community", Broadview Union Hospital staff poses for a picture with guests: Lou Richter (dietary staff), Broadview Mayor Sid Criddle, Barb Petrie (dietary staff), Sherry Richter (dietary staff, head cook), Tom Graham (CUPE Saskatchewan president), Lisa Swanson (dietary staff), Gordon Campbell (CUPE Health Care Council president).

Saskatchewan health care workers cook up healthy communities



When Barb Neufeld heard that the Eastern Saskatchewan Pioneer Lodge would receive this year's People's Choice Award for nutrition services, she cried.

"Home is where the heart is, and this is your home, so it should be our home, too," she told the lodge residents as she accepted the award.

The award was a big part of Communities Day in Saskatchewan on Oct. 5. CUPE's Health Care Council and CUPE Saskatchewan teamed up to recognize health care facilities that go the extra mile to make their communities healthier – starting in the kitchen.

Nine health care facilities received awards. The categories were Food Excellence, for serving hot, nutritious meals prepared on-site; Supporting the Local Community, for buying local products to stock their kitchens; and the People's Choice Award, for staff who have gone above and beyond.

"It's like you're at home," said Sherry Richter, head cook at the Broadview

Union Hospital and chairperson of the food excellence committee. "Everything revolves around the kitchen."

"We've done a good job here, and we feel really great about that," added nutrition staff person Lou Richter. "Broadview staff will often prepare special meals for picky children or for patients with requests."

Health Care Council president Gordon Campbell, CUPE Saskatchewan president Tom Graham and CUPE food excellence representative Vicky O'Dell toured the province on Communities Day handing out certificates. In each facility, the pride CUPE members put into food preparation was obvious, and the winners glowed as they received their awards.

"I know they get very little recognition for their work," said Campbell. "Today, we want to change that."

■ Beth Smillie

Ontario: no rest on LHINs front



Fall 2006 arrived with cooling temperatures, a spectacular burst of colour and the full-blown transformation of Ontario Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman into an outspoken defender of public health care.

But while Smitherman was doing his part to kick off the Liberal re-election campaign by taking on doctors who promote private clinics, his ministry was laying the foundation for taking services out of hospitals and bringing competitive bidding to the whole system.

It's the rollout of Bill 36, the legislation that empowers local health integration networks (LHINs). The bill passed last spring despite a vigorous campaign waged by CUPE Ontario members across the province in coalition with other health care unions.

Now, CUPE has moved into a new phase aimed at protecting workers and keeping services in local communities.

"We have several challenges," says Michael Hurley, president of the Ontario Council of Hospital Unions (OCHU). "The provincial cabinet has until April 2007 to order hospitals to transfer out support services. One of our concerns is that, even if we stop privatization to for-profit companies, we will see more and more of those services moving to the community sector, where wages and working conditions are significantly behind hospitals and long-term care."

That's also the sector where CUPE members have the most experience with competitive bidding, where organizations that provide services compete on price and volume. Providers who can't maintain ongoing "efficiencies" – mainly by lowering wages and benefits – lose contracts.

"We have to remain determined to see improvements in the community sector," said Kelly O'Sullivan, president of CUPE 4308, representing workers in two community-based agencies. She notes that the organization of non-profit employers in the sector is holding its next conference on integrating community services under the regionalization brought on by LHINs.

"Negotiating job security language is going to be important for our members," she added.

Even in hospitals, where conditions are better, support services can be transferred by cabinet order. Yet Bill 36 does not define what those services are. Potentially, they could include anything that is not direct patient care. Support services have also been left out of a framework agreement with the government on labour adjustment, under discussion by the province's other major health care unions. CUPE has decided to stay out of those discussions.

"We're here to protect our members, not to aid and abet the government in restructuring them out of their jobs," said Hurley. If there are to be any discussions, he says, the focus has to shift away from layoffs to other topics, including assurances that no work will transfer from the public to the private sector, improving wages, pensions and benefits, and financial support for retraining.

CUPE's LHIN-Watch activities will continue throughout the fall and winter in partnership with Ontario Health Coalition members.

■ Pat Daley

Quebec: your city workers are there for you!



In September, members in the municipal sector in Quebec launched a major media campaign to inform the public about the work of municipal employees. Entitled *On est là pour vous* (We're here for you!), the ads highlight some of the many indispensable tasks performed by city workers that go unrecognized.

"Municipal services and the people who work in them are under attack from all sides: public private partnerships, outsourcing, privatization, public ridicule, prejudice, etc.," noted the president of the Provincial Council for the Municipal Sector (PCMS), Marjolaine Boutin. "It's time to respond. We want to remind people of the importance and

the advantages of having public municipal services for citizens throughout Quebec."

The campaign covers all of Quebec. There is also an English-language version for the greater Montreal region. Advertisements will be broadcast on 26 radio stations and will appear in nine dailies and 11 weekly newspapers.

In May 2006, delegates at the PCMS convention adopted an action plan and agreed on a special contribution of one dollar per member for a period of 20 weeks. The campaign also received a cost-share contribution from CUPE's national defence fund.

■ Robert Bellerose



N.B. elections: workers' issues at the forefront

After trying to keep his minority government in power for months, Conservative New Brunswick Premier Bernard Lord decided to go to the polls in September to try to obtain a third mandate.

CUPE New Brunswick decided to mount an issues campaign. A questionnaire was sent to the three leaders asking their position on casual rights, pay equity, first contract arbitration and revision of the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission and the superannuation pension Plan. The leaders' answers were published in a leaflet. More than 12,000 brochures were distributed to CUPE members. Kits were also available to help members lobby their candidates and get them to take a

stand on issues affecting workers.

"Even though CUPE NB did not officially support one party, our strategy paid off," said CUPE NB president Daniel Légère. "After ignoring the labour vote for a couple of weeks, Conservatives and Liberals started to pay attention to our message. We even got the Liberals to change their position on some issues."

In the end, Shawn Graham and his Liberals won a narrow majority government, ending seven years of Tory rule.

In the coming months, CUPE will be keeping a close eye on the new government to make sure election promises are kept. The Liberals have said they are prepared to open the policy period of casual employment, stating that it is unac-

ceptable to have individuals working for the government for up to 20 years without being able to become permanent employees. They also say they are committed to achieving pay equity in New Brunswick's public sector. They want to extend pay equity to employees providing contracted services to government, beginning with child care and home care providers.

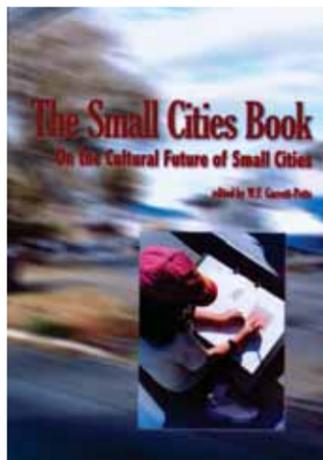
"Although labour relations with past Liberal governments have been difficult, Premier Graham pledged to have a more opened dialogue with unions by meeting on a regular basis with us. We will see if he will open the door," concluded Légère.

■ Danielle Savoie

The Small Cities Book

On the Cultural Future of Small Cities

Edited by W.F. Garrett-Petts,
New Star Books



Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver: when we think of culture, we usually picture big cities and their world-class symphonies, museums, theatre districts and dance companies. But in *The Small Cities Book*, we learn that small cities can be just as rich – and just as valuable.

Focusing on the quintessential small city of Kamloops, B.C., this collection of 25 essays, research papers, poems, stories, and visual art explores what it means to live in a small community during the era of urban sprawl and cultural globalization. The authors explore such ideas as community asset building, home and homelessness, cultural identity and sense of place.

The articles range from an overview of Kamloops' changing economy (from industry and natural resources to retail and servic-

es), to an examination of how the arts can lead to more positive, progressive development, to an exhibit of "story maps" drawn by residents, to a critique of a recent bitter "not in my backyard" controversy involving a halfway house for prison parolees.

"If smaller urban centres are to prosper and maintain their identities in the face of mass cultural influences and big-box retailing, they need to think critically about notions of scale, space and place," the book's introduction states. "To tell their own stories, small cities need to listen to the vernacular, to local examples and voices."

That's advice that even our biggest cities would do well to heed.

■ **Natasha Gauthier**

More than ever, our communities need us

CUPE has always understood the importance of political action. Today, the consequences of our choices in our federal, provincial and municipal elections have never been clearer.

Stephen Harper's cuts to women's organizations and adult literacy programs, along with the elimination of the court challenges program, clearly demonstrate that not only is he not our friend; he is working against us, against families and against equality seeking groups. Instead, he is creating a haven for poverty, racism, bigotry and corporate profiteers.

Privatization threatens the health care systems of every Canadian province. Our infrastructure deficit is now pegged at up to \$125 billion, and the likelihood of another tragedy like the recent highway overpass collapse outside Montreal is all too real.

In November, CUPE activists from across the country will meet in Vancouver for our first National Human Rights



Claude Généreux at CUPE's first university sector conference, held in Montreal Oct. 12-14.

Conference. This is a necessary discussion. The denial of basic human rights occurs around the globe, not only in places like the Middle East and Darfur, but also in our own backyards, where too many people witness racism, sexism and harassment on a daily basis.

All of this says one thing loud and clear. Our communities need us. They need

CUPE's activism and our political action. They need each and every one of our members.

We need to work together to elect governments that are clearly on the side of working people. It's not good enough to elect governments that are "not as bad as the current one". We also need to continue to fight for social and economic justice.

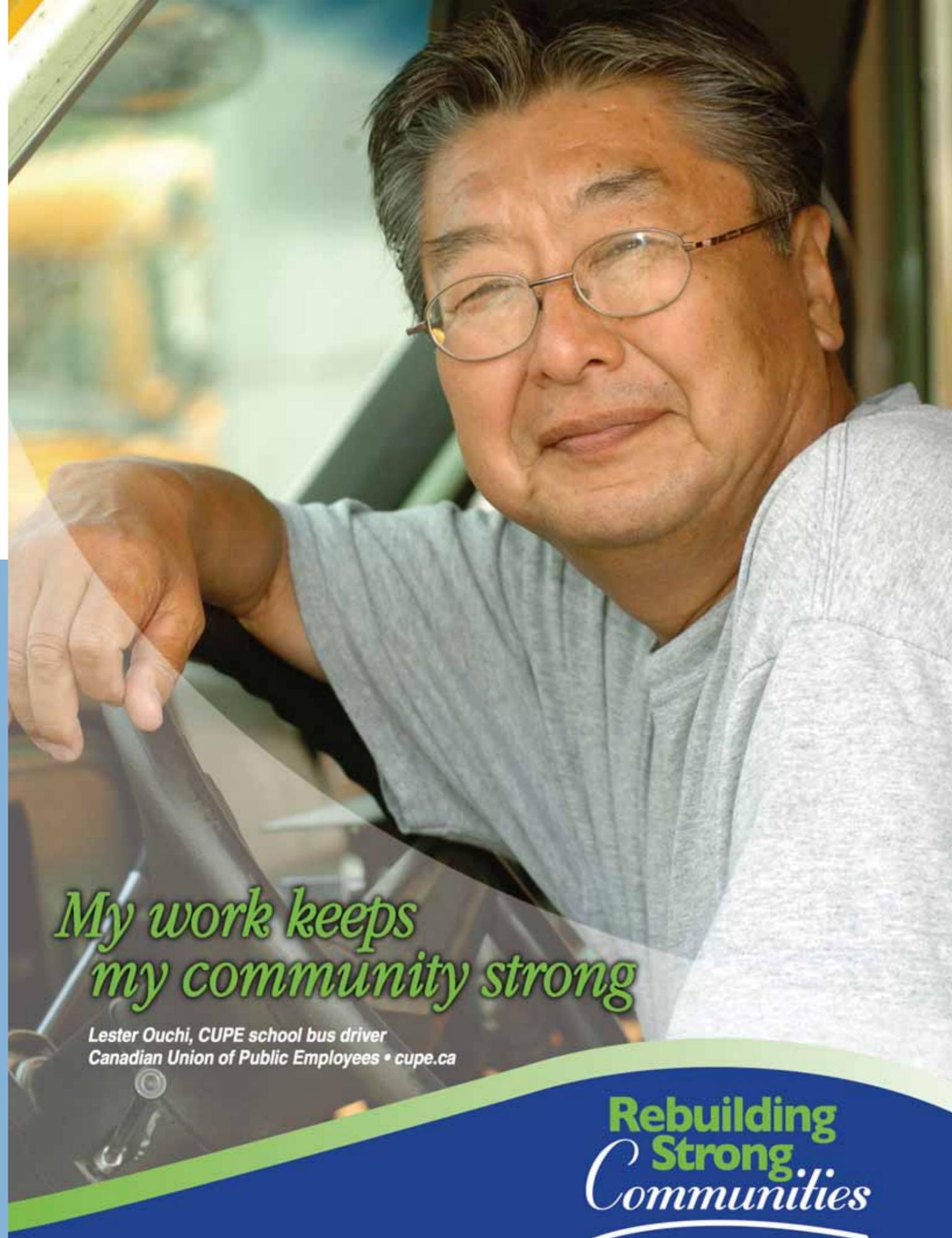
As CUPE plans its budget for 2007, I want to marshal the resources required for all of this activity. We will take steps to secure our national defence fund so it can meet the growing challenges of CUPE's social unionism.

With the right amount of planning and the proper resources, we can make a difference in every community.

In solidarity,

Claude Généreux

Claude Généreux
National Secretary-Treasurer



*My work keeps
my community strong*

Lester Ouchi, CUPE school bus driver
Canadian Union of Public Employees • cupe.ca

**Rebuilding
Strong
Communities**

REMEMBER Work for change

We mourn for the 14 women
slain in Montreal on
December 6, 1989.

Today our goal is to end violence
in our workplaces, our homes and
in the world. Every action does
make a difference.

Change starts with us.



Annie Turcotte
Barbara Klucznik Widajewicz
Nathalie Croteau
Maud Havermick
Helene Colgan
Geneviève Bergeron
Michèle Richard
Maryse Laganière
Annie St-Arnaud
Annie-Marie Leclair
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Anne-Marie Lennay
Barbara Daigreault