

# **National President's Report**

**April 2006 – June 2006**

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

As I begin this report, I am tempted to say that the last few months have been busier than any other time in the history of our Union. But that is not truly the case. Our Union, its members and staff, are engaged now and have been for years as they tackle new emerging challenges. We are active on an increasing number of fronts – protecting our right to free collective bargaining, fighting against privatization, lobbying for social programs and a Canadian vision of caring, monitoring and pressuring a regressive right-wing government, and supporting numerous issues of international scope.

With all of this activity in constant flux, our members and Union still face as their first and foremost responsibility, collective bargaining. 1,900 members of CUPE Local 4222, Thames Valley District School Board (Ontario), walked off the job on May 11, 2006. Never am I more proud of serving as your National President then when I see our Union do what it does best. Sticking together, bargaining, and offering solid support to the members we represent.

Local 4222 stayed on the picket line for a total of 23 days and achieved a two percent wage increase for each year of the three-year settlement, two additional paid days per year, and a 30-minute redress to hours of work for educational and instructional assistants over the span of their collective agreement.

My sincere thanks to all who worked tirelessly in this dispute.

While not exhaustive, my report will highlight some of the key events and initiatives of the last few months.

## **1. Federal Political Scene**

True to expectations, the Conservative federal government in office is turning out to be one the likes of which our country has never seen before. This calls for renewed vigilance on the part of our national union, provincial divisions and all of our local unions to be politically active, to criticize and lobby, to let this government know where we stand on social programs and issues. We must also work hard at links and support with the NDP, the Bloc and the Liberals to counter this right-wing minority government.

## ***Child Care***

As predicted, the federal government went through with its plan to break the promises made by the previous Liberal government for provincial agreements on the transfer of funds for child care programs across the country. The recent federal budget instead enshrined a taxable allowance of \$1,200 for families with young children.

The Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada, its coalition partners and CUPE launched the Code Blue for Child Care campaign and successfully presented 55,000 signatures on an open letter to Prime Minister Harper, opposing the reneging of the deals and the step backward from establishing universal, public non-profit child care for Canadians.

The coalition is now strategizing extensively on the next steps and objectives of the campaign. NDP Member of Parliament Olivia Chow has introduced a private member's bill calling for the establishment of criteria and conditions for funding for early learning and child care programs in order to ensure the quality, accessibility, universality and accountability of those programs, and to appoint a ministerial advisory council on matters relating to early learning and child care in Canada.

CUPE will continue to work with the opposition parties to build support for the bill and will continue to press this issue in the weeks and months ahead.

## ***Bloc Québécois Anti-Scab Bill***

Richard Nadeau, Bloc Québécois Member of Parliament, presented a private member's bill in the House of Commons re-introducing the need for passage of a comprehensive federal anti-scab legislation. CUPE members will recall how adversely affected our Vidéotron members were with no access to anti-scab legislation, and all of us will recall the seriousness and length of some other federal disputes such as CBC and Telus in BC and Alberta last year.

Brother Claude Généreux, Brother Jacques Dénomme (CUPE-Quebec Vice-President of Communications) and I met with Bloc Québécois Leader, Gilles Duceppe to discuss the issue of anti-scab legislation and offer our assistance in helping with the passage of this important Bill.

Bloc MP Carole Lavallée has been assigned to this file and will be making a presentation to our National Executive Board at our June 2006 meeting. She will be explaining the importance of our lobbying and pressuring Liberal and Conservative MPs within their constituencies to vote in favour of the passage of this Bill. As well, Ms. Lavallée is offering to make herself available for a cross-country tour to advocate for the need to successfully obtain anti-scab legislation for all of Canada, based on the Quebec model.

The introduction of Anti-Scab legislation failed by just 12 votes in 2005. We must all be politically active on this issue to ensure its success this time. The momentum is there to succeed.

## ***Airline Safety***

I recently joined members of the Airline Division to meet with Lawrence Cannon, Minister of Transportation, to discuss crucial passenger safety issues.

Transport Canada bureaucrats have tried to push forward with plans to amend regulations on flight attendant to passenger ratios (moving from the current 1-40 ratio to a 1-50 ratio). The impact of the proposed regulation would allow Canadian planes to operate with 20 - 25% fewer flight attendants. We pointed out to Minister Cannon that this is another example of the lack of transparency in his government, and that the public does not support a reduction in the number of safety professionals on planes.

## **2. CUPE National Strategic Initiatives**

### ***National Women's Task Force***

Subsequent to the first meeting of the National Women's Task Force, members set off to introduce the Task Force and its mandate and to emphasize their desire to reach out to consult and discuss broadly with the women and men of our union on the issue of increasing the participation of women at all levels of our union.

Task Force members began the process of building regional sub-committees and of developing 2006 regional plans and budgets. They sought time on the agenda of division conventions and many CUPE events scheduled during this spring period. Our sincere thanks to division executives for their willingness to allow time on their convention agendas for this important issue within our union.

The National Women's Task Force meets June 18-20 to report in and share experiences, adopt and finalize a common discussion guide and workplan, and receive facilitating skills-building. Task Force work will continue throughout our union, ultimately reporting to our Fall 2007 National Convention.

### ***All National Committees and Working Groups Meeting – April 20-23, 2006 – Ottawa, ON***

National Committees and Working Groups were invited to an all-committees meeting on April 21<sup>st</sup>. You will recall that this was done for the very first time in the spring of 2004 to allow for an opportunity to review the governance and roles of national committees/working groups and to build and strengthen the inter-related work of committees.

This year's objectives were to highlight the importance of the work of our committees at a community and coalition level, and to profile the impact we have on lobbying for legislation while remaining focused on our Strategic Directions Policy 2005-07 and ways to better increase our effectiveness.

Some 200 members and staff participated in the plenary. On April 20<sup>th</sup>, a training day for co-chairs, NEB liaisons and staff advisors, was held and was a resounding success.

The one-day plenary was chaired by Alex Munter, candidate for Mayor – City of Ottawa. Guest speaker Maude Barlow, President of the Council of Canadians joined us in the early afternoon. A panel of five CUPE members was also struck to discuss the work of specific committees or issues. They were: Rhe'na Oakes (Local 1169) – CUPE Climate Change Conference; Joanne Foote (HEU) – National Aboriginal Council; Wayne Lucas (President, CUPE Newfoundland and Labrador) – Atlantic/Maritimes Political Action Conference; Stephanie Melinsky (Local 2191) – Ontario ACL/Coordinated Bargaining; Edgar Godoy (Local 2191) – 3<sup>rd</sup> Health Care Exchange, Cuba.

The one-day plenary was followed by the first regular meeting of individual committees/working groups on April 22-23.

***National Aboriginal Organizing Meeting – March 31-April 1, 2006 – Ottawa, ON and National Aboriginal Council Inaugural Meeting – May 4-5, 2006 – Saskatoon, SK***

Some 15 members and staff were invited to strategize and provide their thoughts and advice on how to strengthen and move forward our Union's commitment to advancing Aboriginal organizing. Feedback included the aspects of profiling CUPE, education and the need for an organizing capacity and workplans. The issue formed part of the subsequent National Aboriginal Council Inaugural Meeting.

As mandated by Resolution 67 adopted at our last national convention, on May 4-5, the National Union held an historical inaugural meeting of the National Aboriginal Council in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Participants discussed the selection process of members, the development of terms of reference, organizing and potential tri-partite Aboriginal Framework Agreements, and identified key work priorities for the Council.

Provinces that do not have an established provincial Aboriginal Council will be asked to assist in a representative selection by enabling a meeting or Aboriginal circle and consulting as broadly as possible among CUPE Aboriginal members in their region. Sister Joanne Webb (Local 4800 – Ontario) and Brother Brian Barron (L. 500 – Manitoba) are the interim senators for the Council.

The meeting coincided with the Saskatchewan Aboriginal Conference allowing participants to also experience this event.

***Future of Medicare – May 31, 2006 – Ottawa, ON***

On May 30<sup>th</sup>, CUPE convened a meeting of union and coalition leaders in Ottawa, to discuss the future of Medicare.

The objective was to bring together leaders to have a focussed strategic discussion about the state of Medicare and emerge with a Health Care Solidarity Statement, which would underscore the importance of Medicare and our collective commitment to it.

Leaders and senior staff attended from CAW, CFNU, CLC, CEP, NUPGE, PSAC, SEIU, USW, Canadian Health Coalition, Council of Canadians and the Ontario Health Coalition.

To set the context for the discussion, the Canadian Health Coalition presented “Health Care in the Eye of the Storm”, which provided a description of the current political moment, identified threats and opportunities and demonstrated the need to organize politically to defend public health care.

The forces against public health care include corporate interests, federal and provincial political leaders, unelected public office holders (such as Supreme Court of Canada Judge McLaughlin and Senator Michael Kirby), pro-privatization medical community, trade and business associations, corporate media and right-wing think tanks.

Although this list is daunting, the forces for public health care are strong and diverse. Some provincial governments, coalitions, unions, health research organizations and networks, many doctors and health professionals and the public, support the core values of our health care system and will fight to protect it.

The participants agreed on the following outcomes:

- Solidarity Statement expressing our collective commitment
- Canadian Health Coalition will expand its Action Committee to coordinate upcoming activities and work on developing a national campaign

### ***Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) – June 2-5, 2006 – Montréal, QC***

As part of Strategic Directions to increase our effectiveness as a Union, CUPE National has committed itself to participating at conferences, forums or meetings at which many of our members’ employers participate.

CUPE represents some 150,000 municipal workers across the country. Three years ago, we began in a more serious way to engage and participate at the Federation of Canadian Municipalities’ Annual Conference, which is attended by some 1,700 municipal councillors and mayors.

CUPE Locals 30, 37, 38, 417 and 1169 (all from Alberta) registered members as delegates. CUPE Metro Vancouver District Council was also represented. General Vice-President (BC) Barry O’Neill and Regional Vice-President (Alberta) D’Arcy Lanovaz, Brothers Claude Généreux and myself were in attendance.

Along with some CUPE staff, we attended and reported in on sessions by producing a daily journal, we organized and worked at our kiosk sharing our materials with mayors and councillors, and we hosted a very successful CUPE reception at which over 400 delegates dropped in and a trip for two anywhere in Canada was drawn. (Further information and complete documentation can be found on the [www.cupe.ca](http://www.cupe.ca) web site.)

### ***Canadian Libraries' Association (CLA) – June 15-16, 2006 – Ottawa, ON***

For the second consecutive year, CUPE has participated in the Canadian Library Association Annual Conference. Materials were prepared and made available to all delegates from our CUPE display booth. Members of CUPE Local 1169 (Calgary), Local 2067 (Windsor) and Local 905 (York Region) staffed the booth.

Opportunities to engage in discussions and conversations at a function which is in essence a gathering of one of CUPE's major sector employers offers us an opportunity to raise our members' issues and expertise on workplace matters that we have vast knowledge on.

### **3. Canadian Labour Congress**

On April 19<sup>th</sup>, the Canadian Labour Congress held a press conference for the unveiling of its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Stamp (1956 – 2006) and hosted a small noon-time reception. Past President Robert White and members of the Executive Council, as well as other coalition partners who work with labour were invited. The stamp features the globe held by two people's hands and was commissioned by Canada Post. A gala event to celebrate the CLC's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary is planned for October.

Following up on a mandate given to them at the 2005 Convention, the Congress has developed and delivered campaign training geared toward municipal politics. Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Ontario and PEI are all preparing for municipal elections this fall. CUPE locals in those provinces are encouraged to contact their local CLC Representative for information about the training program.

### **4. Organizing**

A cross-Canada look at organizing was presented to the June National Executive Board meeting. This report is received on a quarterly basis.

#### ***Aboriginal Organizing***

As previously discussed, Aboriginal workers were identified as an organizing target. At our November 2005 National Executive Board meeting on Organizing, we agreed that a special meeting to discuss Aboriginal organizing needed to be held. The meeting took place from March 30 to April 1, 2006.

Essential components to organizing in this area include in-depth regional mapping of Aboriginal employers, agencies and boards; building political relationships; education; and raising CUPE's profile.

### ***Child Care***

Organizing on the child care front continues. Events such as town halls in **Nova Scotia** were held profiling CUPE as the union of choice. In two of the four centres targeted, we should be counting ballots soon. In **Ontario** and **BC**, mapping projects identifying potential projects are underway.

In **Ontario**, CUPE Local 4400, with the assistance of organizers and member-organizers began a successful campaign to organize workers at the Not Your Average Daycare, which is a child care centre operating eight centres housed within public schools. A card signing was proposed which gave the union automatic certification upon obtaining signed cards for 50 % + 1 of the workforce. This is one of the first automatic certification campaigns in Ontario in recent years.

### ***Paramedics***

On April 20, 2006, the New Brunswick Ministry of Health announced the establishment of a single public sector company owned by the government which placed all paramedics in the province under the Public Services Labour Relation Act. This created the stage for over 600 new members joining CUPE Local 1252 (our provincial health care group).

Shortly thereafter, due to restructuring of the PEI Ambulance Services, CUPE campaigned hard and won the representation vote for PEI paramedics!

Our union now represents all paramedics in both **PEI** and **New Brunswick**.

### ***Long Term Care***

CUPE was also successful in winning a vote against LIUNA for 130 workers at the Villa Marconi Long-Term Care Centre in Ottawa, **Ontario**. Workers recognized CUPE's expertise in long-term care and that they would be able to have a voice in how their issues would be dealt with. The positive drive also assisted our campaign at Trillium Long-Term Care where CUPE obtained representation rights for 168 workers.

### ***School Board***

In **Saskatchewan** the province's restructuring of the school board sector, reduced the number of school divisions from 52 to 13. Our organizing efforts have been focused on achieving a threshold of 80% of support staff which will pave the way for provincial bargaining. We are close to this level with representation rights in 10 of 13 divisions.

### ***Municipal Sector***

A snapshot of CUPE's municipal sector was profiled as a separate segment to the organizing report. Municipal locals make up one of the largest sectors in CUPE, representing over 20% of CUPE membership. The number of employees on municipal payroll in CUPE is 150,000, in 1,150 bargaining units.

The NEB reviewed data pertaining to union density in the sector and were advised that annual wage increases averaged 2.7% for municipal workers compared to 2.2% in the entire public sector in the first quarter of 2006. Alberta municipal settlements are among the highest across the country; Ontario settlements are experiencing wage increases of about 3% per year; Quebec is seeing 2.5% to 3%; and BC settlements vary considerably from 1.5% to 3% per year over the next three years.

### ***Certification Requirements***

The NEB reviewed current certification rules in all 10 provinces and the federal jurisdiction. Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Quebec, New Brunswick, PEI, Newfoundland and Labrador jurisdictions to a qualifying degree consider card-based certification, compulsory votes are required in all other jurisdictions.

The provinces of BC, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, PEI and Newfoundland and Labrador have first contract legislation. Federal groups benefit from both automatic certification and first contract legislation.

These legal frameworks have a tremendous impact upon our organizing efforts.

## **5. Regional Reports**

### ***Airline***

Our Air Transat Component ratified a new collective agreement in May, which saw members receive wage increases and improvements to working conditions. The Air Canada Component is entering into the wage re-opener negotiations which was scheduled as part of the bankruptcy settlements. They have also just purchased and moved into a new building in Toronto. We wish them well as they settle into their new home.

### ***HEU***

Negotiations with Compass continue to be difficult. Last year, HEU was able to reach collective agreements with the other health care contractors – Sodexo and Aramark – but Compass has decided to avoid bargaining and continue to challenge the union in court. The 950 members are fed up and their bargaining committees are planning further actions.

On a more positive note, as a result of the recent Facilities Sector settlement, HEU is working with BCGEU and IUOE to develop preliminary criteria for the allocation of the \$5 million Education Fund. This fund offers career mobility opportunities in health care by providing all members access to training money.



### ***British Columbia***

It was with heavy hearts that we heard of the tragic workplace deaths of two CUPE members, paramedics who lost their lives at a mine site in Kimberly. Our condolences go out to the family and friends of Sister Kim Weitzel and Brother Shawn Currier.

The May long weekend was anything but a holiday for the K-12 Bargaining Committees, but they were able to celebrate a tentative collective agreement at the end of it. The individual locals will now put the finishing local touches on their settlements, which are expected to be complete by the end of June. This was the last group to reach settlements under the public sector negotiating framework. Special thanks go out to the bargaining teams and staff coordinators in K-12, Community Social Services, Paramedical Health, Community Health, Colleges, and Universities. You all contributed to a successful round of intense bargaining. Congratulations.

### ***Alberta***

Our diligent work with the Friends of Medicare paid off in mid-April when the Klein government shelved plans for the Third Way. Part of that plan was to allow doctors to work in both the public and private system. Albertans clearly indicated they want none of that. Although we will always be watchful of another privatization scheme coming forward, CUPE members in Alberta are to be congratulated for the effort they put into this campaign.

School board locals across the province continue to speak out about the crisis that has been created by under-funding of maintenance and support in schools. In such a wealthy province, it is somewhat unbelievable that the situation is so bad that school roofs are collapsing and layoffs and school closures seem imminent.

### ***Saskatchewan***

CUPE Local 882 in Prince Albert is the latest municipal local facing a potential strike. In May, the inside city workers voted 97% in support of job action, for the first time in their 43 year history. The 120 members want the same agreement that other city workers achieved – 9.5% over four years, but the city is demanding concessions.

Our education sector continues to get stronger in Saskatchewan, thanks to aggressive organizing plans. We now represent over 70% of the education support workers in the province, and are in a much stronger position to advocate for provincial bargaining.

### ***Manitoba***

Restructuring in health care will affect workers in laundry, diagnostics and rehabilitation. Laundry workers will vote in a representation vote on June 16<sup>th</sup>. Workers in diagnostics will only see a change in the name of their employer. Local 1550 members in rehabilitation services will transfer either to Local 500 or PSAC, depending on the position they choose to move into.

The School Sector Committee is developing an action plan with the Division Executive and other unions to achieve a defined benefit pension plan. The Social Services and Child Care Committee continue to lobby for increased funding for the services which fall under their jurisdiction.

Manitoba is one of four provinces going to the municipal ballot box this fall. Labour Councils across Manitoba have active campaigns to recruit and elect labour friendly candidates.

### ***Ontario***

The Ontario Health Coalition, along with assistance from all sectors of CUPE, have held plebiscites against the introduction of P3 hospitals in their communities. The general public responded with approximately 50,000 people taking the opportunity to vote. The results clearly indicate that the public has no appetite for P3 hospitals. The government in retreat has indicated that it will only require the privatization of “hard maintenance services” which is a much narrower focus than original pronouncements. Regardless, with the strings of empty promises we continue to press hard to defeat the government initiatives towards privatization.

Association for Community Living (ACL) locals continue to forge ahead in their multi-year campaign to pressure the government to address under funding in the sector. One element of the strategy involves locals at the bargaining table implementing a coordinated bargaining strategy that will move the parties towards a central table. Another area of focus is working with employer groups to develop and implement a joint strategy to lobby government for improved funding for wages and infrastructure within the sector.

University workers have launched their “CUPE Campus Health & Safety Check-up” campaign. The initiative includes visits to campuses across Ontario to address health and safety concerns of members, in particular asbestos and hazards due to deferred maintenance and air quality. A report on the work of the coordinating committee findings will be released in the early fall of this year.

### ***Quebec***

Delegates attending the recent Provincial Council Municipal Sector Conference decided to take major steps towards defending municipal services. They adopted a detailed action plan which will be implemented during the course of the year. The objective is to rebuff all forms of privatization and to dispel the widespread prejudices against municipal employees. The delegates also voted in a special assessment of \$20 per member to be utilized in the defence of public services.

On the health and social services front, delegates to their recent conference discussed concerns with an action plan regarding restructuring in the sector. The restructuring has resulted in reducing the amount of local unions from 125 to 55. The re-organization resulted in units being created by job category rather than employer. The delegates

also voted in an amendment to their governing bylaws which will automatically reserve a position for women if the executive is formed with less than 50% women.

### ***New Brunswick***

Local 1252 (New Brunswick Council of Hospital Unions) which presently represents approximately 200 ambulance workers will have an additional 600 workers in the bargaining unit over the next 12 to 18 months. This infusion of individuals in the bargaining unit which are employed in the delivery of ambulance services is a result of the recent government announcement that they were establishing a single public sector company owned by the provincial government. Local 1252 has since 1969 been the certified bargaining agent for ambulance services in the public sector, including Paramedics, Emergency Medical Technicians, Dispatchers and Administrative Support Workers.

A “Reaching Atlantica – Business with Boundaries” conference was held in Saint John from June 8 to June 10, 2006. The Atlantica concept agenda is to bring elites in the region to a consensus that Atlantic Canada and Eastern Quebec need to be economically, socially and politically integrated with Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and Upstate New York to form a single coherent entity. Atlantica is the image of a unified region consisting of Canada’s Atlantic provinces and the Northern-eastern United States in which provincial and state legislation would eliminate the minimum wage, restrict the ability of workers to organize and drastically reduce public spending on social programs.

The conference provided local activists an opportunity to organize a forum to inform the public about the dangers of economic and political integration of the Atlantic region and Canada with the United States and to voice opposition and concern regarding this very real threat to Canadian sovereignty, economy, social programs, workers, environment and health. The Council of Canadians and the labour movement sponsored a town hall meeting including press conferences denouncing the Atlantica concept. On the last day of the conference a public protest rally was held. The division presidents of New Brunswick, PEI, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Nova Scotia, and General Vice-President, Brother Rick MacMillan attended the conference to add their voices to the protest.

### ***Nova Scotia***

The Nova Scotia School Board Council of Unions (NSSBCU) continues to meet with government officials in a continuing effort to reach agreement on a job evaluation process. With a provincial election on the horizon, discussion with the government to reach an agreement has proven to be elusive.

Our efforts to organize child care workers has been given a big boost. We were recently successful in obtaining sufficient cards signed in four centres. The votes which had been conducted were not counted due to the employer(s) contesting our applications. These objections have been dismissed. We are now awaiting the results of the vote of which by all reports success is predicted.

With a provincial election date set, CUPE Nova Scotia has been at the forefront of our activities in ensuring that the NDP form the next provincial government. For years the NDP in their role as official opposition has been the voice of the people. We are confident that with the high level of activism of our members and staff in support of the party will ensure success.

In a continuing attempt to coordinate our activities in the social services sector, a recent meeting was held with the Deputy Minister of Community Services to discuss establishing a “lead table” model for our ARC, RCF and other community services locals.

### ***Prince Edward Island***

With the issue of restructuring of the ambulance service in PEI, CUPE presented a well-documented brief on the advantages of public ambulances to the government. The government rejected our advances for a public service and proceeded with amalgamation of all ambulance service of the Island. This resulted in a representation vote for the ambulance service workers who had been represented by three different labour organizations.

After a very active campaign we were successful in being chosen as the union of choice by the workers in this sector.

As of July 1<sup>st</sup>, approximately 20 members of Local 1145 Transportation Group will be moved to the Department of Transportation under UPSE. The local is negotiating a transfer agreement to secure the benefits of the members affected. We are losing great activists in our union as a result of this reorganization. We wish these affected members well with a certainty that they will continue to be active in the labour movement in PEI.

### ***Newfoundland and Labrador***

The provincial government has backtracked in a recent announcement that they were looking to establish a new dementia unit in Corner Brook as a P3 initiative. Following CUPE public reaction to the initiative in which it was indicated that we would mount a fight back campaign the minister responsible announced that the facility would be publicly owned and operated.

Following our recent victory in a long standing pay-equity dispute with the provincial government that will see members take a share of a \$24 million settlement, steps are now being taken to ensure that retired members are able to access the funding. A special website has been set up for retirees to inquire about the process for accessing the fund.

## **6. Provincial Division Conventions**

### ***Saskatchewan Division – March 8-10 – Saskatoon, SK***

The Saskatchewan Division ran a smooth, well-organized convention attended by just over 200 members. David Forbes, the new Minister of Labour, addressed delegates.

On International Women's Day (March 8<sup>th</sup>), delegates participated in a rally organized by CUPE-Saskatchewan and co-sponsored by the Early Learning Child Care Coalition in front of City Hall. Speakers addressed equality issues as well as the need for access to a public non-profit child care program for all Canadian families. A second rally was also held with SGEU in support of a casino closure and loss of jobs.

### ***Alberta Division – March 23-25 – Fort McMurray, AB***

The 54<sup>th</sup> Alberta Division Convention opened in Fort McMurray on March 23<sup>rd</sup> and hosted NDP Leader Brian Mason and other keynote speakers. While more than 50 general and constitutional resolutions were submitted on a variety of social issues, delegates discussed at length the provincial government's health care reforms.

During the convention, Brothers Génereux, Lanovaz and I visited the Fort McMurray public water treatment plant. The Fort McMurray City Council recently said no to a P3 proposal and the planned expansion will be publicly owned and operated.

### ***New Brunswick Division – April 6-8 – Fredericton, NB***

New Brunswick Division convention delegates' attention was on political action and pending municipal elections. Brother Hassan Yussuff, CLC Secretary-Treasurer, spoke fervently of the need for greater and more focused political action.

Some 250 delegates were gathered to discuss and debate strategy.

### ***Manitoba Division – April 26-29 – Dauphin, MB***

The theme of the CUPE Manitoba Division convention centered on recognizing and highlighting what our members are doing to build strong communities, how public services make communities a welcoming place to live. NDP Cabinet Minister, Stan Struthers, Minister of Conservation, addressed the delegates.

The Division also held a commemorative ceremony to mark the Day of Mourning (April 28) in front of Dauphin City Hall.

### ***BC Division – April 26-29 – Vancouver, BC***

CUPE BC opened its convention on the theme of "Building From Strength" and began its convention by recapping and celebrating the leading role its members played in support of the BC Teachers' strike and its strong political action work.

Guest speakers included federal NDP Leader Jack Layton, BC NDP Leader Carole James, as well as international guest speaker Carlos Gonzales, the President of the Union of University Workers of Columbia.

Delegates at convention joined the BC Federation of Labour's Day of Mourning ceremony.

### ***Newfoundland and Labrador Division – May 1-3 – Marystown, NL***

Newfoundland and Labrador members gathered to debate public-private partnerships (P3s) in health care and provincial coordinated bargaining. They also adopted an emergency resolution on closures and layoffs at the FPI fish plant. The convention also honoured long time NDP Leader Jack Harris who recently stepped down.

Congratulations to Brother Wayne Lucas who was re-elected as President of CUPE Newfoundland and Labrador for the ninth consecutive term!

### ***Nova Scotia Division – May 8-10 – New Glasgow, NS***

Delegates to the Nova Scotia Division welcomed Darrell Dexter, Leader of the New Democratic Party. Nova Scotia is facing a closely contested provincial election.

Delegates also approved a Division Strategic Directions Plan which followed key areas of the National Strategic Directions Policy document. A moving candle light vigil commemorated the 14<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Westray mine disaster.

### ***Prince Edward Island Division – May 11-12 – Charlottetown, PEI***

Delegates heard from NDP Leader Dean Constable, and also received a presentation from the National Women's Task Force (as did all provincial division conventions this year).

Members also honoured retired Maritimes Regional Director Bob Davidson, as well as Brother Simon Hashie (PEI Division Treasurer), who due to restructuring is no longer a member of CUPE.

### ***Ontario Division – May 24-27 – Ottawa, ON***

The largest ever Ontario Division convention was held in Ottawa this year. The convention featured a special international panel and honoured striking members of CUPE Local 4222 by raising \$120,000 in donation support. A very successful rally for child care was held on Parliament Hill. The visuals of this demonstration were captivating and many other unions and coalition partners fighting for universal child care participated. A second rally was held to support members of the United Steelworkers on strike at the Ottawa Congress Centre.

A special evening tribute was held where delegates honoured Brother Brian O'Keefe who has announced his retirement. Brother O'Keefe had served as OD Secretary-Treasurer for 10 years.

Congratulations to Brother Patrick (Sid) Ryan re-elected as President and Brother Fred Hahn elected as Secretary-Treasurer!

## **7. Retirements**

On behalf of our union, may I express our thanks and best wishes to the staff who have retired or will be retiring in the next few months. They are:

Brother Robert Davidson, Maritimes Regional Office (February 1, 2006)  
 Sister Nancy McNeil, Windsor Area Office (July 1, 2006)  
 Sister Velma Humphrey, Sydney Area Office (August 1, 2006)  
 Sister Dominique Malboeuf, Quebec Regional Office (September 1, 2006)  
 Brother Denzil D'Souza, Ontario Regional Office (September 1, 2006)  
 Sister Sharon Lockwood, Saskatoon Area Office (November 1, 2006)  
 Brother Ron Moreau, Ontario Regional Office (June 1, 2006)

## **8. In Memorium**

I know that many of you have joined me in offering condolences to the family of Sister Marlene Tartsch. Sister Marlene was a tireless activist who worked as a temporary representative in the Manitoba Regional Office. She was Secretary-Treasurer for CUPE Manitoba and was Chairperson of the Manitoba Health Care Council and she was also one of the pioneers of the National Leadership program for women. Sister Marlene passed away on May 6<sup>th</sup> after a courageous battle with cancer.

## **9. Middle East**

As many of you have heard, delegates to the recent CUPE Ontario convention adopted a resolution calling for a "campaign to boycott, divestment and sanctions" against the state of Israel.

CUPE National has a policy that was adopted at our 2003 convention. That policy states that we:

"Demand that the Israeli Government immediately withdraw from the occupied territories and abide by UN Resolution 242 and 338";

"call for and actively work towards an end to all acts of violence that take the lives of innocent people, whether they be Palestinian or Israeli";  
 and,

“help develop a peace process based on equality between Israelis and Palestinians and based on the implementation of United Nations resolutions and international law.”

CUPE National respects the rights of its chartered organizations to take a stand on all issues. As a national union we are governed by policy resolutions adopted at our national conventions. And as such, we will not be issuing a call, nor have we been asked by CUPE Ontario to call upon local unions across Canada to boycott Israel.

CUPE encourages democratic debate on international issues. Debates focused on the Middle East should respect the legitimate aspirations of both the Palestinian and Israeli people.

## 10. **Closing Thoughts**

The issues and challenges facing our Union are never-ending and as your National President, I try to represent our Union to the best of my capabilities. I know, however, that it is Brother Claude, the members of our National Executive Board, our activists and members, and our staff that help me achieve to the best of my ability this responsibility. For this, I would like to express my sincere appreciation and thanks.

My quarterly reports, the annual reports – *CUPE Celebrates*, and *CUPE’s Work on International Solidarity*, attempt to summarize and provide accountability to you of the work of our Union. If you have not seen these documents, please visit our web site [www.cupe.ca](http://www.cupe.ca) or contact my office. Your comments and feedback are welcomed.

As I conclude my report, I wish each and every one of you a safe and enjoyable summer with family and friends.

In solidarity,

PAUL MOIST  
National President