

INSIDE:

Saskatchewan Pay Equity
Home Care Cars
Pensions
Major Wage Settlements
Cost of Living (CPI)

Our benefits are under attack!

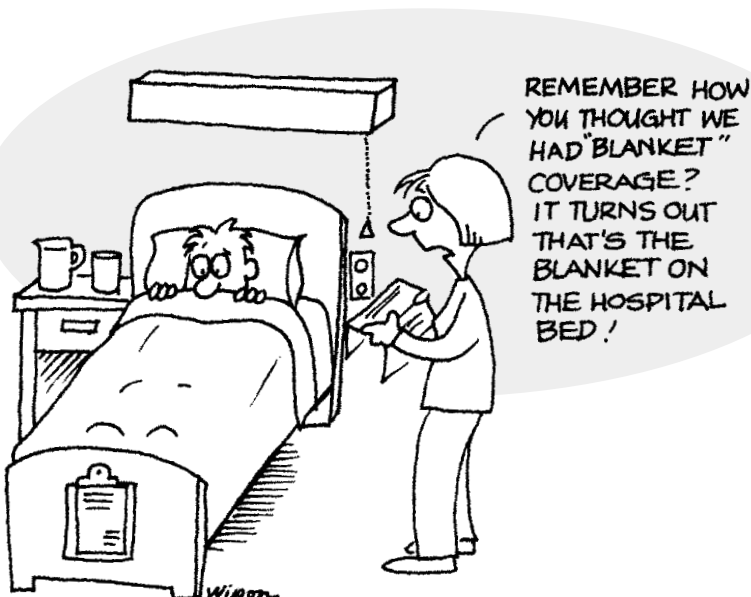
CUPE locals are fighting to keep their hard-won benefit packages. In the face of provincial deregulation of drugs and services and the federal government's refusal to adequately fund Medicare, benefit costs are rising. And so is employer pressure on locals to reduce costs by scaling back benefits sorely needed by members.

Tabletalk – *your bargaining resource* – will publish four times a year. Its goal is to give CUPE Local bargaining committees, elected officers and servicing representatives useful information for preparing – and negotiating – bargaining demands. Tabletalk's three-hole punch style makes it easy to keep in reference binders. Feel free to make copies or use the material to fit your members' needs. Comments welcome at research@cupe.ca.

Disponible en français

Here are a few nasty tricks that employers have been trying:

- Introducing “flexible” or “cafeteria-style” benefits which break the benefit package into smaller ‘customized’ plans that permit employees to choose from a list of benefits offered. This leads to “two-tier” benefits where higher-paid employees can afford better benefits than lower-paid members (often women, disabled people and visible minorities). And, it’s NOT cheaper since there are no longer savings from economies of scale, plus ‘customizing’ increases administration costs.
- Cutting the benefit ‘formulary’ which is the list of drugs or health services that is covered by the benefit plan. Once reduced, it is very hard to expand.
- Hiring brokerage firms and pharmacists to cut back the benefit plan.
- Increasing the deductible which increases employees’ annual costs.
- Implementing co-insurance which assigns a penalty payment every time a bill is submitted, penalizing “sick” members.
- Capping the overall maximum dollar limit per year, or a limit on a given service, hurting members who need expensive services such as Private Duty Nursing and Ambulance Services.



- Setting lifetime maximums, penalizing members who need long-term insurance.
- Using outdated dental fee guides to lower reimbursement.
- Increasing employees' portion of the premium.
- Reducing coverage by not specifying alternatives when private rooms are unavailable.
- **Using a mail-order Pharmacy**, such as Medi-Trust, for non-emergency drugs, drugs for chronic ailments and maintenance drugs.
- **Demanding proper workload and staffing** as a way to prevent illness.
- **Adding Detailed Benefit Plan descriptions** to collective agreements so that they are grievable.
- **Lobbying** with employers for public health care and proper funding, and reducing the time that patented drugs can deny generics from coming onto the market (through Federal Bill C-91).

Here are a few ways CUPE locals are **winning** at the benefit bargaining table:

- **Negotiating Multi-Employer Benefit Plans** which save money because larger groups lower costs, and sharing costs and risks provides more security for workers.
- **Negotiating Joint Union-Employer Benefit Committees** to monitor benefits. The joint multi-union and multi-employer Standing Committee on Insured Benefits (SCIB) in New Brunswick is an example.
- **Switching to a less expensive carrier or insurance company** - non-profits such as Green Shield or Blue Cross may be an alternative.
- **Encouraging the use of generic drugs** when a health care practitioner determines a substitution is appropriate.
- **Negotiating 'Preferred Provider' arrangements** with unionized and local pharmacies to reduce costs for plan members in exchange for ensuring business for the pharmacy.

Here are some recent gains made by CUPE locals:

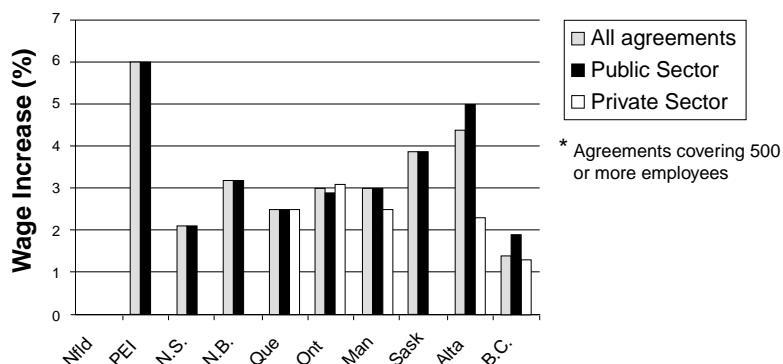
- Cape Breton Regional Municipality (CBRM) – changed total funding share from 50/50 to 60% employer/40% union.
- Southern Rail, the sub-local for Skytrain, in B.C. (CUPE 7000) – extended health benefits were increased to lifetime limits of \$50,000 (and \$100,000 April 2003) from \$7,500. Plan C dental was increased from a \$1,000 maximum to a \$3,500 maximum. Premiums for retirees with at least 10 years service are now covered by the employer.
- CUPE 218, Durham Catholic School Board, Ontario – added caps and crowns to the dental plan and increased provisions for glasses for adults from \$200 to \$300 every two years (kids get coverage every year).
- CUPE 2128, Biggar Public School Division, Saskatchewan – won a 1.5% increase for their dental plan and a new extended health package.
- CUPE 416, Toronto Municipal Workers, Ontario- negotiated 3% increase to include private duty nursing care; speech therapist; licensed or registered physiotherapist; vision care; hearing aids; PSA and ovarian screening; major restorative dental care; orthodontics; group life insurance; accidental death and dismemberment; and long term disability. The group life insurance increases from \$5,000 for each employee to two times each employee's annual salary, with the employer paying 100% of the premium.

For more information, visit cupe.ca, e-mail research@cupe.ca, or write to Heather Farrow, CUPE Research, 21 Florence Street, Ottawa, Ontario, K2P 0W6. For more details, see the following CUPE documents: *Flexible Benefits a Raw Deal*, *Managed Health Care*, and *CUPE The Facts: Fighting Benefit Takeaways*. ■

Wage settlement information

- This chart shows major wage settlements for unionized workers in locals with more than 500 members. Check the table below for the actual percentage increases.
- Because HRDC chooses to compile data only for settlements with 500+ members, the vast majority of CUPE settlements are not reflected, since 91% of CUPE locals have fewer than 500 members.
- Note the above average wage settlement increases in Manitoba and Saskatchewan – provinces where there are NDP governments.
- For PEI, NS, NB, the public sector data may only reflect one agreement, rather than representing a provincial trend.

**Provincial Wage Settlements
Major Agreements* Third Quarter
2002**

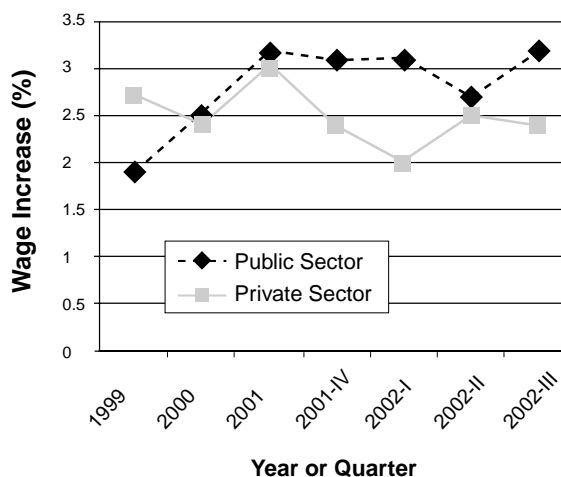


| | Nfld | PEI | N.S. | N.B. | Que | Ont | Man | Sask | Alta | B.C. |
|----------------|------|-----|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| All agreements | ND | 6% | 2.1% | 3.2% | 2.5% | 3% | 3% | 3.9% | 4.4% | 1.4% |
| Public Sector | ND | 6% | 2.1% | 3.2% | 2.5% | 2.9% | 3% | 3.9% | 5% | 1.9% |
| Private Sector | ND | ND | ND | ND | 2.5% | 3.1% | 2.5% | ND | 2.3% | 1.3% |

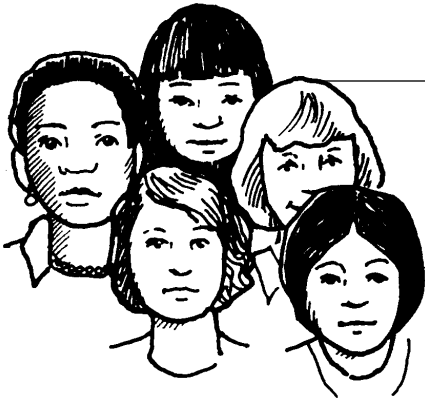
Source: Human Resources Development Canada
ND: No Data Available

- This chart shows major settlements trends in Canada for unionized workplaces with 500 or more employees. The last four quarters show changes by quarter during 2002.
- For most of 2002, public sector wage increases have been 1.3% higher than inflation (or CPI), representing a real wage gain.
- Overall, the public sector has outpaced the private sector in negotiating wage increases – a reversal of an earlier trend.

**Settlement Trends
Major Agreements* for Canada**



* Agreements covering 500 or more employees
Source: Human Resources Development Canada



Pay equity on the books for Saskatchewan library workers

Hard work and strike action has paid off for library workers in Saskatoon and Regina. Members of CUPE 2669 in Saskatoon and CUPE 1594 in Regina now have pay equity language in their new collective agreements.

The municipal library workers weren't covered by the provincial government's pay equity policy as it only covered library workers in the provincial civil service. The locals' employers argued there were no male comparators. But determined members went on

strike and won the right to compare to other municipal workers. The locals negotiated 2% of payroll set aside for the implementation of an internal job evaluation plan. Pay equity will then be subject to negotiation during the next round.

CUPE 1594's members at the Regina library also achieved a pay equity letter of understanding in their June 14, 2002 collective agreement. Their employer has tried to shelve the agreement but the local is working hard to make sure the pay equity commitment to members is honoured.

Library local 2669 in Saskatoon ratified their new contract November 26, 2002, after a rotating strike and subsequent lockout that began two months earlier. In addition to the pay equity commitment, the local was able to achieve a wage increase for this round for all members!

Congratulations to CUPE 2669 and 1594 for standing up for pay equity!

See www.cupe.sk.ca for more information.

Here's the pay equity language that CUPE 2669 and 1594 negotiated in a Letter of Understanding:

"The parties are committed to the concept of pay equity that is based on the principle of equal pay for work of equal value...considering...that there are not enough male comparators within the Saskatoon Public library...the study will compare pay equity disparities between CUPE 59 and CUPE 2669...through job evaluation..."

"CUPE 1594 and the Regina Public Library agree that the results of the study as set out in this Letter of Understanding will be implemented subject to negotiation and agreement between the parties". ■

Home care workers get wheels!

Home Health Aides in Saskatchewan's Battleford Health District had been using their own vehicles for calls and it wasn't working.

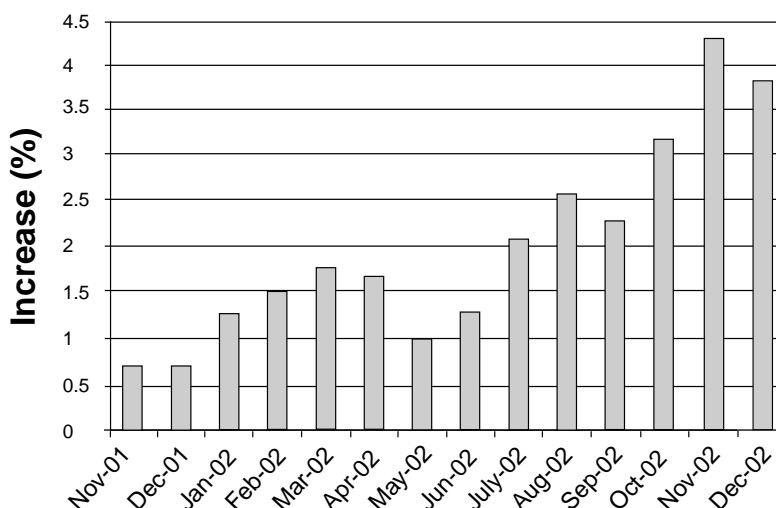
The workers found the wear and tear far exceeded the employer's supplied travel allowance. Their cars were wearing out faster than they could afford to replace them. The CUPE members banded together and went to the employer with a solution and they won!

The workers now have five cars they can use to do their jobs. They even were able to arrange that the employer-supplied cars are scheduled and assigned to the Aides, just as the work is scheduled.

Saskatchewan's CUPE Health Care Council is now lobbying the provincial government to allocate funding to the health authorities for the provision of vehicles for all Home Health Aides.

For more details, go to www.cupe.sk.ca ■

Increases in the Canada Consumer Price Index (CPI)



Source: Statistics Canada

Inflation reaches high of 4.3% (November 2002)

Inflation, as measured by increases in the Consumer Price Index (CPI), reached a high of 4.3% in November 2002, compared to the same month in 2001. In November 2002, gasoline prices were 19.0% higher than in November 2001, and natural gas prices were 14.5% higher. The 7.3% increase in electricity prices also increased the CPI for November 2002.

Alberta suffered the highest rate of inflation at 9.7% higher in November 2002 than November 2001. New Brunswick came in second at 6.1%. The lowest rate of inflation was in B.C. at 3.5%. The other provinces were: Newfoundland and Labrador 5.2%, P.E.I. 5.1%, Nova Scotia 5.5%, Quebec 3.7%, Ontario 3.8%, Saskatchewan 4.3% and Manitoba 3.7%.

CUPE Privatization Conference

*Come talk about
bargaining and privatization*

**March 27-29
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It's RSP time again, but don't be fooled!

This time of year, the major banks spend millions promoting RSPs. RSPs are good for banks because they make them huge profits. But, RSPs are not pensions. RSPs are only contributions to individual investment accounts. Unlike most pension plans, RSPs make absolutely no commitment to any pre-set level of future income, and they force all of the 'risk' onto the individual. In fact, since RSPs are cashable at any time, there is no certainty that they will produce a retirement income at all. Many are cashed in as soon as an urgent financial need arises.

The truth is that defined benefit pension plans are far superior to RSPs because they ensure workers know how much income they will have upon retirement. CUPE has come up with a way to give members access to a defined pension plan at minimum expense to employers.

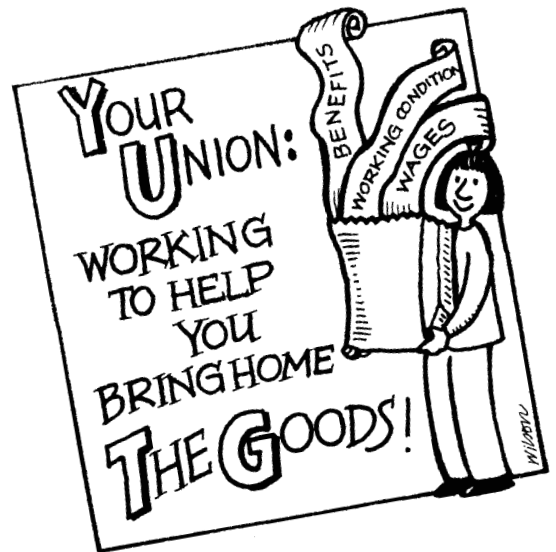
CUPE members from every sector and every area of the country, can negotiate the Multi-Sector Pension Plan (MSPP) – a defined benefit pension plan – if they do not have a pension plan, or have an inferior plan. The MSPP is a national pension plan fully controlled by two unions - CUPE and SEIU (Service Employees International Union). It costs the employer nothing in terms of

administration. All the employer has to do is contribute. The amount from both members and the employer can range from 4% to 10.5% of income. Another benefit is that the MSPP conforms to recent breakthrough legal decisions and ensures spousal survivor benefits are provided to same-sex spouses.

The social service sector, Associations for Community Living and child care centres, comprise the largest number of MSPP members. However, the Plan also has members who work for a golf course and flight attendants. To participate, locals can negotiate the MSPP, and the level of contribution by the employer and the members, into the collective agreement. The local will then be asked, at least once per year, to verify enrolment data received by the Plan's administrator. Including the MSPP in the collective agreement allows the local to file a grievance should the employer fail to remit contributions.

Here are some of the locals that have recently negotiated the MSPP:

- CUPE 608-10, Osoyoos Golf & Country Club in B.C.
- CUPE 4029, Calm Air International, an airline in Manitoba.



- CUPE 2204, Ottawa Daycare in Ontario
- CUPE 3440, ACL in Kirkland Lake, Ontario was on strike in the fall of 2001 to achieve the MSPP
- CUPE 4474, Tayside Community Residential and Support Options, Ontario, bargained the MSPP in their first collective agreement in January 2002.

If you are in a local without a pension plan (or a lesser plan), write to Heather Farrow, CUPE Research, 21 Florence Street, Ottawa, Ontario, K2P 0W6, e-mail research@cupe.ca, or go to the cupe.ca website for more information. The CUPE document, *CUPE: You Too Can Have a Good Pension Plan: The Multi-Sector Pension Plan*, is very useful for more details.

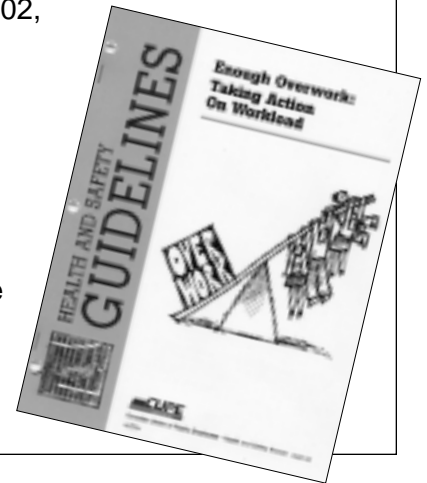
You can also contact the MSPP fund office at 105 Commerce Valley Drive West, Suite 310, Markham, Ontario, L3T 7W3, tel. (905) 889-6200, fax (905) 889-7313. ■



Looking for bargaining tools?

Go to cupe.ca for these new CUPE National publications or contact the branch:

- **Disability Rights in the Workplace: Understanding Duty to Accommodate**, September 2002, Equality Branch.
- **Enough Overwork: Taking Action on Workload**, 2002, Health and Safety Branch.
- Coming Soon: Revised (Un)Employment Insurance Guide and (Un)Employment Insurance Fact Sheet for School Board Members ■



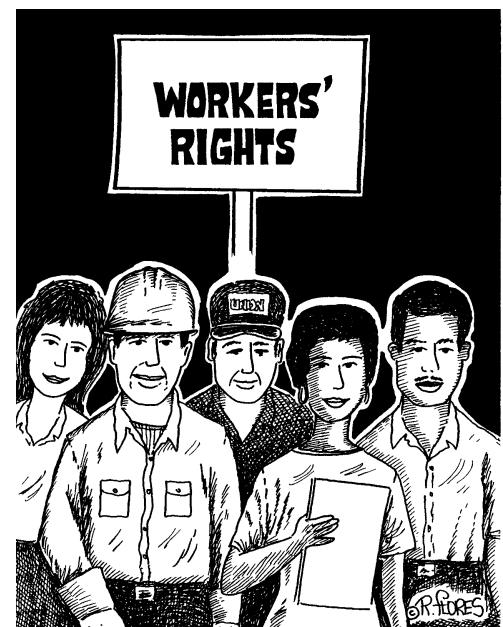
Check These Out!

Selected New Documents Related to Bargaining:

- For **statistics on poverty**, see *The Progress of Canada's Children 2002*, Canadian Council on Social Development, call toll-free 1-866-767-6766.
- *Snakes and Ladders: A Policy Brief on Poverty Dynamics* by Marc Lee, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Oct. 2002, see www.policyalternatives.ca or write to: 410-75 Albert Street, Ottawa, ON. K1P 5E7
- *Winners and Losers in the Labour Market of the 1990s*, by A. Heisz, A. Jackson, G. Picot, March 2002, Statistics Canada, see www.statcan.ca
- For **workload issues** see, *2001 National Work-Life Conflict Study*, Health Canada commission by professors Linda Duxbury of Carleton University in Ottawa and Chris Higgins of the University of Western Ont. in London. See www.hc-sc.gc.ca ■

Calling all CUPE Sisters and Brothers – Send Us Your Great Bargaining Language!

If you would like to see any contract language or your story featured in *Tabletalk*, please write to Heather Farrow at CUPE Research, 21 Florence Street, Ottawa, ON K2P 0W6, e-mail research@cupe.ca or fax (613) 237-5508. ■



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