

Tabletalk –

your bargaining resource –

is published four times a year to provide 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.

Please email Susan Attenborough at research@cupe.ca with corrections, questions, suggestions, or contributions.

Disponible en français

Hello?

Cell phones and pagers have changed the way we communicate at home and at work. Does your job require you to have a cell phone or pager? If so, who pays the costs?

When employers require workers to have cell phones or pagers as part of their job, the employer should pay the costs. However, it can get complicated at tax time.

The Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) may consider how much workers get reimbursed for cell phone/pager use as income and tax them on it. How? If the employer reimburses at a flat monthly rate and the employee's phone bill is less, the CRA considers the difference as income, which must be reported and is subject to tax.

“So, for example, if a worker's monthly cell phone/pager bill is \$22.00, and the employer reimburses the worker at a rate of \$30.00 per month, the difference in the amount of \$8.00 could be considered as income and therefore a taxable benefit. However, there would be no issue if the worker's monthly cell phone/pager bill exceeds \$30.00.”

Here's how to provide protection: “The employer agrees to reimburse employees at a maximum of \$XX.XX per month upon proof of activation.” (Source: “Bargaining benefits: Cell phones and pagers,” cupe.ca)



(Continued on next page)

What about when I'm not at work?

Cell phones/pagers must be used for business purposes **only** if reimbursement is to be considered a non-taxable benefit. One way to be sure that there's no confusion at tax time is for the employer to fill out a "T2200" form that covers cell phone use.

CUPE researcher Joe Courtney has put together a fact sheet on negotiating cell phone coverage at work that includes useful tips and sample language. Check it out at cupe.ca. ■

Common Front Bargaining

In Quebec, public employees represented by different unions bargain together in the Common Front. Together they are a force of 475,000 public employees.

Bargaining has been particularly difficult this round.

During negotiations with the Common Front unions, the government introduced a budget that called for cutbacks in the health and education sectors by 2013, specifically targeting administrative staff. Workers in the health care and education sectors are already overloaded trying to care for students and patients. Cutting administration will just increase the pressure on front-line workers.

The unions are criticizing the government for not trying to find collective solutions at the bargaining table: "Collective agreements were not even concluded when the government already announced that it has no intention of taking them into account when the time comes to cut positions. On our side, we continue to seek sustainable solutions to improve our public services, which are clearly not in Bachand's budget," said Michel Arsenault, president of the QFL. (Source: CUPE Quebec web site, May 2010)



The Common Front is asking for cost-of-living adjustments for the 475,000 workers it represents, as well as a wage catch-up with the private sector, where wages are about 7.7 per cent higher.

Once again, governments turn to public employees to bear the brunt of the pain required to repay the provincial deficit.

On March 20, more than 75,000 people gathered in the streets of Montréal to demonstrate their support for a negotiated solution to the issues facing public services in Quebec. Still, the government stalls, the same government that is wrestling with scandals around the awarding of municipal contracts and the collusion of elected officials with private firms.

The Common Front requested mediation in late April. As of the end of May there was no settlement. Solidarity greetings to our Sisters and Brothers in Quebec! ■



About 70 per cent of CUPE members do, but in the private sector only about 20 per cent of workers belong to a workplace pension plan.

In most plans, particularly in the public sector, workers make significant contributions to their future pension benefits. Every payday they contribute a portion of their paycheque to their pension. Their employer contributes another portion of their wages to the plan. That's what a pension is – deferred wages!

The average workplace pension benefit for a 30-year public sector employee is a modest \$17,900 a year. (Source: "It's time to fix Canada's pension crisis," June 11, 2010, cupe.ca) This is hardly the gold-plated plan that some uninformed critics claim about public sector plans. However, most CUPE members will never achieve 30 years of service – and 30 per cent of CUPE members aren't part of a workplace pension plan at all.

Women are less likely than men to be covered by a workplace pension plan because of the kind of work they do. Women tend to be concentrated in low-wage, part-time jobs and experience more frequent breaks from the workforce as primary caregivers for children and seniors. The current pension system is not working for women who face a greater likelihood of poverty when they retire.

Unions have a proud tradition of advocating for decent pensions for their members and all Canadians. It's time to take up the fight again. CUPE and the Canadian Labour Congress are actively campaigning to "Secure Retirement Incomes for All." Our goals are:

- To amend the CPP to slowly increase contributions to phase in a doubling of existing benefits. Increasing benefits from the public plan will go a long way towards improving and securing pension incomes for the 93 per cent of Canadians who contribute to the CPP and for the majority of working Canadians who don't have workplace pension plans.
- To fight for better regulations to protect existing workplace pension plans from bankruptcy, high-risk investments and employer underfunding. We've seen the impact on workers at Nortel, who paid for their employer's bankruptcy with their pensions.
- To boost our efforts to win decent retirement incomes for members who don't have workplace pension plans. Strong workplace pensions combined with public pension plans that cover all working people will provide retirement security with dignity.

Want to be part of the campaign to fix pensions? You can learn more and sign the petition at cupe.ca. ■



News Flash

Good news on the CPP front. Finance ministers met in Prince Edward Island in June and came to an agreement for a modest, phased-in increase in the CPP. In the coming months, we will see efforts to define "modest" and "phased in." But the federal government's endorsement of the proposal for expanding the CPP represents a major shift, due in significant part to the mobilization of the labour movement on this issue.



Sector profile – Libraries

When was the last time you visited a public

library? When you do, you will probably run into a CUPE member. CUPE represents almost 63 per cent of all library workers in Canada!

The majority of library workers work in Canada's public library system but others work in libraries, universities, schools, and municipalities. CUPE represents library workers in eight of ten provinces with the majority in Ontario, Quebec, and British Columbia.

As you might expect, the library sector is a predominantly female workforce. And, predictably, women library workers earn, on average, less than their male counterparts.

According to Census data, the average salaries of male library clerks rose 7.26 per cent over the five-year period 2000–2005, whereas the average salaries of female library clerks fell 2.69 per cent.

Not surprisingly, pay equity is a big issue for many library locals, and there have been some major successes. For example, in June 2008, CUPE Local 416 and the Toronto Library signed a pay equity settlement worth \$20 million over

five years. The job evaluation process increased wages anywhere from 15 cents to \$4.22 an hour, retroactive to 2004. The lowest wage at the Library is now \$10 an hour (minimum wage in Ontario is \$8.75 per hour), an improvement over the previous poverty level wages paid by the employer. (Source: *Tabletalk*, Winter 2009)

Libraries are usually funded with taxpayer dollars, but there has been a shift away from federal and provincial funding. Currently, municipal expenditures on libraries exceed federal and provincial spending combined!

Canada's aging workforce presents the library sector with real challenges in the not-too-distant future: About one-quarter of Canada's library staff will retire by 2014.

CUPE library members are active at all levels. CUPE was a platinum sponsor of the Canadian Library Association (CLA) National Conference and Trade Show in Edmonton, Alberta, June 2–5, 2010. CUPE also sponsored the keynote presentation, "Wikipedia, a tool for sharing knowledge, sharing power." As well, CUPE has posted a video about library workers on YouTube. Check it out! http://cupe.ca/libraries/public_libraries (Source: Canadian Public Libraries, cupe.ca). ■

Stronger Together



CUPE National Health Care Sector Meeting

October 20-22, 2010 in Victoria, British Columbia

Don't forget to register for CUPE's Health Care Sector conference in Victoria, October 20–22. Sign up at cupe.ca.

Innovative Language

More and more workers are biking to work – it encourages healthy, active workers and reduces greenhouse gases, both of which are worth supporting! Here's an example of contract language that can help compensate those who leave their cars at home.



CUPE Local 3942 and Ottawa Salus Corporation, expiry March 31, 2011

23.04 Expenses

a) Employees required to use a private motor vehicle for the Employer's business shall be paid at the rate of forty-two cents (42¢) per kilometre.

A mileage claim form must be submitted by all employees who claim kilometres per month.

An employee who has travelled by bicycle for work purposes in excess of 100 kilometres between April 1 and October 31 may claim an allowance of \$0.20/km to a maximum of

fifty dollars (\$50.00) towards the upkeep of such bicycle and related safety equipment. Such claim itemizing bicycle journeys will be made by November 30th of each year.

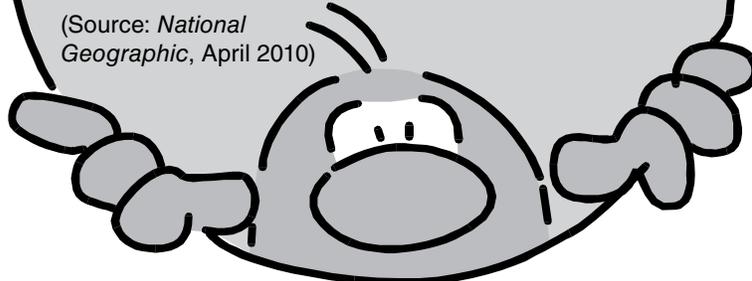
Employees who are authorized to attend a conference on behalf of Salus will be reimbursed for their related expenses to be agreed upon in advance by the employee and the Executive Director.

Traffic tickets, parking violations, etc., will not be reimbursed by the Employer for any reason.

FACTOID

- **67 per cent of Dominican Republicans and 52 per cent of Laotians use factory-bottled water as their primary source of drinking water.**
- **About 2 billion gallons of water are used each day to irrigate golf courses in the U.S.**

(Source: National Geographic, April 2010)





Vale Inco strike

Thousands of United Steelworkers members have been on strike since July, 2009 in Sudbury

and Port Colborne, Ontario, and in Voisey's Bay, Newfoundland and Labrador.

Vale Inco, is 100 per cent owned by Brazilian interests. It is attempting to gut Canadian workers' collective agreements and cut their pensions. The employer wants the workers to give up their defined benefit pension for a defined contribution or money purchase plan.

Governments and industry promote and predict a decline in defined benefit plans. Defined benefit plans provide better protection for workers because they provide benefits based on a formula, which employers are obligated to fund. But employers claim they are too expensive to maintain, and they are anxious to pass more of the cost and the risk to employees.

That's what this strike is about. If the employer wins here, it will be a major setback in the fight to maintain fair pensions for workers.

CUPE has been particularly supportive of the strikers:

- CUPE National Executive board passed a resolution of support promising a \$10,000

contribution to the United Steelworkers' strike fund, encouraging CUPE locals to provide support and pledging to lobby all governments to introduce anti-scab legislation.

- Ten months into the strike, Steelworkers in Labrador have received a \$25,000 boost from their sister union. Delegates to the CUPE Newfoundland and Labrador convention delegates dug deep into their pockets and their locals pledged \$12,855 for the strikers as a show of solidarity and support for this difficult labour dispute. National President Paul Moist, who was attending convention, immediately pledged to match that amount to bring it over the \$25,000 mark.
- At their May 2010 Convention in Windsor, CUPE Ontario delegates showed their support by raising \$70,000 in donations and pledges for the thousands of striking Sudbury workers and their families.

The strong support of fellow unionists went a long way to sustain these workers in their year long strike. In July, Sudbury and Port Colbourne members ratified a tentative settlement, with about 75 per cent approval. Existing employees won major improvements to their defined benefit plan including indexing and health care benefits. New hires will join a defined contribution plan. Negotiations continue with the Voisey's Bay, Newfoundland, members. ■

Defined benefit pension

- Pension benefit is calculated using a formula based on earnings multiplied by years of service.
- The employer has an ongoing obligation to contribute and costs can be spread over time.
- All workers receive pension benefits that are roughly equitable and proportional to their earnings.

Defined contribution pension

- Pension benefit is based on how much is in the individual's account, which varies by contribution levels, investment returns, and the cost of purchasing an annuity or monthly pension income.
- The employer is not obligated to fund a preset amount, so the size of your pension is determined by the size of your account and the investment performance.

Consumer Price Index by Province, April 2009 to April 2010

	% change
Canada	1.8
Newfoundland and Labrador	2.5
Prince Edward Island	2.3
Nova Scotia	2.5
New Brunswick	2.9
Quebec	1.9
Ontario	2.2
Manitoba	1.0
Saskatchewan	2.1
Alberta	1.6
British Columbia	1.0

Source: Statistics Canada, *The Daily*, Friday, May 21, 2010

In every province, higher gas prices continue to drive up inflation. In April, prices at the pump were 16.3 per cent higher than they were in April 2009. This follows a 17.2 per cent rise in the 12 months from March 2009 to March 2010.

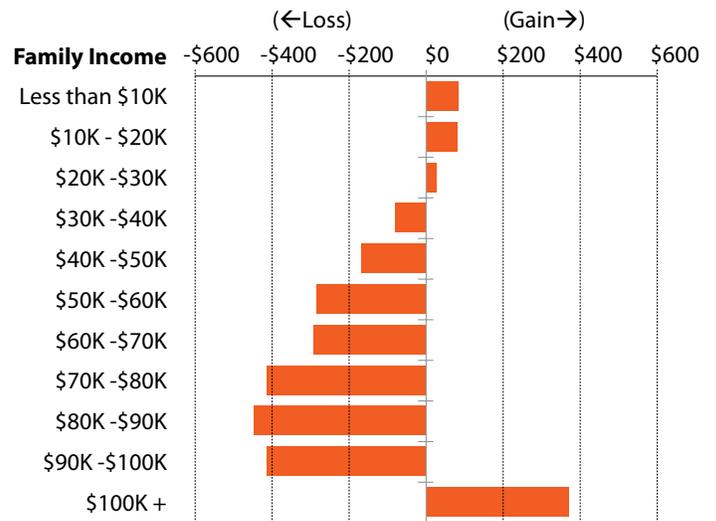
Overall, energy prices rose 9.8 per cent between April 2009 and April 2010, following on a 5.8 per cent increase during the twelve-month period to March. When energy prices are taken out, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) rose 1.1 per cent compared with a 1.0 per cent increase in March.

Transportation prices, which increased 6.2 per cent in the twelve months from April 2009 to April 2010, drove the CPI up for the sixth consecutive month. In addition to higher gasoline and passenger vehicle prices, consumers paid 5.6 per cent more for passenger vehicle insurance premiums in April than a year earlier as insurance companies try to recoup lost profits.

Regional trends continue. Atlantic Canada has rates of inflation of 2.5 per cent or higher because of the region's higher dependence on fuel. In Ontario and Quebec, inflation has averaged close to 2 per cent while in Western provinces the average inflation rate to date in 2010 has been below 1.5 per cent. Increases in sales taxes and the shift to the HST



Impact of Ontario HST Tax Reform on Average Annual Loss or Gain by Family Income



Includes impact of shift to HST, sales and property tax credits, income tax cuts and flow-through impact of corporate tax cuts, but not one-time transition payments.

Source: *Economic Climate*, June 2010

will boost inflation rates in Ontario, British Columbia, Quebec, and Nova Scotia over the next two years.

Many of the familiar culprits continue to drive the cost of living higher: rising prices for fuel, houses, and insurance premiums. However, these increases are on top of hikes in many user fees, taxes, and regulated prices, such as electricity, property taxes, water, postal and telephone services, urban transit, and education and health care services.

(Source: "Economic Climate," June 2010, cupe.ca)

Current and Upcoming “Key” Negotiations – covering 500 or more employees, May 31, 2010 Federal Jurisdiction

Employer	Union	Employees	Status	Expiry Month
Public Sector				
Canada Post Corporation	CUPW	6,000	arbitration	Sep 09
Private Sector				
TELUS Communications (Quebec) Inc.	CUPE	1,010	conciliation	Dec 09
Groupe TVA Inc.	CUPE	1,000	conciliation	Dec 09
Maritime Employers Association (Que.)	CUPE	830	tentative agreement	Dec 08

Provincial and Territorial Jurisdictions

Employer	Union	Employees	Status	Expiry Month
Public Sector				
Comité patronal de négociation du secteur de la santé et des services sociaux	Various unions	174,820	bargaining	Mar 10
Gouvernement du Québec	Various unions	68,990	bargaining	Mar 10
Comité patronal de négociation des collèges	Various unions	28,850	bargaining	Mar 10
Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations	CUPE/HSAS/SEIU/SGEU	27,500	conciliation/ bargaining	Mar 08/Mar 09
Community Social Services Employers' Association	BCGEU	15,000	bargaining	Mar 10
Ontario Hospital Association	SEIU	15,000	mediation	Oct 09
Health Employers Association of BC	HSABC	14,000	bargaining	Mar 10
Government of Manitoba	MGEU	13,500	bargaining	Mar 10
City of Montréal	Various unions	13,360	arbitration/conciliation	Dec 06/Aug 08
Government of New Brunswick	NBUPPE/CUPE	12,160	bargaining	Dec 08–Mar 10
Capital District Health Authority	NSGEU	8,350	bargaining	Oct 09
Government of Nova Scotia	NSGEU/CUPE	7,690	bargaining	Oct 09/Mar 10
Nova Scotia Association of Health Organizations	NSNU	3,580	bargaining	Oct 09
Emergency Health Services Commission (B.C.)	CUPE	3,500	bargaining	Mar 10
BC Hydro	COPE	1,600	bargaining	Mar 10
City of Saskatoon	CUPE	1,490	bargaining	Dec 09
City of Regina	CUPE	1,200	bargaining	Dec 09
Halifax Regional School Board	CUPE	770	bargaining	Jul 09
Private Sector				
Vale Inco (Ont.)	USW	3,450	work stoppage	May 09
Extendicare (Canada) Inc., Nursing Homes	SEIU	2,870	arbitration	Apr 10
Central Care Corporation	Various unions	1,660	arbitration	Mar/Apr 10

Upcoming Key Negotiations

Employer	Union	Employees	Expiry Month
Provincial and Territorial Jurisdictions, Public Sector			
Government of Canada	CSN	5,950	May 10
Provincial and Territorial Jurisdictions, Private Sector			
Government of Nova Scotia	NSTU	10,000	Jul 10
Universities (Ont.)	Various unions	6,870	May/Jun 10

Source: Strategic Policy, Analysis, and Workplace Information Directorate Labour Program, HRSDC, May 31, 2010