

## BARGAINING TOOLS **FAIRNESS**

# New contract language kit helps secure basic provisions

With anti-union financial disclosure legislation already introduced by the Conservative government, and the possibility of some form of US-style “right-to-work” law not far behind, there is added urgency for locals to include strong, preventative language in their collective agreements.

That’s why CUPE has developed a special Fairness project bargaining kit. This kit will assist bargaining teams to assess their current collective agreement language and provides sample language that can strengthen collective agreements.

While it might not protect locals from all forms of anti-union legislation, bargaining new language to protect our representation rights is an important line of defence.

For example, financial disclosure legislation would force locals to spend time and resources reporting detailed financial publicly. But union members already have access to this information, and only the employer benefits from

this kind of disclosure. The kit helps identify opportunities to ensure the employer shares the cost of implementing any new procedures.

In total, the kit covers these seven vital areas:

- Member contact information
- Orientation sessions
- Access to worksite
- Bulletin boards
- Union dues deduction and remittance
- Union release time
- Language in response to potential legislation

There is also a detailed overview of the legal issues related to union access to employee contact information. Contact information is essential to the democratic functioning of the union and required under law. Enshrining this right and the format of the information in the collective agreement will simplify the understanding of this right



with the employer.

It has always been important to have a direct connection with all our members even before recent legislative attacks on unions.

Strengthening representation rights will be good for locals, CUPE, and ultimately the broader labour movement.

Talk to your staff representative for more information on the Fairness project bargaining kit.

■ **Graham Cox**

## INSIDE

### 2 BARGAINING TOOLS

Online surveys make setting bargaining priorities easier

### 3 BARGAINING TRENDS

Significant gains for developmental services workers in Manitoba and Ontario

### 4 BENEFITS

The real solution for high drug costs

# Online surveys make setting bargaining priorities easier



As a democratic, member-driven organization, CUPE's ongoing success is built on dialogue with our members. A key tool we use to engage is a membership survey. Through surveying, we are able to solicit input and inform bargaining priorities. Often this is a vital point of contact between members and their union, so it is important that we make this interaction as smooth as possible.

A coherent and concise survey will help members feel comfortable about sharing positives and negatives about their workplace. It also allows us to gather evidence to support key demands and engage our members on the issues. With that knowledge in hand bargaining committees can speak with authority when they negotiate with the employer.

While bargaining surveys are a common tool, many locals are unaware that CUPE has tools available to help with the process. CUPE Research uses LimeSurvey, a free open-source online survey tool. With LimeSurvey we can design, collect, and analyze surveys that will best meet the needs of our

members and your local's bargaining team.

LimeSurvey offers easy functionality and robust customization. The software is easy to use. Any modern browser can access the survey and surveys can be circulated and promoted via email.

Sometimes online surveys suffer when respondents do not complete a survey they started. Incomplete surveys are frustrating for surveyors and respondents alike, and decrease the effectiveness of your efforts. That's why LimeSurvey allows for minimum survey abandonment, meaning members are able to save unfinished surveys and return to them later. Survey administrators can also set end dates on surveys so that when a survey period is over, additional responses are cut off.

Some of the more interesting features of LimeSurvey include skip logic and branching logic. These features allow you to set conditions

for questions depending on earlier answers, and make it easier for respondents to bypass questions that are not meaningful to them.

Based on many years of experience with the software, CUPE Research has developed best practices to ensure high response rates. We also have a library of preformatted questions for multiple sectors which can be used as a starting point for your bargaining survey. These resources will help get your survey up and running quickly.

Once the survey is complete, results are analyzed and presented to you. Or if you prefer, we can provide the raw data directly.

If you would like to use LimeSurvey for your next round of bargaining, contact your CUPE national servicing representative.

■ **Venai Raniga**

Tabletalk is published four times a year to provide CUPE bargaining committees and servicing representatives useful information for preparing and negotiating bargaining demands.

Find past issues of Tabletalk online at [cupe.ca/tabletalk](http://cupe.ca/tabletalk)

An email edition of Tabletalk is available. Subscribe at [cupe.ca/subscribe](http://cupe.ca/subscribe)

Please email Margot Young at [research@cupe.ca](mailto:research@cupe.ca) with corrections, questions, suggestions, or contributions.

COPE 491

**CUPE** / Canadian Union  
of Public Employees

# Significant gains for developmental services workers in Manitoba and Ontario

Developmental services workers will be seeing much needed wage increases in Manitoba and Ontario. The Ontario government allocated \$200 million over three years in their 2014 budget for frontline community and developmental services workers, while the Manitoba government announced \$6 million over three years for support workers in August 2014. For a sector that's been chronically underfunded over several years, these increases will have a huge effect on collective bargaining.

In Manitoba, the additional \$6 million will raise the amount the government provides for wages of developmental services workers to between \$13 and \$14 an hour by 2017. These figures are still significantly below the \$18 an hour minimum CUPE members are fighting to achieve by 2018, but it's a start. Ontario workers in the sector are also expected to see a wage increase, but the ministry has not yet released details of the funding allocation, and bargaining is ongoing.

## Issues in the sector

Bargaining wage increases is extremely difficult in underfunded sectors. Many developmental service facilities have difficulty retaining dedicated staff due to low wages and poor benefits, which affects the consistency of care for those with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Workload issues and insufficient staffing affect the quality of services and supports. A survey of developmental service organizations by Ontario Agencies Supporting Individuals with Special Needs showed that many are cutting hours of staff and eliminating or not



Members of CUPE 3085, Community Living Selkirk, won a significant victory for ACL workers province-wide. Photo: David Jacks

filling open positions, in some cases even for women on maternity leave.

## Mobilizing on the ground

These budget increases would not have been possible without ongoing and concerted pressure from CUPE members who work in assisted community living (ACL) facilities supporting individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Workers knew they needed to mobilize politically in order to set the stage for collective bargaining.

Members of CUPE 3085 at the ACL in Selkirk, Manitoba planned to go on strike the day after the scheduled government funding announcement, following a 94 per cent strike vote. They had already held information pickets on July 15 and 22, and demonstrated outside the office of NDP MLA Kerri Irvin-Ross, the Minister of Family Services and Housing. But the government's course change meant the strike was no longer necessary, and

brought welcome relief after several years of lobbying to improve conditions for workers in the sector.

January 29, 2014 was Developmental Service Worker Appreciation Day in Ontario, and locals invited MPPs to "walk in their shoes" for a day, taking them to workplaces to learn more about the effects of underfunding. CUPE representatives also met regularly with MPPs from all political parties, worked with the parents of individuals they care for, did pre-budget media work, made presentations and submitted a brief to the Select Committee on Developmental Services.

Both campaigns highlight how working conditions and collective bargaining are linked to service provision. Ultimately, workers must highlight that a life devoted to ensuring the dignity of others should not mean a life of poverty.

■ Sarah Ryan

# The real solution for high drug costs

Often we hear that the high cost of pharmaceuticals is making extended health plans unsustainable. Employers will say that too many people are taking drugs that are too expensive. So what is the answer? More restrictions on the plan like managed formularies and increasing the use of generic brands can only go so far in reducing drug costs.

There is a solution, and it lies right at the root of Tommy Douglas's vision for universal health care in Canada. The answer is a national pharmacare program.

Currently across our membership there is a patchwork of coverage for medically necessary prescription drugs. For some members the costs are covered completely. Others have some coverage or a co-payment plan, and some have no prescription drug coverage at all. When we look across the country, only 42 per cent of all Canadians have any prescription drug coverage at all, leaving many at risk.

The labour movement has often rallied for changes that improve the lives of everyone, not just for our own members. A national pharmacare plan could be our next great achievement. We can even engage our employers to stand alongside us to make real change for everyone in Canada and save money on their drug plans in the process!

## Making the case

By creating a national pharmacare plan, we could:

**Save money.** Canada is ranked second in an Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) list for drug spending per capita by country. This high ranking is due in part to the fact that we

purchase drugs provincially and not nationally. If we purchased nationally we would get a much better bulk buying discount. A study done by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives in 2010 estimated that we could save \$10.6 billion annually by instituting a national pharmacare plan. That is money employers and provinces could have at their disposal for other projects. Financially it makes good sense!

**Reduce private administration fees and costly private plans.** Currently private insurance companies make hefty profits off of our drug plans. A national public plan would remove the profit element from providing access to pharmaceuticals and create a more affordable system.

**Make drugs safer.** An independent adjudication process that is conducted nationally with more requirements for proper drug trials and research would result in safer prescription drugs.

Research, approvals and prescribing practises are currently influenced by pharmaceutical companies. A strong national program would reduce this influence.

**Increase equality.** Currently not all Canadians have equal access to affordable pharmaceutical care when they need it. That's not right, and a national pharmacare program can help.

The idea of a national pharmacare program isn't new, but there has been real political apathy in Canada that makes big change difficult. A change like this is sensible. It could result in real cost savings for our employers and meaningful help for both our members and Canadian society as a whole. If this government won't do what is right and sensible, we should consider electing one that will.

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Check out CUPE's fact sheet on pharmacare and other health care issues at [cupe.ca/health-care](http://cupe.ca/health-care)

■ **Jordana Feist**

