

NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S REPORT

June 2015 – September 2015

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

This reporting period, notwithstanding the summer season, has been a very busy one for our union on a number of fronts.

Municipal members in London, Ontario and Water Workers in Halifax, Nova Scotia walked the picket line, in both cases in defence of longstanding collective agreement rights and benefits. I was pleased to walk with their members and with the successful conclusion we achieved in both.

Our country was thrust into a federal election, the longest in our modern history, by the Prime Minister triggering the official election call on August 2, 2015. This cynical move in mid-summer was motivated by Prime Minister Harper's desire to silence third-party campaigns and to exploit the Conservatives' financial clout to outspend all other parties. Notwithstanding this development, as detailed within this report, we have an historic opportunity on October 19th to elect our first-ever federal NDP government. Now is the time for all of us to work harder than we ever have.

On the global scene, most recently in the Mediterranean, the English Channel and in Austria, we see tens of thousands of refugees seeking a new life and escaping from violent regimes and a life of abject poverty. These tragedies playing out before our eyes on a daily basis point to a world where corporate power has never been stronger, and migrant mobility never more constrained. The image of a young Syrian boy, Alan Kurdi, dead on a beach in Turkey, drew global attention to the plight of refugees.

Within this report I detail our sister union's struggles in both the U.S. and the United Kingdom, proof positive that the pressure on public sector workers is both relentless and increasing.

Final preparations are underway for CUPE's 27th constitutional convention to be held in Vancouver November 2 to 6, 2015. Our national parliament, CUPE's highest decision-making authority, offers us the opportunity to debate key issues and to continue to build

our union's solidarity. I sincerely hope your local has made our national convention a priority and that we'll see you in Vancouver.

To all activists and staff, thank you for your daily efforts on behalf of our 633,000 members.

National Scene

- **Bill C-377**

On June 30, 2015 the Canadian Senate adopted Bill C-377 after an unprecedented move by Conservative Senators to set aside a ruling by the Senate Speaker (also a Conservative appointee).

As has been well-documented, Bill C-377 represents an unprecedented, and quite probably unconstitutional intrusion into the internal affairs of Canadian trade unions.

Within days of Bill C-377's adoption, I participated in a special meeting of the CLC's Executive Committee and chaired a conference call of CUPE's National Executive Board.

All CLC unions have agreed to work together on a legal challenge; we also know that groups such as the Canadian Bar Association plan similar challenges. All affiliates also agreed to restrict commentary on this bill and to focus on defeating the Harper government (and Bill C-377) in the October 19th federal election.

To all CUPE locals, there is no need for you to take any actions regarding Bill C-377; Brother Charles and I will be in direct contact as this file unfolds.

- **Employment Insurance (EI)**

A new study by the Institute for Research on Public Policy documents the many failings of our current EI system, after ten years of Conservative rule. Only 40% of Canada's 1.3 million unemployed even qualify for EI benefits. The study outlines how the system discriminates in terms of benefit levels for those who do qualify depending upon where they live.

For example, two workers earning \$560/week, one in Cape Breton and, the other in Saskatoon who were laid off in May 2015 would see the following entitlements:

- Cape Breton (required to work 12 weeks) – entitled to \$264/week in EI for a maximum of 30 weeks;
- Saskatoon (required to work 20 weeks) – entitled to \$280/week in EI for a maximum of 14 weeks.

I was proud to see a media release from our four provincial division presidents in Atlantic/Maritimes Canada denouncing the inequities and the absence of accountability of our current EI Commission. EI reform must be a key federal election issue.

- **Federal Election**

As mentioned, we are currently in the midst of the longest federal election campaign in over 100 years. On October 19th, we have an opportunity to make history.

Our federal election work in support of Tom Mulcair and the NDP has included federal election breakfasts at all 10 provincial division conventions this past spring. My thanks to the over 1,000 members who attended these sessions and those who committed one day on a campaign to change all the days ahead. In mid-August I knocked on doors in Newfoundland and Labrador, Ontario and Manitoba with CUPE activists. Our party and the entire team of NDP candidates need our support; please get involved in your riding campaign.

We are well into the next phase of our campaign, providing election materials appropriate for discussion with rank and file members in the workplace. Please access these materials at <https://cupe.ca/cupe-2015-election-hub> and visit our website for regular issues and campaign updates.

Federal NDP candidates with a CUPE connection, include:

Jennifer Martel	– Abbotsford, British Columbia (member)
Vicky O'Dell	– Souris-Moose Mountain, Saskatchewan (staff)
Bobbi Stewart	– Cambridge, Ontario (member)
Kathleen Jodouin	– Nipissing-Timiskaming, Ontario (member)
Alex Johnstone	– Hamilton West, Ontario (former member)
Patrick Colford	– Miramichi, New Brunswick (member)
Brianne Goertzen	– Winnipeg South, Manitoba (member)
* Rathika Sitsabaiesan	– Scarborough North, Ontario (former member)
* Matthew Kellway	– Beaches East York, Ontario (former member)
* Alexandre Boulerice	– Rosemount-La Petit Patrie, Quebec (staff)
* François Pilon	– Laval, Quebec (former member)
* Ruth Ellen Brousseau	– Berthier-Maskinonge, Quebec (former member)
* Robert Chisholm	– Dartmouth-Cole Harbour, Nova Scotia (retired staff)

(* denotes incumbent Member of Parliament)

To each of you volunteering your time in an NDP campaign, thank you. Your activism makes a difference.

- **Council of the Federation Meeting**

Canada's provincial/territorial premiers met in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador in mid-July.

I was pleased our union was in attendance, holding a public P3 workshop attended by over 100 citizens, and high CUPE visibility at the Canada Health Coalition Rally for Public Medicare.

As part of the CLC's delegation I was able to attend a social function with the premiers and a private labour meeting with four premiers.

Canada's nurses released a new research paper in St. John's which calculates the new Health Accord funding imposed unilaterally by the Harper government will actually see a \$43.5 billion cut to provinces by 2024 (previous calculation had concluded a \$36 billion cut).

- **Asbestos**

The Health Canada website was quietly changed in June to detail for the first time the health risks associated with asbestos exposure. Up until this point, successive federal governments have denied the health hazards associated with exposure to asbestos.

Countless CUPE staff and health and safety activists have fought this issue for decades. The Health Canada acknowledgement, while long overdue, is a testimony to the diligence and legitimacy of over 25 years of intensive labour lobbying.

- **Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)**

In June, the TRC issued 94 recommendations under the leadership of Justice Murray Sinclair. The full report will be issued later this fall.

Redress for the legacy of the residential schools form a large part of the Commission's report plus recommendations to advance the process of reconciliation between Aboriginal Peoples and non-Aboriginal Peoples in Canada.

Our union must embrace these recommendations. A first step in this will be our welcoming Justice Sinclair as a confirmed special guest speaker at our upcoming national convention.

2. Collective Bargaining / Strikes / Lockouts

There were five CUPE disputes involving job action in this last reporting period. All but one of these of disputes has been settled.

- **CUPE 2316 – Children’s Aid Society of Toronto (Ontario)**

Fifteen emergency after hours workers walked off the job on July 27th to back their first contract demands. After nearly two and one-half years of attempting to reach a first contract members are frustrated with the employer’s inability to conclude an agreement with the Union. The members are seeking parity with their counterparts at the Catholic Children’s Aid Society in Toronto.

PROVINCE	LOCAL	EMPLOYER	# OF MEMBERS	STRIKE BEGAN	DURATION (days)
Nova Scotia	227	Halifax Water Commission Outside Workers	230	May 19, 2015	59
Nova Scotia	1431	Halifax Water Commission Inside Workers	105	May 19, 2015	59
Ontario	101	City of London	650	May 23, 2015	62
Ontario	2316	Children’s Aid Society of Toronto	15	July 27, 2015	On-going
British Columbia	401	Town of Qualicum Beach	53	July 31, 2015 Locked-out	35

- **CUPE 227 and CUPE 1431 – Halifax Water Commission (Nova Scotia)**

Members of both Locals returned to work after 59 days on the picket line to protect their defined benefit pension plan. The ratified deal provides for increases of 1.5% in each of the first two years, 2.25% in the third year, 1.5% in the fourth year and 2.25% in the fifth year. The defined pension plan remains in place with some changes however the strike pushed the employer to remove the substantive concessions they initially had on the table.

- **CUPE 101 – City of London (Ontario)**

The 650 Inside Workers at the City of London were forced out on strike to defend against significant concessions the employer was seeking. The employer was seeking concessions with respect to wide open hours of work, retiree benefits, job evaluation and job postings. Wages were also in dispute. Bolstered by strong picket lines and a supportive membership the Local was able to arrive at a settlement after 62 days on the picket line.

The deal provides for wage increases totaling 4.75% over four years, limited increases to the hours worked with shift premiums, changes to the job postings and retiree benefits for new hires and a strengthened job evaluation plan. Clearly the Mayor and Council were disengaged and should pay the price come the next civic elections.

- **CUPE 401 – Town of Qualicum Beach (British Columbia)**

Members were locked out by the employer on July 31st when the members refused to accept a deal that did not meet the pattern of 2% per year in general wage increases. After 35 days on the picket line the Town offered the pattern of 2% in each of four years plus an additional 1% for the last six months of a four and one-half year deal.

The employer actually tried to scuttle the deal at the last minute when they put on the table the removal of one position in the bargaining unit to out-of-scope after the Local Union ratified. They subsequently removed the proposal paving the way for a return to work.

- **CUPE 5167 – Royal Botanical Gardens (Ontario)**

Members at Royal Botanical gardens avoided strike action using a strong strike aversion campaign. The 39 members ratified a five year deal that provided in the first year \$1.00 per hour across the board increase and 1.5% increase on top followed by yearly increases of 1.75%, 2.25%, 2.50% and 2.75%. In addition they were able to negotiate increases to the education allowance, meal allowance and clothing allowance.

3. Regional Services Division Updates

- **Airline Division**

Our legal case continues challenging the federal Conservatives granting exemptions to airlines allowing a ratio of one flight attendant for every 50 passengers, a regressive move from the former 1:40 ratio.

Our Air Canada component is continuing bargaining on behalf of both Mainline and Rouge flight attendants.

Air Transat members' collective agreement expires in October, plans are well underway to commence negotiations.

CanJet

On September 1st, 2015 CanJet Airlines announced cessation of operations and laid off the final few dozen flight attendants and pilots.

The airline formerly had staff in Halifax, Montréal and Toronto and at its height of operations the airline had around 450 flight attendants. A substantial amount of the company's remaining business was providing planes and staff for Air Transat vacation destinations.

The flight attendants, members of CUPE Local 4044 are investigating options to secure severance pay.

- **Hospital Employees Union (HEU)**

Contract-flipping by British Columbia's health care system is again causing problems for our health care members. The Vancouver Coastal and Providence Health Care Authorities are in the midst of changing multi-national service providers from Aramark to Compass.

The 900 affected HEU members want to remain with their union. We are currently before the British Columbia Labour Board and the CLC in a dispute with the United Steelworkers over representation rights for these workers. This problem would not exist if British Columbia's Labour Code contained successor provisions.

- **British Columbia**

British Columbia's K-12 locals continue to speak out against austerity cuts and layoffs being forced by provincial under-funding of the public education system.

City of Nelson workers, members of Local 339, received accolades from their local member of the legislature assembly (MLA) for their speedy response and clean-up after a major storm on June 28, 2015. Thank you to Local 339 members for a job well done.

I was pleased to join hundreds of CUPE British Columbia and HEU activists at the annual Labour Day festivities in Vancouver on September 7, 2015.

- **Alberta**

Alberta's new NDP government has moved quickly on the first \$1.00 increase in the province's minimum wage, which will move to \$15/hour by 2018. The government has also pledged to eliminate the two-tier liquor servers' minimum wage rate by 2016.

Alberta Federation of Labour President, Gil McGowan is running for the NDP in the federal riding of Edmonton Centre, our party has the potential to pick up a number of new Alberta seats on October 19.

- **Saskatchewan**

CUPE Saskatchewan leadership have been hosting membership barbecues all over the province over the summer months. They have obtained thousands of public signatures opposing privatization plans by the Wall government.

CUPE National Representative, Sister Vicky O'Dell is running for the NDP in the riding of Souris-Moose Mountain. The NDP expects to pick up seats in Saskatchewan this fall after a decade out of office in terms of NDP Members of Parliament.

- **Manitoba**

Local 500 (Winnipeg municipal workers) have publically endorsed the call for federal construction of an all-weather road to the Shoal Lake 40 First Nation. Shoal Lake is the source of Winnipeg's drinking water. Located in North West Ontario, the Shoal Lake Band residents have lived under a boil-water ordinance for over a decade.

CUPE Manitoba has been visible in the community hosting health care barbecues and placing a float in the Filipino Street Festival. A mid-August CUPE campaign night saw over 30 CUPE members show up to canvass on behalf of NDP Member of Parliament, Pat Martin.

- **Ontario**

CUPE Ontario's campaign in opposition to the privatization of Hydro One has seen a growing public support opposing this move by the federal government.

In late June, Thunder Bay became the latest city to become a blue community, supporting public water and declaring accessible water a human right.

Congratulations to our six CUPE locals and our CUPE staff who achieved a settlement with the OMNI Group of Nursing Homes. Achieved at a single table, this level of coordination yielded very positive results in the very tough private nursing home sector. This fall the spotlight is on school board bargaining with 55,000 Ontario school board workers at a single table, the largest bargaining table in our union.

I was pleased to attend a special meeting of all Ontario School Board locals regarding their bargaining strategy with the Ontario government with 55,000 members. This is CUPE's largest single bargaining table.

Ontario activists were very visible in Labour Day parades held throughout the province.

- **Quebec**

CUPE Quebec and the Quebec Federation of Labour applauded an announcement by NDP Leader, Tom Mulcair that a federal NDP government would reinstate the federal tax credit for investors in labour-sponsored funds. Since 1990 the “Fond de Solidarité” (FTQ) has helped to create/maintain over 50,000 jobs in Quebec.

The Common Front public sector negotiations on behalf of over 400,000 workers (including thousands of CUPE members) are set to secure strike mandates this fall in order to back up contract demands in negotiations with the Couillard government.

I was pleased to join CUPE Quebec leaders in Montréal’s annual Pride March held in mid-August.

- **Nova Scotia**

The MacNeil government convened a meeting in late August to advise public sector unions of their new five-year austerity driven bargaining mandates. CUPE alongside our public sector sister unions have pledged to remain united to preserve our free collective bargaining rights.

CUPE Local 4782 won a significant arbitration award against Harmony House Residential Services for back pay with interest, unpaid RRSP contributions, unpaid dues and \$50,000 for aggravated damages. The award will be registered in Court as the private residence for adolescent girls has closed.

CUPE Nova Scotia President, Brother Danny has announced his candidacy for the office of President of the Nova Scotia Federation of Labour (NSFL).

The NSFL Convention will be held in mid-October. Long-serving President Brother Rick Clarke announced his retirement plans in August.

- **Newfoundland and Labrador**

CUPE Newfoundland and Labrador hosted a very successful P3 symposium in St. John’s coincident with the annual Premiers’ Meeting. The symposium gained successful media attention as the provincial Conservative government, facing almost certain defeat in a late fall election, touts their plans for P3 nursing homes among other privatization initiatives.

- **Prince Edward Island (PEI)**

CUPE PEI hosted a very successful Duty to Accommodate workshop in Charlottetown on June 22 and 23, 2015. A mixed group of union members, employer representatives and community groups attended, and all have commended CUPE’s Equality Branch staff for a job well done.

CUPE PEI leaders are using the Fairness Works model to discuss key election issues such as quality child care and retirement security with members throughout the province.

- **New Brunswick**

Members of Local 18 employed by the City of Saint John achieved a new 5.5 year deal providing for 14.5% in wage hikes throughout the term of the deal.

Austerity in all provincially-funded sectors remains the order-of-the-day in New Brunswick. Many key sectors have been without agreements for well over two years and the province is considering a P3 nursing home model.

Members have been visible throughout the summer protesting against cutbacks in health care, proposed P3 nursing homes and other public sector cutbacks.

4. Pensions

Pensions remain a front-burner issue throughout all sectors of our union. At the Halifax Water Commission our 335 members of Locals 227 and 1431 walked the picket line for 9 weeks to successfully defend their Defined Benefit (DB) pension plan.

A few pension highlights over this reporting period include:

- **Alberta**

It was reported in mid-July that Alberta's public sector pension plan liabilities fell by more than \$400 million. This turnaround confirms the position taken by the public sector union coalition in 2014, arguing draconian legislation which would have scaled back benefits, wasn't needed.

The legislation died on the order paper when former Premier, Alison Redford stepped down. Former Premier Jim Prentice's government was defeated by Rachel Notley and the NDP in the May 5, 2015 election and the threat of imposed legislative changes is gone.

- **Hospitals of Ontario Pension Plan (HOOPP)**

HOOPP announced in late June expanded rights for workers whose employment divested from one employer to another to consolidate their pension benefits in their current plan. This will help hundreds of former employees of the Victorian Order of Nurses (VON) who are now HOOPP members.

HOOPP, led by CUPE Trustee and HOOPP Chair, Sister Helen Fetterly has recently announced expanded rights for part-time health care workers to join the pension

plan. The former requirement to work a minimum of 700 hours per year has been removed. Part-timers became eligible for plan membership in 2007 and since then, over 53,469 have enrolled.

In a similar vein, I note the most recent newsletter from CUPE Local 1169 (Calgary and Cochrane Public Library workers) who informed all members scheduled for 14 hours/week (or more) of their right to enroll in the Local Authorities Pension Plan (L.A.P.P.)

Our ongoing struggle to represent precarious workers must include bargaining for such provisions as the right to join the pension plan. We must also both inform and encourage all members to avail themselves of their rights.

My congratulations to our leaders in the Ontario Council of Hospital Unions (HEU) and Local 1169 for their foresight in standing up for part-time and precarious workers.

- **Multi-Sector Pension Plan (MSPP)**

CUPE's own MSPP continues to grow. A total 161 employers participate, with 131 being CUPE locals. A total of 13,635 workers are enrolled (as of March 2015) a 30% increase since 2010.

- **Nursing Home Related Industries Pension Plan**

As at December 2010 the NHRIPP had the following statistics:

- 23,371 SEIU members
- 10,871 CUPE members
- 7,715 UNIFOR members
- 1,993 Ontario Nurses members
- 5,104 Pensioners
- = 44,108 total members

As at December 2014 the NHRIPP had the following statistics:

- 29,130 SEIU members
- 13,850 CUPE members
- 9,610 UNIFOR members
- 2,934 Ontario Nurses members
- 7,505 Pensioners
- = 55,791 total members

The plan is fully funded on a going concern basis and continues to grow as newly organized nursing homes are added through negotiations.

5. Organizing Report

During the period of June 1, 2015 to August 31, 2015 CUPE organized 550 new members in 10 bargaining units. The largest unit organized was a HEU unit at Simple Q at Inglewood Care Centre covering 246 Care workers. We welcome all of our new members into the CUPE family.

Across the country we organized 379 members in long term care facilities, 13 members in health care, 75 members in municipalities, 43 members in social services and 40 members in the post-secondary sector.

We are currently involved in 53 active campaigns that if successful would bring 4,619 new members into CUPE. At Labour Boards across the country we have 8 projects representing 1,638 new members waiting for certification votes to be conducted. There are 8 restructuring projects on-going that will result in representation votes affecting 2,814 CUPE members. Unfortunately during this period we lost 1,552 members at the CBC in a representation vote.

6. Global Justice / International Solidarity

• UNISON National Delegate Conference

I was pleased to attend our UK sister union's annual conference held in Glasgow, Scotland June 16-19, 2015. I was their international speaker and at their request focussed on global trade deals such as CETA and TTIP and the perils of investor-state clauses which further empower global corporations.

The May 7 2015 UK election saw the Conservatives achieve a majority and UK unions are preparing to fight the austerity agenda and legislative attacks on their right to strike.

• New York State Fast Food Wage Board

New York State has moved to implement a \$15 an hour minimum wage in New York City by 2018 and state-wide by 2021, affecting some 180,000 workers. Mass demonstrations continue throughout major U.S. cities over a living wage for all workers.

• American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)

In June 2015, AFSCME hosted senior national office staff from our union to discuss organizing, pensions, re-connecting with rank and file members and other key members.

The assault on trade union rights continues in the United States (U.S.). Wisconsin Governor, Scott Walker has removal of union rights as a centre-piece of his run for the Republican party presidential nomination. We learned in June that Prime Minister Stephen Harper met with Walker in Ottawa this past spring.

By far the biggest challenge facing public sector unions in the U.S. is an impending Supreme Court case, Friedrichs v. California Teacher's Association. The case centers around compulsory dues deduction and is being pushed by a host of right-wing groups.

It is critical that our union continues to develop our relations with our sister unions in the U.S. and throughout the world, through our global union, Public Services International (PSI).

- **International correspondence**

In this reporting period we have written the presidents of Columbia, the Philippines and Iran regarding ongoing violations of basic trade union rights.

- **Public Services International (PSI)**

PSI reported to us in mid-July 2015 about a one-day general strike called on July 9 by the General Confederation of Workers (CGTP), focussing minimum wage and an end to government corruption.

- **Greece**

Greece again felt the power of the European Union and the IMF as further austerity measures were imposed upon the Greek people as the price for further bailout funds. Banks and other creditors aren't being asked to make sacrifices, only the people of Greece are feeling the effects of imposed austerity.

7. Personal / In-memoriam

I offer my sincere condolences to the families of the following CUPE members, staff and retirees who have lost loved ones in this reporting period:

- Julian Farinha – Local 1280 (Toronto Catholic District School Board)
- Paul Cheeseman – Local 416 (City of Toronto)
- Pat Zolf – Local 79 (retired – City of Toronto)
- Darryl McKenzie – Local 1050 (City of Quesnel)
- Mahmoud Ghannam – Local 2974 (member – Essex Windsor paramedic)
- Frank McGregor – Local 30 (retired member and past local president)
- Barbara Ann Dickinson – Local 15 (Secretary-Treasurer of Local 15)

- Farida Abdurahman – Local 4822 (member)
- Clare Powell – Retired staff – Saskatchewan Regional Office
- Richard Balnis – Retired staff – National Office

Retirements

My sincere thanks to each of the following CUPE staff for their many years of dedicated service to our union.

- Monique Drapeau North Bay Area Office (June 1, 2015)
- Kathleen Corrigan British Columbia Regional Office (June 1, 2015)
- Donald Devine British Columbia Regional Office (July 1, 2015)
- Rhonda Spence British Columbia Regional Office (July 1, 2015)
- William Summerlus Manitoba Regional Office (July 1, 2015)
- Jill Allyson Currie Manitoba Regional Office (July 1, 2015)
- Sylvie Pepin Quebec Regional Office (July 1, 2015)
- Elaine Ehman Saskatchewan Regional Office (August 1, 2015)
- Ruth Scher British Columbia Regional Office (August 1, 2015)
- Frederick Blake London Area Office (August 1, 2015)
- Pierina DeBellis Windsor Area Office (September 1, 2015)
- Derek Blackadder Ontario Regional Office (September 1, 2015)

As you can see, summer notwithstanding, things remain very busy in all sectors of our union.

Congratulations to CUPE Communications and Literacy staff for winning a Canadian Association of Labour Media (CALM) award, the Cliff Scotten Prize for a narrative, video, audio or visual that reflects history, traditions and culture of the labour movement. Our production, “CUPE Learning in Solidarity”, won the Award. Congratulations again to all who worked on this website devoted to learning and literacy.

I am proud to report that our union donated \$10,000 to create a new on-line resource for women and children escaping domestic violence. Sponsored by the Canadian Network of Women’s Shelters and Transition Houses, you can view this important new resource at sheltersafe.ca.

Finally, I urge you all to vote NDP and to get involved in supporting your local NDP candidate. We are the cusp of history, let’s do our part to realize the dreams of the many activists who built our movement and our political party.

My thanks to all CUPE activists and staff for your many efforts on behalf of our 633,000 members.

In solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Moist." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

PAUL MOIST
National President

:jv/ceu
Revised: September 29, 2015 @ 3:24 p.m.