



POST-SECONDARY



This profile is intended to provide CUPE members with basic information about the sector they work in from a national perspective. Find all our sector profiles and more information online at cupe.ca

CUPE represents 67,800 members in 237 bargaining units in the post-secondary education (PSE) sector. Our members work in universities, colleges, and student-led organizations.

CUPE PSE members work in a wide variety of positions. We represent academic workers, including instructors, researchers, teaching assistants, and support staff working in grounds and building maintenance, libraries, food services, caretaking, information technology, clerical support and administration.

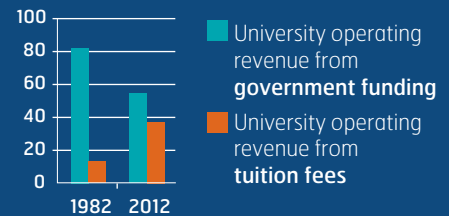
Around 400,000 people work in universities, colleges, vocational and trade institutions in Canada. Of those, about 45,000 are full-time university faculty members outside CUPE's jurisdiction.

CUPE is a major union in universities, representing approximately 25 per cent of all non-faculty employees. CUPE has far fewer members in colleges, but has a significant number of college members in BC and Quebec.

Funding

The barriers to accessing higher learning are greater than ever, despite overwhelming evidence that investing in PSE makes sense for Canada's social and economic well-being.

Plummeting public university funding, rising fees



Universities and colleges have seen the proportion of government funding plummet since the 1980s. In 1982, 83 per cent of university operating revenue came from government funding. Today, it accounts for only 55 per cent. Tuition fees have risen by 155 per cent (accounting for inflation) since 1990, and the average student debt upon graduation is over \$28,000.

Students are on the front lines in the fight against cuts to post-secondary education funding. Over the past year, students have protested tuition increases across the country. At Memorial University in Newfoundland and Labrador, students forced the university to back down from a proposed tuition hike. Meanwhile, students at Dalhousie University in Nova Scotia and at the University of British Columbia managed to reduce the size of tuition increases.

2 PRIVATIZATION
Food and janitorial services are prime targets.

2 CASUALIZATION
Universities are shifting more and more teaching to part-time and temporary instructors.

3 SOLIDARITY WORKS
In every region, members are pushing back and achieving victories for workers.

4 ACCESSIBLE EDUCATION
CUPE members are fighting for high-quality, affordable public education.

In addition to affecting students, including CUPE members working as teaching and research assistants, the loss of federal funding has significant impacts on CUPE members in other ways – affecting both service quality and our members' working conditions.

ISSUES

Outsourcing and privatization

Declining government funding and an increasingly corporate mindset have led to university and college administrators contracting out work done by CUPE members. Targets for privatization include food and janitorial services.

Privatization has extended beyond these targets and now includes student instruction. At several universities, private, for-profit colleges offer courses that can be used toward public univer-

sity degrees. The result has been fewer course offerings for CUPE sessional instructors.

One recent victory in the fight against outsourcing was won at the University of Toronto. U of T has just ended its contract with Aramark and taken over responsibility for food services at its downtown campus. For workers, this means higher wages and access to better benefits, including the university's pension plan.

Casualization and job security

There is a trend of not filling vacant full-time food services and janitorial jobs, and instead relying on part-time and casual workers. In Ontario, we are seeing layoffs in areas such as caretaking, food services, and maintenance – while universities simultaneously post casual positions in the same areas.

Full-time, tenure-track teaching positions are being replaced by sessional instructor positions with much lower pay, fewer benefits, and little job security. Some sessional instructors have worked for over 20 years, but still need to apply for their job every four months.

In 2013, 27 per cent of university professors and 24 per cent of college professors were in temporary positions. Across the sector, the proportion of temporary workers has grown steadily since 2000.

CUPE has been able to achieve some protection for casual workers, including at Simon Fraser University, where CUPE 3338 successfully organized contract janitorial staff at the Vancouver campus. These workers now have the greater job security enjoyed by unionized janitors at the Burnaby and Surrey campuses.

PENSIONS

Most university pension plans are employer sponsored. Most college plans are multi-employer plans established and regulated through provincial legislation. For the most part, these are defined benefit pension plans. Since the 2008 recession, employers have attacked pension plans, looking to cut benefits and shift risk to employees, most notably by moving from defined benefit plans to defined contribution or target benefit plans.

In the past year, the University of Prince Edward Island has been tying up collective bargaining by insisting on benefit cuts for future retirees. The University of Saskatchewan has filed a grievance against CUPE 1975, trying to make unilateral changes to the pension

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plan, rather than bargaining changes as required by the collective agreement.

In Ontario, the government is pressuring universities to move from individual employer-sponsored plans to a jointly sponsored, multi-employer plan.

Discussions have been taking place among employers and unions on what a multi-employer plan would look like.

Bill 75 in Quebec, adopted in June 2016, will force universities to restructure their pension plans to limit costs. CUPE and other unions have protested, saying the proper way to deal with pension reforms is at the negotiating table, not through legislation imposed by the government.

There have been some recent victories. In Alberta, the former Conservative government tried to make changes to the Local Authorities Pension Plan (which includes our college members), transferring risk to employees and cutting benefits for retirees. Thanks to a well-coordinated multi-union campaign, the Conservatives backed down and abandoned the changes in 2014.

BARGAINING

Recently there have been some very difficult rounds of bargaining in the post-secondary sector, as CUPE members have faced increasing concessionary demands.

In March 2015, CUPE members at York University and the University of Toronto went on month-long strikes over tuition levels, funding for graduate assistants and teaching assistants, and the hiring of tenure track professors. In December

2015, CUPE 3902 filed an unfair labour practice complaint against U of T, arguing the university negotiated in bad faith because they presented outdated and inaccurate information on student income.

After a year without a contract, CUPE 926 members at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Ont., went on a week-long strike in July. A key sticking point in the negotiations was the university's push to contract out custodial work. The local fought hard to protect job security language and will continue to stand together against precarious work.

Allies

CUPE and our coalition partners have long advocated for affordable and accessible public post-secondary education for students in well-funded colleges and universities. Our main long-time partners in this struggle are students represented by the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS), La Fédération étudiante universitaire du Québec (FEUQ), La Fédération étudiante collégiale du Québec (FECQ), and L'Association pour une solidarité syndicale étudiante (ASSÉ). We also work closely with faculty union members.

Many CUPE locals regularly work with student unions, public interest research groups, women's centres, LGBTTI groups, and other campus-based organizations. Many campuses have regular inter-union meetings to discuss issues of shared concern – such as pensions, benefits, contracting out, and other bargaining issues.

Other research institutes and groups that support our issues include the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, the Broad-bent Institute, federal and provincial New Democratic parties, the Canadian Labour Congress and provincial federations of labour.

CAMPAIGNS

National Post-Secondary Education Act

CUPE and our allies are calling for a National Post-Secondary Education Act that will restore the federal government's support for PSE, ensure that provincial governments meet national standards, and reduce tuition fees and student debt.

The future

The federal Liberal government was elected on a commitment to increase grants for low-income students and Indigenous students. They included new student grants in the 2016 federal

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budget, but abandoned their promise to increase funding for Indigenous students. The government needs to be held to account for its commitment to Indigenous students.

The post-secondary education sector suffers from severe federal and provincial underfunding. We have witnessed the further corporatization of colleges and universities. While at one time these institutions were led mostly by senior academics and experienced public servants, leadership is increasingly coming from the private sector, and is on a mission to transform the institutions themselves.

We can reverse this corporatization trend, and restore proper funding to our institutions. To achieve this, we must keep building coalitions with students, other unions and community groups, united in the struggle for affordable, high quality, public post-secondary education provided by public employees who are treated with the dignity and respect they deserve.

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CUPE and our allies are calling for the creation of a National Post-Secondary Education Act.

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- More information for your sector • Tools to help you and your local
- Success stories from across the country • And more!