

NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S REPORT

June 2013 – September 2013

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

Our third quarter of 2013 was marked by some very significant national and international events.

A number of communities in Alberta, including the City of Calgary, were hit by extreme flooding which was not foreseen and caused significant damage and left tens of thousands of citizens homeless.

CUPE members were on the front-lines of flood-fighting and evacuation efforts and have received well-deserved accolades from municipal and provincial officials. CUPE Alberta, numerous Alberta locals, CUPE British Columbia, and our national union have made donations to assist with flood relief efforts.

In early July, the small Quebec community of Lac-Mégantic was devastated as rail cars full of fuel exploded in the heart of the town's downtown business district. CUPE Quebec and CUPE national have both made donations to a town fund. Apart from the loss of life and devastation left within Lac-Mégantic, this tragedy raises a number of rail transportation regulatory and health and safety issues.

Internationally, the hopes of the so-called Arab Spring have faded as we watch unprecedented violence in Egypt in the aftermath of the fall of the Morsi government. This coupled with ongoing civil war in Syria point to instability throughout the Middle East region.

Behind all of the shocking images we witness nightly on newscasts is the undeniable fact of the devastation brought about by soaring food costs and high unemployment on workers, their families, and communities throughout the region. Similar pressures have resulted in massive citizen protests in both Turkey and Brazil in recent months.

Within CUPE, negotiations continue at over 1,500 bargaining tables in an environment of austerity and restraint. As detailed within this report, strike/lockout activity has been minimal, but the bargaining climate remains tough.

A citizens' coalition in Regina has forced Regina City Council to hold a plebiscite on a proposed P3 wastewater treatment plant. CUPE members and retirees are active in the campaign which will culminate in the September 25, 2013 referendum.

On Labour Day weekend, I was pleased to attend the founding convention of Unifor, the successful merger of CAW and CEP, Canada's largest private sector union, one we hope many unorganized private sector workers will want to join.

Finally, this month (September 24, 1963 to be exact) marks the 50th anniversary of the birth of our union, CUPE. Our provincial divisions and many locals have held a variety of celebrations throughout the year. The culmination of these celebrations will be our national convention in Québec City between October 21-25, 2013.

I know you will all join me in offering our sincere thanks to the sisters and brothers, staff, and rank and file activists whose struggle and vision built CUPE into Canada's biggest and best union. As always, I also offer sincere thanks to each and every one of our activists and staff for your ongoing work on behalf of CUPE members.

1. Federal Scene/Canadian Labour Congress (CLC)

• Bill C-377 (Union Disclosure Bill)

On June 26, the Canadian Senate adopted an amended Bill C-377 and returned the bill to the House of Commons.

The amendments include:

- Raising the threshold for separate itemization of transactions from \$5,000 to \$150,000.
- Raising the reporting threshold for union salaries from \$100,000 to \$441,661.
- Exempting branches and locals from the requirements of the bill, as well as unions with less than 50,000 members.
- Specifying that expenses covered by solicitor-client privilege are exempt from reporting.

While labour had been calling on the Senate to defeat Bill C-377, the amendments make a flawed piece of legislation better.

In mid-August, Prime Minister Harper prorogued Parliament, which means Bill C-377 will return to Parliament in its original, pre-Senate form. So this matter remains far from being resolved.

- **Employment Insurance (EI)**

The Council of Atlantic Premiers, who have united in opposition to the federal changes to EI brought on by the 2012 federal budget, have formed an expert panel to consult publically within the four Atlantic provinces.

Each government nominated one person to the expert panel; the Nova Scotia government nominated our president of CUPE Nova Scotia, Brother Danny Cavanagh.

- **Bill C-525 Certification/Decertification Process in the Federal Jurisdiction**

In early June 2013, another Conservative MP private member's bill was introduced in Parliament. The bill proposes the elimination of the automatic card check certification system that has existed for decades at the federal level.

Further, the bill requires the achievement of 50% plus one of all the workers in the proposed bargaining unit to achieve certification, not the threshold of 50% plus one of all who vote. It also places the same threshold requirement on decertification votes, thereby making it easier for a minority to get rid of their union.

- **2014 Federal Budget**

CUPE has submitted our pre-budget brief to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance. Our recommendations fall under three main headings:

- Reverse public spending cuts, introduce progressive measures to boost jobs and growth.
- Expand the Canada Pension Plan.
- Reverse the cuts to Employment Insurance.

(Full submission available at <http://cupe.ca/ei/reverse-public-spending-cuts-introduce>.)

- **Unite for Fairness**

In late August, Brother Charles and myself had our latest in a series of telephone town hall meetings with CUPE local presidents. Among other issues, we discussed the CLC's "Together Fairness Works" initiative.

Put briefly, this initiative seeks to re-establish direct face-to-face contact with rank and file union members. The narrower the gap between union activists and the general membership, the stronger our union will be.

Each CLC affiliate will conduct the member contact work in the manner that suits them best. All CLC affiliates (and a growing number of non-affiliates) are pooling resources to run a national media campaign designed to improve our image and to educate the public on the key role unions play for all workers through efforts such as the defense of public medicare and the expansion of the CPP. Look for these television ads this fall throughout Canada.

Check www.uniteforfairness.ca for updates on our activities. In addition, the CLC's initiatives can be viewed at <http://www.canadianlabour.ca/action-center/together-fairness-works/decent-pensions>.

- **Labour College of Canada (CLC)**

On August 23, 2013, Sister Susan Ruffo (Managing Director of Union Development) and I were pleased to attend the graduation ceremony for the Labour College of Canada. We were joined by Brother Fred Hahn (president) and Sister Candace Rennick (secretary-treasurer) of CUPE Ontario. The following CUPE members graduated this year:

Brother Keith Bousquet, CUPE Local 500, Winnipeg, Manitoba;
Brother Patrick Colford, CUPE Local 865, Miramichi, New Brunswick;
Sister Dianne Frittenburg, CUPE Local 1933, Bridgewater, Nova Scotia;
Brother Wil Kelly, CUPE Local 503, Ottawa, Ontario;
Sister Xolisiwe (Connie) Ndlovu, CUPE Local 4308, Toronto, Ontario;
Sister Tracy Newman, CUPE Local 5200, Halton, Ontario;
Sister Tammy Prescod, CUPE Local 1750, Hamilton, Ontario;
Sister Helen Sawatsky, CUPE Local 4777, Big River, Saskatchewan;
Sister Michelle Waite, CUPE Local 3479, Courtenay, British Columbia.

Each student must complete an intersessional project, a major research assignment. I read all of the CUPE projects; all were excellent. One focused on the plight of home care workers and included the following passage:

“I have been doing this job for 40 years now. I am legally retired, but nearly 10 years ago, I came back to the workforce because I could not survive on my little pension due to the low wages I made it’s a hard life, my body aches all over, but I cannot stay at home without my income.”

(Brenda, 76 year old home care worker.)

My sincere congratulations to each graduate for both their hard work and their commitment to our union.

If you are interested in information about all of the intersession learning projects, contact Sister Susan Ruffo at sruffo@cupe.ca.

2. CUPE at 50

A year of 50th anniversary celebrations will culminate at our national convention in Québec City in October.

A video will be introduced which profiles the first five decades of CUPE. Post-convention, the video will be both a cherished keepsake and an education tool for our next generation of CUPE activists and staff.

One of this year's strategic priorities was for our union to focus on new and young CUPE members. In mid-August, Brother Charles and I were privileged to attend a gathering of 60 young members from across Canada.

Over 350 members applied online to participate in this strategic meeting which had, as its focus, our union receiving direct feedback from young members, including their views on CUPE, their experiences as a CUPE member, and most importantly, their advice on our union better connecting with young workers. These members are key to making our next 50 years the success we all want to see.

This past spring, each of our ten provincial divisions celebrated our 50th through videos, the introduction of past leaders, and other creative efforts.

I am continuing to receive CUPE pins which I pledge to display permanently at our national office. If you have CUPE pins you'd like to pass along, please contact me directly or send them to my attention to national office. Preserving our history ensures we won't forget where we came from.

3. Collective Bargaining/Strikes/Lockouts

At time of writing, there are three disputes ongoing across the country.

In British Columbia, 16 members of CUPE Local 389 at the North Shore Winter Club in Vancouver have been locked out for over four months as the employer seeks significant concessions. There have been no meaningful negotiations since the beginning of the lock out. The employer has been found to be in violation of British Columbia labour legislation by using scabs to do the work of CUPE members.

On August 1, 16 members of CUPE Local 4616 took strike action to protect their collective agreement. The members who work for the Township of Bonfield were forced to take this action when the mayor and council advised that they would unilaterally change the terms and conditions of employment upon expiry of the collective agreement. The town is seeking to impose the substantial concessions that were contained in their final offer which was rejected.

Faced with concessions, the almost 300 members of CUPE Local 1393 at the University of Windsor took strike action on September 8. These members are skilled trades workers providing a range of vital services to the university, from plumbing and carpentry to nursing and therapy, graphic design, and public relations. The university is seeking to attack seniority rights in the event of a layoff by removing chain bumping. As well, the university is attempting to reduce the wages of members by proposing significant changes to the joint job evaluation plan.

| PROVINCE | LOCAL | EMPLOYER | # OF MEMBERS | STRIKE BEGAN | DURATION (days) |
|------------------|--------------|-------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| British Columbia | 389 | North Shore Winter Club | 16 | May 3, 2013 | ongoing |
| Ontario | 4616 | Township of Bonfield | 16 | Aug. 1, 2013 | ongoing |
| Ontario | 1391 | University of Windsor | 282 | Sept. 8, 2013 | ongoing |

The 35 members of CUPE Local 5120, GoBus drivers in St. John's, Newfoundland, have ratified a first collective agreement providing for a \$2.00 per hour increase over three years. This was a first collective agreement and allows the members to move forward and build upon the agreement and work towards a positive relationship with their employer.

Employees at Ryan Hall Nursing Home in Bridgewater, Nova Scotia, members of CUPE Local 5033, have ratified a three-year agreement that provides for increases of two (2), two and a half (2.5), and three (3) percent over three (3) years. The 70 members were also able to negotiate dental benefits as part of their agreement. The deal was part of provincial bargaining and was the first time the government has sat at the table and negotiated dental benefits for long term care employees.

After receiving a strong strike mandate, CUPE Local 2719 at Maples Personal Care Home in Winnipeg reached a memorandum of agreement that was subsequently ratified. The 130 members were able to achieve their goal of wage parity with other personal care homes operated by Revera. The local was also able to address the issue of work short staffed.

CUPE Local 726, members working at the City of Estevan in Saskatchewan, have a new three-year deal. The deal provides increases of four (4), three and a half (3.5), and three (3) percent. The wage increases move the members closer to comparable work in other industries and will address the shortage of skilled labour.

4. Regional/Service Division Updates

Newfoundland and Labrador

After a one-year campaign, the Trio Pension Plan has invited CUPE to be part of a review group to consider current plan challenges. Trio is the plan for a number of small municipalities and a year ago they announced unilateral amendments that would reduce plan features.

CUPE Newfoundland and Labrador continues its public pressure on the Dunderdale government regarding key issues, including provincial austerity and CPP expansion. A recent Vector Poll confirmed citizen support for modest tax hikes as opposed to service cuts. The Poll also showed Lorraine Michael and the NDP as the number one provincial party in terms of public support.

Nova Scotia

About 3,300 long term care workers and 3,700 school board workers have ratified new agreements with modest wage increases, no concessions, and dental plan and pension improvements.

CUPE Nova Scotia continues to campaign for public medicare and fair funding from the federal government. CUPE Nova Scotia also plans a public meeting for October 3, 2013 in Liverpool, Nova Scotia. Nova Scotians will go to the polls on October 8, 2013 in a provincial election. CUPE Nova Scotia is coordinating volunteers to support the NDP campaign.

Prince Edward Island

CUPE Prince Edward Island is hosting a public meeting in Charlottetown on September 16, 2013 on the Health Care Accord and the need for proper federal funding for medicare.

This summer saw CUPE visible in numerous county fairs and festivals with our message about the value of public services.

New Brunswick

Employment Insurance (EI) remains a very visible public issue in New Brunswick and CUPE New Brunswick, under the leadership of president, Brother Daniel Légère, is very involved in ongoing public demonstrations and other lobbying efforts.

CUPE New Brunswick health care workers continue to oppose plans to replace the province's hospital linen services with a disposable linen service. This and other service cutbacks are in the news on a daily basis.

Quebec

A very successful CUPE Quebec convention was held for some 700 delegates in Québec City between June 18-21, 2013. Federal NDP Leader Thomas Mulcair addressed the convention and was well received by delegates. Congratulations to CUPE Quebec president, Sister Lucie Levasseur, and general-secretary, Brother Denis Bolduc, who were re-elected to their respective positions.

CUPE Quebec General-Secretary Brother Denis Bolduc visited Lac-Mégantic in the aftermath of the rail explosion and in addition to presenting a donation for relief efforts, pledged CUPE members volunteer efforts to assist in rebuilding the community.

Ontario

I was pleased to join CUPE Ontario president, Brother Fred Hahn, and secretary-treasurer, Sister Candace Rennick, in Niagara-on-the-Lake for the annual meeting of Canada's premiers and territorial leaders. The Ontario Health Coalition sponsored a conference on public medicare and a large rally, including many CUPE members and staff, was held.

CUPE Ontario vice-president (and national diversity vice-president) Sister Yolanda McClean has been elected as the membership secretary for the Ontario Chapter of the Congress of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU). Congratulations sister!

CUPE Ontario leadership and activists were very visible in high profile events such as Toronto's Gay Pride Parade and the Caribana Festival.

Manitoba

CUPE Local 500 (City of Winnipeg) won a major victory in late spring as Winnipeg City Council defeated a move to contract out four civic golf courses.

After a 15 year absence, Labour Day celebrations returned to Winnipeg with a very successful Labour Day Picnic which I was privileged to speak at; many CUPE members took part in the picnic.

Manitoba's Minister of Health, the Honourable Theresa Oswald, has proclaimed October 7-11, 2013 as Health Care Support Workers' Week.

Saskatchewan

CUPE Local 5791 (University of Regina) concluded a difficult round of bargaining which included employer threats to wind-up the current DB pension plan and put in place a DC plan for all new hires. This concession was successfully resisted and members ratified a new deal with wage increases in each year.

September 25 will be the date the citizens of Regina vote on a controversial P3 wastewater treatment plant proposal. A citizens coalition, Regina Water Watch, secured over 24,000 signatures, forcing the referendum. Regina City Council has opted for the P3 model as they argue it is the only way to secure 25% federal funding (some \$57 million) through the P3 Canada fund.

Alberta

As mentioned, CUPE members have received numerous accolades for their delivery of front-line services in the aftermath of flooding which hit numerous communities throughout the province.

Ironically, the need for infrastructure investment for flood mitigation sees Albertans discussing taxation options. In an austerity era, it sometimes seems like it takes a natural disaster to underscore the value of public infrastructure.

Provincial restraint has hit the public school system in Alberta. Some school divisions are enacting layoffs and provincial restraint is also driving some moves to contract out support services.

British Columbia

This fall our 27,000 K-12 school board members will be front and center with their negotiations. A decade of restraint has left CUPE members in no mood for further wage freezes.

Three members of CUPE Local 2262, aquatics staff in Castlegar, British Columbia, have been saluted for their heroic efforts in saving a life in a pool incident this past spring. Congratulations to Troy Bingham, Vanessa Bloodoff, and Josh Davis.

CUPE British Columbia again played a big role in Labour Day events throughout the province.

Airline Service Division

CUPE national is working closely with all of our airline leadership in opposition to the Harper government's move to allow a 1:50 ratio on selected aircrafts (the longstanding regulation has been a 1:40 ratio).

Our organizing efforts continue at West Jet, where we have an active committee engaged in card signing.

The biennial Airline Division convention will be held in Québec City on October 20, 2013.

Hospital Employees' Union (HEU)

A recent decision of the British Columbia Labour Relations Board has dismissed 48 BCNU raid applications and sets out a framework for determining union representation of LPNs recently transferred into the Nurses Bargaining Association when the British Columbia Liberal government passed Bill 18. The decision was clear that Bill 18 changed the definition of nurse, but did not make any determination on union representation. The Labour Relations Board did re-establish some degree of previous jurisprudence and going forward, HEU can expect to be involved in representation votes.

5. Organizing Report

Member organizers, activists, and staff have had an active period of organizing activity during the period June 1, 2013 to August 31, 2013. During this period 1,108 new members in 26 bargaining units joined CUPE. CUPE currently has 11 applications for certifications before labour boards at this time. If successful in these applications CUPE membership would grow by up to an additional 2,250 members. We also are involved in four restructuring campaigns representing 1,171 members.

Our new members come from a variety of occupations and workplaces including long term care homes, municipalities, social services, post secondary, and K to 12.

CUPE is currently involved in a number of projects that potentially represents 10,529 public sector employees in 49 new units who are currently not organized. These campaigns are at various stages – in some cases we have made presentations, while in other cases we are at the card signing stage. Each project takes on a character of its own. Certification can be done quickly or it can take up to two years. For instance, on Prince Edward Island, CUPE has been actively involved in organizing education workers for over two years and our work is just now resulting in certification being voluntarily granted in the Eastern and Western School Boards.

We are also at times facing threats of raids or decertification. This period is no exception. The biggest threat we are facing is CUPE members in HEU who continue to face raiding attempts by the British Columbia Nurses Union. As well, our long term care members in Alberta are under constant threat of raids by the Alberta Union of Public Employees. In both cases, BCNU and AUPE are outside the house of labour. During this period, HEU faces an additional threat by pulp and paper workers who are going after trades and maintenance workers. We have over 3,500 members at risk and we continue to be vigilant working with these bargaining units and members to ensure they remain within CUPE and the house of labour.

6. Global Justice/International Solidarity

- **Philippines Solidarity Tour**

A CUPE led delegation participated in a seven day Fact Finding Mission (FFM) in the Philippines from July 12-18, 2013. The FFM, "*Against the Killings and Repression of Public Sector Workers*", was a component of an ongoing project through the Global Justice Fund with our partner union the Confederation for Unity, Recognition and Advancement of Government Employees (COURAGE). COURAGE members experiencing harassment and persecution for their trade union activism and membership shared their experiences with the delegation, and expressed the need for ongoing monitoring and international solidarity.

The delegation had the opportunity to meet with the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT) who hosted a tour of several public sector schools and the surrounding communities where levels of poverty are high. Finally, the delegation participated in the International Conference for Human Rights and Peace in the Philippines from July 19-21, 2013 where CUPE Manitoba president, Sister Kelly Moist, represented the CUPE delegation and presented the situation facing workers and trade unions in Canada.

- **World Outgames – LGBTT Conference**

A CUPE delegation attended the LGBTT conference on human rights, organized as part of the 2013 World Outgames, in Antwerp, Belgium in July. The World Outgames brings together LGBTT athletes, artists, and allies from around the world; over 70 countries were represented at this conference. The delegation had the opportunity to listen to amazing keynote speakers, to network with sisters and brothers from around the world, and presented CUPE's abstract on transphobic harassment and discrimination in employment and health in Canada. The conference adopted a declaration reaffirming LGBTT rights are human rights and there are important future opportunities to work closely with the CLC, AFL-CIO, and PSI to ensure that the labour movement is represented in the overall program.

- **Letters of Solidarity Since June**

CUPE sent a letter to the State of São Paulo health sector workers and government officials in Brazil, commending the workers for courageously striking for more than 40 days to pressure the state government to open negotiations and bargain in good faith, and further implored the state government to begin negotiations in order to resolve the outstanding issues and end the strike.

CUPE sent a letter to the Korean Public and Social Services and Transportation Workers' Union, Education Workers Solidarity Division (KPTU-EdSol), declaring our support for them as they planned a nation-wide rally in June 2013. We offered our solidarity as they called on the Korean government to bargain in good faith and to respect the trade union rights of education support workers.

CUPE joined the chorus of voices calling for amnesty for two Nigerian University of Regina students holding refuge in a Regina church as they face deportation orders for having briefly worked at Walmart in contravention of the study permits.

7. Personal/In Memoriam

In Memoriam

I offer my sincere condolences to the families of Sister Helen O'Regan, retiree from the Ontario Regional Office, who passed away on June 28, 2013; Brother Alfred Hryciw, retiree from the Alberta Regional Office, who passed away on July 10, 2013; Brother Grenville Owen Jones, retiree from the Nanaimo Area Office, who passed away on July 10, 2013; Brother Peter Driedger, retiree from the Victoria Area Office, who passed away on July 13, 2013; Brother Murray Craddock, retiree from the Manitoba Regional Office, who passed away on September 2, 2013; and Brother Gilles Giguère, retiree from the Quebec Regional Office, whose wife passed away on September 11, 2013.

Retirements

I offer sincere thanks, congratulations, and best wishes to the following CUPE staff who have announced plans to retire.

Sister Gail Reisch – Windsor Area Office – August 1, 2013
Brother Brian Blakeley – National Office – September 1, 2013
Sister Martine Drapeau – Dalhousie Area Office – September 1, 2013
Brother Lawrence Power – Atlantic Regional Office – October 1, 2013
Brother Thomas Steep – Maritimes Regional Office – October 1, 2013
Sister Karen McNama – Ontario Regional Office – December 1, 2013
Sister Kathrine Hutton – Trail Area Office – January 1, 2014

8. Conclusion

As always, our union remains busy as we approach our historic 26th constitutional convention.

I hope to see many of you in Québec City at the national convention. To those of you unable to attend, thank you for your daily leadership in the thousands of workplaces where we are privileged to represent CUPE members.

To all retirees reading this report, thank you for your tireless efforts in building our union over the past 50 years. On behalf of all 627,000 CUPE members, we offer our sincere thanks and wish each of you continued good health.

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

:jvp/ceu