

**What is the bargaining education program that CUPE members need for these times?**

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## **Discussion Guide**

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**CUPE** *education*

## **It's time to revise CUPE's bargaining education program for members. You are invited to help shape the new program!**

### **Background**

**The landscape for collective bargaining is changing rapidly** in both the public and private sectors. Globalization has increased pressure for competitiveness and tax cuts. Employers and governments are legislating away free collective bargaining rights. Bargaining issues have become increasingly complex in the context of funding cuts and declining government support for public services.

**The face of our membership is also changing.** The baby boomers are retiring in huge numbers. They are being replaced by younger workers, workers born in other countries, racialized workers, and Aboriginal workers. We have more casualized workers in our membership, as a result of both organizing and workplace restructuring. Many new and young workers have less job security. Many workplaces are adopting two tier compensation and benefits, creating tensions between younger/newer workers and more senior/older workers. Many new members have weaker connections to the union and to the collective agreement process.

Finally, **CUPE has also changed as an organization** since the current bargaining education program was developed over ten years ago. More locals are engaged in coordinated and central bargaining. The research branch produces CAIS (Collective Agreement Information System) instead of SALAD (the previous collective agreement database). And we have many more staff supporting locals as servicing representatives, researchers, communicators, legal counsel, etc.

In February 2013 members and staff will gather at a National Bargaining Conference in Ottawa to talk about this changing landscape and strategize about how to move forward.

## The invitation

The Union Development Department wants to engage members and staff in a conversation about the kind of bargaining education program our members need in these changing times. We want to provide education that is relevant and empowering. We want an education program that will support forward movement at all our bargaining tables, whether those tables are local, coordinated, or central.

You are invited to be part of this conversation. Here's how you can do it:

### Step 1:

Go to <http://cupe.ca/union-education/bargaining-education> and have a look at the list of all the ways that CUPE currently supports locals and bargaining councils in bargaining. This will give you a picture of what already exists.

### Step 2:

- Gather a group of CUPE members and/or staff together to talk about the questions in this discussion guide. See “Tips for hosting a great conversation”.
- Make sure someone in the group is assigned to share your answers.
- Or, you could think about the questions on your own.

### Step 3:

Go back to <http://cupe.ca/union-education/bargaining-education> to share your ideas.

Deadline for input: **March 1, 2013.**

## **The questions**

### **The context for bargaining**

1. What time is it for collective bargaining for CUPE members?
2. What are the most important advances we could achieve for our members in these times?

### **The bargaining education program**

3. What does our education program need to cover if we want to achieve the advances identified in Question 2 above?
4. Who needs to learn what?
5. How can our education program help us maintain and build bargaining strength (in spite of the times we're in)?
6. What would our education program look like if it reflected the changing membership of our union?

### **Tools and resources**

7. Which bargaining tools and resources are most essential to achieving everything we're talking about?

## Tips for hosting a great conversation

1. Design an invitation that makes people want to be there.
2. Think about who you want at your conversation and make sure they get the invitation.
3. Take time to create an inviting room set up. Think about music, food, lighting, table and chair set up. Set things up so people can see each other and aren't looking at each other's backs. Create an atmosphere where people can be as comfortable, creative and productive as possible.
4. Have people ready to play key roles: facilitation, recording, timekeeper, etc.
5. Have fun!

Here is a sample invitation:

### *CUPE needs us!*

*The education department is updating CUPE's bargaining workshops and we can have input.*

*Come and share your ideas about what kind of bargaining education program will help (our local/committee/bargaining council/sector/region, etc.) maintain and build bargaining strength.*

*Place:*

*Time:*

*(Food provided or any other special  
~~arrangenemtns~~ arrangements)*

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## Sample discussion outline

This is an example of what a two hour discussion might look like, using the discussion questions in this document. This example includes time for a 15 minute break.

### Welcome and introductions – 10 minutes

- Idea: Ask: “Why is this discussion important to you?”

### Context – 20 minutes

- Idea: Do the first question as a mingle, where everyone stands up and talks to each other for about 10 minutes. Or lead a group discussion with 10 minutes spent on the first question and 10 on the second. Create a short list of meaningful and realistic bargaining priorities (given the times we’re in).

### Bargaining education program –45 minutes

- Idea: Choose some or all of the questions. Put one question on each table and let people choose what they want to talk about. -Record answers right onto flipchart paper. If it’s a small group, have the group choose the questions most important to them.

### Tools and resources – 15 minutes

- Idea: Brainstorm. Or do a “keep”, “change” “stop” activity with existing resources (where people say why they think a certain tool should be kept, changed or stopped.)

### Wrap up – 15 minutes

- Idea: thank people for taking time to provide input into CUPE’s bargaining education program.
- Clarify who will send in the input and when.

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