

Counterpoint

**FOCUS:
CONSERVATIVES
NEGLECTING
HEALTH CARE**

**FEDERAL
BUDGET FAILS
WORKING
PEOPLE**

**Master bargaining
in Newfoundland**

Are you hurt by
EI changes?

Alberta pension
plan safe, for now

**Protecting public
water services**

KEEPSAKE POSTER
ON CLEAN DRINKING
WATER



“Now if they found a billion dollars in just six weeks, is there really a need to have these job losses?”

CUPE NL President Wayne Lucas, page 3.

Federal budget fails working people

The 2013 federal budget failed to address Canada's real economic and social problems. Unemployment, poverty and slow economic and income growth will not improve under the government's continued austerity measures. Instead, Finance Minister Jim Flaherty's budget will actually make these problems worse.

For municipalities and provinces the pain will be felt almost immediately. The budget cuts \$250 million per year from the federal infrastructure funding made available to municipalities through the Building Canada Fund (BCF). It will also leave very little for the first two years since the fund is back-end loaded.

This is far from the \$2.5 billion increase in infrastructure funding that the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and its allies called for. The reduced BCF funding will now force more communities to apply for funding that is only available through the P3 Canada Fund, which the budget renewed and which ties infrastructure to risky

public-private partnerships.

On the positive side, the federal government did commit to indexing the Gas Tax Fund by two per cent and giving municipalities greater flexibility in how these funds can be spent.

Job training is also being negatively impacted by the budget. Funding to provinces for literacy and essential skills, made available under current Labour Market Agreements, is essentially being taken away and put under the control of

employers for cost matching by them and the provinces.

The federal government has made a lot of noise about labour market and skills shortages, but its own projections show that the unemployment rate will remain high for the foreseeable future, declining to 6.4 per cent only in 2017.

With more than five unemployed Canadians for every job vacancy, what we needed was a proactive and coordinated national approach to training that

supports joint programs and industry sector councils, and doesn't take funding away from provincial training programs.

Overall, the budget fails Canadian workers on many fronts. There is a disturbing lack of any measure to help working families make ends meet in tough economic times. Measures like an expanded Canada Pension Plan, national child care funding, commitments to public health care and rolling

back cuts to EI are needed. This budget also continues to let Aboriginal people down.

By implementing progressive tax measures, closing tax loopholes and restoring tax rates on corporations, the government could have addressed the very real and pressing social and economic problems facing Canadians today. Instead they chose a budget that ignored these needs.

■ Tria Donaldson



CUPE'S QUARTERLY PUBLICATION SPRING 2013

Counterpoint

ISSN print 1920-2857
ISSN online 1920-2865

Counterpoint is published by the Canadian Union of Public Employees. Address all letters to the editor to: CUPE Communications, 1375 St. Laurent Blvd. Ottawa, ON, K1G 0Z7
T: 613-237-1590 F: 613-237-5508
Publications Mail Agreement Number 40005741

Union-printed on 50% recycled, 30% post-consumer waste, elemental chlorine-free paper, certified by the Forest Stewardship Council.

Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to: CUPE Communications, 1375 St. Laurent Blvd. Ottawa, ON, K1G 0Z7
Visit CUPE's website at cupe.ca or contact us at cupemail@cupe.ca

Managing Editor Mario Émond
Communications Director Heather Fraser
Graphic Designer Jocelyn Renaud
Editorial Assistants Hélène Bélanger • Valérie Ménard • Stéphanie Bibeau
Contributors Pierre Ducasse • Clay Suddaby • Wes Payne • Gregory Taylor • David Jacks • Janet Szliske • John McCracken • Tria Donaldson • Philippe Gagnon • Lou Arab

CANADIAN UNION OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES NATIONAL EXECUTIVE BOARD

National President Paul Moist
National Secretary-Treasurer Charles Fleury

General Vice-Presidents Daniel Légère • Lucie Levasseur • Fred Hahn • Tom Graham • Barry O'Neill

Regional Vice-Presidents Wayne Lucas / Newfoundland & Labrador • Danny Cavanagh / Nova Scotia • Sandy Harding / New Brunswick • Lori MacKay / Prince Edward Island • Denis Bolduc / Quebec • Ginette Paul / Quebec • Candace Rennick / Ontario • Michael Hurley / Ontario • Henri Giroux / Northern Ontario • Kelly Moist / Manitoba • Judy Henley / Saskatchewan • Marle Roberts / Alberta • Mark Hancock / British Columbia • Victor Elkins / British Columbia
Diversity Vice-Presidents Brian Barron • Yolanda McClean



New chief shop steward in town

When facing an issue in the workplace, members of CUPE 2509 at Seven Oaks Hospital in Winnipeg, Manitoba, have a new chief shop steward to turn to: Roma Aguinardo.

Roma started in 2005 as a unit clerk in dialysis, acting as front-line support



to patients and their families. Her work involves maintaining databases, filing, transcribing orders, and booking appointments. Her favourite part of the job is getting to know patients and being a friendly, supportive resource for them when they walk in the door.

But helping people doesn't stop after working hours.

For Roma, taking on the role of CUPE 2509 chief shop steward in 2012 was a natural move. "I was always an advocate in any job I've been in," she explains. "I wanted to be a support for everybody else."

Roma's friendly and outgoing personality makes her very approachable, but when it comes to meetings with management she takes

her role very seriously. "You don't want people to take advantage of you, so you get involved with the union," she says. "It puts you at the same level as management so you can fight for members who need support."

Her role as chief shop steward brings her new challenges that she meets head-on. "I like when people talk to me about a problem," she explains. "I like looking through the collective agreement – my satisfaction is finding an answer to help the member."

Roma has a passion for people, for the work she does at the hospital, and for her role as chief shop steward for CUPE.

"I love helping others, and this role gives me a chance to help others in my workplace," concludes Roma. "I always tell my children that they should follow in my footsteps and get involved too – it's a very fulfilling place to be."

■ David Jacks

Master bargaining in Newfoundland

CUPE members in Newfoundland and Labrador are in the midst of 'master bargaining' affecting almost two-thirds of our members in that province.

On March 26, the Dunderdale Conservative government released a provincial budget that contained massive job cuts for the public sector, while announcing the merger of four English school boards into one board to cover the entire province.

The government announced 1,181 jobs will be eliminated, including layoffs for 485 employees in the core public service and 246 vacant positions that will not be filled, plus 190 voluntary retirements. A hiring freeze also remains in effect.

CUPE members will be most affected by the 450 positions being cut outside of so-called 'core' government departments, meaning health care, school boards, housing, libraries and Government House.

Reacting to the budget, CUPE NL President Wayne Lucas questioned whether any of the job cuts were really necessary. Lucas pointed to the province's actual deficit of \$563.8 million, which was dramatically lower than the \$1.6 billion forecasted by the finance minister prior to the budget announcement.

Said Lucas: "Now if they found a billion dollars in just six weeks, is there really a need to have these job losses? After all, it was this government that hired these individuals on. At this rate, we should just wait another six weeks and we'll have a surplus. This is the gang that couldn't shoot straight."

■ John McCracken

Are you hurt by EI changes? Tell us your story.

More and more workers across Canada – including CUPE members – are being hit by the devastating changes to Employment Insurance introduced by the Harper Conservative government. The labour movement must increase the pressure on the Harper government by showing the real impact of these new rules.

"To stop the EI changes, we need to tell the stories of the real impact of these changes on people," explained CUPE National President Paul Moist.

CUPE members working for school boards, municipalities, universities and colleges, and in trades will be affected by the reform. The stories of these people will help convince Canadians and the government that these changes are unfair for workers across Canada.

If you are having trouble with employment insurance, please send your stories to EIWATCH@CUPE.CA. You can send your whole story or just provide your telephone number so that we can contact you.

■ Philippe Gagnon

NATIONAL PRESIDENT PAUL MOIST

Standing up for fairness

Federal Conservatives and some provincial leaders, notably in Ontario, are poised to introduce anti-union legislation that would make it optional for employees to pay dues in unionized work places, or to limit how unions spend their money. In particular, there is a lot of talk about attacking our rights to political action work by allowing members to "opt out" of the portion of dues spent on those activities.

This move is consistent with the Harper Conservative government's attacks on workers and their unions over the past several years: intervention in labour disputes on the side of the employer; cuts to Employment Insurance; raising the age of retirement through changes to Old Age Security; the vigorous recruitment of vulnerable temporary foreign workers; and the introduction and passage of Bill C-377, meant to harass and intimidate unions regarding their finances.

An attack on dues check-off is designed to weaken unions financially. To make union dues for political purposes voluntary is an outright attempt to stop our

political work. Campaigns to expand CPP or oppose cuts to Employment Insurance, for example, are inherently political.

The Conservative government may seek to restrict dues to purely bargaining and collective agreement enforcement. In short, they seek to de-fund the social unionism which has been a hallmark of our union for our entire fifty years. The Canadian labour movement will respond with strength and with solidarity to these attacks.

It is time for our union to speak with one voice to oppose the assault by Conservative and Liberal governments on our rights. And so, we are starting a conversation with our 627,000 members about the importance of the union to our members and more broadly to all Canadians.

Polling conducted by the Canadian Labour Congress shows us just how important these individual conversations are. The majority of union members have little or no awareness about coming attacks on unions and their funding. It also shows that we need to have two-way conversations with our members about the vital work we do to represent and serve workers – both our own members and the broader Canadian public.

More than ever we need unions. More than ever we need to be talking and listening to our members, face-to-face, about bargaining, about our issues at work and about keeping our union strong.

PAUL MOIST ONLINE  twitter.com/CUPENatPres



FOCUS:

HEALTH CARE CUTS



Putting an end to the Conservatives' neglect of our health care system

Access to quality health care remains a top concern among Canadians. Across Canada, 94 per cent of people surveyed also say they want to strengthen Medicare rather than see increased privatization. Unfortunately, the federal government does not share this viewpoint.

Since early 2011, many unions and organizations have been calling for the renegotiation and renewal of the 2004 Health Accord covering the 10-year period through 2014. However, in December 2011, without entering into any form of negotiation with the provinces, the Harper government unilaterally announced plans to reduce the six per cent indexing of health transfers and review the health funding formula. According to best estimates, this translates into a total of \$36 billion in cuts over a 10-year period starting in 2014 (see table).

The Harper Conservative government could not be clearer about what it wants to do for health care: nothing. The Conservative government is not showing leadership in terms of improving care for the elderly, investing in front-line care and prevention or taking steps to reduce drug costs. These measures should be negotiated with the provinces, but Harper refuses to even sit down at the table to undertake the necessary discussions.

To make matters worse, the government is making no effort to ensure compliance among the provinces

with a major piece of federal legislation, the Canada Health Act. Through its indifference and negligence, the Harper conservatives are allowing – and contributing to – the accelerated privatization of our public system.

Clearly, CUPE members need to take action to help steer the federal government in a new direction and ensure that the Harper government strives to play a positive role in improving our public health care system (see CUPE's health care campaign article on page 5).

CUPE recommendations
Against this backdrop

of attacks on our public system, increased privatization and the government's role in health care cuts, it is critical for CUPE to respond and to share our ideas and proposals with all Canadians. And it is not enough to simply seek to protect the existing system: we need to go further by developing additional programs and policies to meet the current and future needs of our population. CUPE's recommendations seek to protect, strengthen and expand our public health care system.

CUPE proposes two main approaches to pro-

tecting our system. First, we need to ensure adequate and reliable federal funding in the form of a minimum six per cent annual increase. Second, we need to curb privatization, establish national standards for preventing two-tier health care and enforce compliance with the Canada Health Act.

CUPE also proposes two additional measures for strengthening our system. Further efforts are required to improve health care safety and control hospital-borne infections, such as adding custodial staff and reducing overcrowding in our hospitals. We also need to bolster front-line care, notably through the creation and consolidation of community health centres.

We are also calling on the federal government to do more to expand and augment services to the

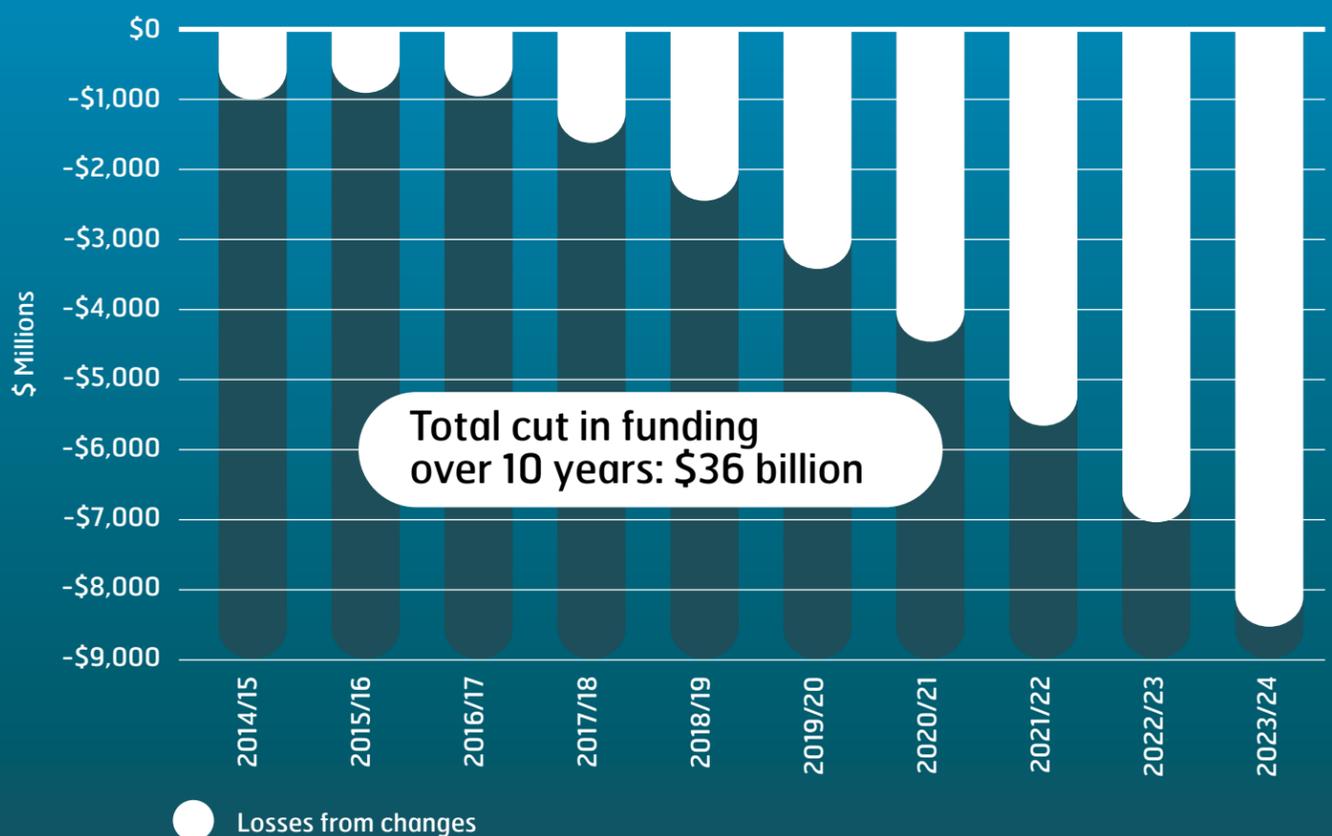
general public. Canada needs a national, public, continuing care program that covers both long-term and home care. A national drug plan also needs to be created to reduce drug costs.

Our public health care system has long been a source of pride for Canadians. We need to take action against the federal government's withdrawal from this system and the forces seeking total privatization and present real solutions for improving our system. As front-line workers in our health care system, CUPE members have a real role to play to call on our government to protect, strengthen and expand our public health care system.

Find out more at **CUPE.CA/HEALTH-CARE-PUBLIC-SOLUTIONS**.

■ Pierre Ducasce

Cuts to health care transfers from federal changes to CHT* formula Canada



*Canada Health Transfer

Source: Report of the Council of the Federation Working Group on Fiscal Arrangements, July 2012.

Our public health care system has long been a source of pride for Canadians. We need to take action against the federal government's withdrawal from this system and the forces seeking total privatization. We need to present real solutions for improving our system.



Tommy would be scandalized

Despite living in the provincial birthplace of Tommy Douglas, Medicare's creator, the people of Saskatchewan have no special protection against privatization of health care. Even while the province celebrated 50 years of public health care last summer, the conservative Brad Wall government has continued to relentlessly push their health care privatization agenda.

Private clinics are poaching qualified, experienced staff from the public sector. "Instead of expanding capacity, the health region's decision to contract out surgeries has reduced surgical capacity in Regina hospitals," says CUPE Health Care Council President Gordon Campbell.

Surgical procedures have been contracted out to private companies Surgical Centre Inc. and Aspen Medical Surgery Inc. Although an earlier arbitration award permits this

contracting out only until the end of 2013, the government marches forward with privatization.

In 2012, the Saskatchewan government created 3sHealth (Shared Services Saskatchewan) to "achieve efficiencies through shared services." The 3sHealth program has a five-year savings target goal of \$100 million. Reviewing health care laundry services – its first shared services review – started in the spring of last year. CUPE Health Care Council has made a strong case to keep this service public. Privatization of hospital laundry services would have a big impact on laundry services and workers in rural communities.

Despite the continuous attack on public health care, CUPE members in Saskatchewan continue to defend our public system against privatization. For more information please visit CUPESASKHCC.CA.

■ Janet Szliske

CUPE's health care campaign: We need you!

As mandated by the last national convention, CUPE is launching a mobilization campaign on health care which is set to continue into 2015. The main focus of the first phase of this campaign will be to lobby government and opposition Members of Parliament.

And for this we need you. The participation and activism of our members on the front-lines is essential for the success of a campaign of this nature. Meetings with elected officials and mobilization efforts will take place largely

at the community level.

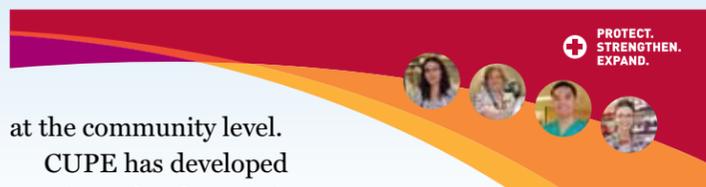
CUPE has developed a variety of tools to assist locals and divisions to move forward with this campaign to call on the federal government to protect, strengthen and expand our public health care system. We have assembled a kit including the full text of our proposals and ideas for lobbying strategies.

Over the coming months, CUPE staff will be available to assist your team and provide additional infor-

mation and training on the campaign. The training will cover both the content and the lobbying techniques themselves. This training will be valuable to you both for this campaign and for future efforts.

For additional information or to confirm your interest in receiving training, please email HEALTHLOBBY@CUPE.CA.

■ Pierre Ducasse



Têtes-à-têtes!





CUPE joins Canadian Labour Congress to oppose threats to union security

Conservatives at the federal level and in some provinces have indicated they plan to introduce anti-union legislation that would attack the Rand formula, making it optional for employees to pay dues in unionized work places, or to limit how unions spend their money.

CUPE and the CLC are organizing a major response to these increasing threats from politicians with anti-union stances. At a recent meeting, CUPE's National Executive Board unanimously passed the CLC resolution calling for "a comprehensive campaign to reinforce the value of union membership and unions."

In telephone town hall meetings with local presidents across the country, CUPE National President Paul Moist and National Secretary-Treasurer

Charles Fleury outlined the attacks unions are facing, and listened to members about the best way to respond.

"It is time for our union to speak with one voice to oppose the assault by Conservative and Liberal governments on our rights," Moist told local presidents on the call. "And so, we are starting a conversation with our 627,000 members about the importance of the union to our members and more broadly to all Canadians."

CUPE is currently producing material and rolling out training for local activists to hold one-on-one conversations with members in their workplaces on the importance of the Rand formula and the value of the labour movement's participation in improving the daily lives of our members at the bargaining

table and through broader political action.

"We need to ensure that every single one of our members knows the importance of their union and the importance of their collective agreement for fairness for workers in the workplace and fairness for workers in the economy," said Moist.

The Rand formula ensures dues are collected automatically from every employee in a unionized workplace. The stability this provides ensures workers have the power of numbers to build a fair and just society. Without this power workers would not have the wages, benefits and working conditions many now take for granted. In the end, the Rand formula creates fairness for all.

Visit CUPE.CA for more information.

■ **Wes Payne**

Alberta pension plan safe, for now

CUPE members and pensioners in Alberta may have dodged a bullet.

After a concerted effort by CUPE Alberta, CUPE locals and other unions, the Local Authorities Pension Plan (LAPP) board has recommended no changes be made to the current structure of the plan. However, it is the Minister of Finance who alone has the power to make these changes happen, and he is the one who asked for these changes in the first place.

Last fall, the Redford government asked public pension plans to find ways of making pensions more sustainable. In response, the LAPP board began a flawed consultation process to measure support for different means of cut-

ting back pension benefits. Proposals included an end to automatic indexing of pensions and higher retirement ages.

About 25,000 CUPE members are part of this plan, plus retirees. The plan covers employees of most municipalities, school boards, and Alberta Health Services. It is one of four major public sector pension plans in the province.

CUPE Alberta President Marle Roberts says the decision of the LAPP board comes after pressure by retirees and plan members. "This is a victory, and we should congratulate ourselves," said Roberts. "The pressure from our locals and our members is making a difference."

■ **Lou Arab**



in brief

National child care program sorely needed



Kitchen Table discussions held during CUPE Saskatchewan's division convention last March highlighted the real need for a national child care program.

Many heart-felt stories were shared, including one from a Saskatchewan grandmother who provides child care to her 11-year old granddaughter in Manitoba – by phone every Wednesday – because her daughter's shift extension goes two hours longer than the after school care program.

Province-wide problems were discussed during the convention, including the lack of child care in rural Saskatchewan, no availability of after-hours or weekend care, long waiting lists and high costs, and age limitations for children accepted into programs.

CUPE, alongside many other organizations and unions, has launched a campaign to rethink child care in Canada. Tell us your story, host a kitchen table conversation or simply pledge your support for the campaign. Find out more at RETHINKCHILDCARE.CA.

CUPE launches national disability rights campaign

CUPE's Persons with Disabilities National Working Group has launched a new campaign to raise awareness of the rights that all workers have—to be treated with respect and dignity, and to ensure disabilities are accommodated at work.

The committee is issuing a poster, brochure and a series of fact sheets to promote the campaign across the country. For more information visit CUPE.CA/DISABILITY-RIGHTS.

Showing our mettle





CUPE BC pulls out all the stops in BC election

This edition of Counterpoint went to press just before Election Day in BC on May 14. While the outcome was unknown at press time, CUPE BC's Political Action Committee (PAC) was hopeful for a strong showing for BC NDP Leader Adrian Dix and his team and an end to the devastating policies of the BC Liberals.

CUPE BC has always been very politically active, but the Division took political action to new levels in the 2013 campaign. In the run-up to the election, the PAC produced a leaflet ("Why Should You Vote") encouraging members to register to vote. That leaflet was followed up with activists making more than

10,000 calls to members to encourage them to vote NDP. In March, CUPE BC held a virtual town hall and thousands of CUPE members participated, hearing directly from Adrian Dix.

CUPE BC's 50th annual convention in mid-April was the unofficial kickoff to the election campaign, and Dix delivered a keynote address that was very well received. During the 28-day official election campaign, the Division sent a letter to members outlining the issues and explaining why CUPE was supporting the NDP. Finally, in the last week of the campaign, members received an "end game" leaflet reinforcing the NDP message to voters.

■ Clay Suddaby

Protecting public water services

CUPE members are working with allies in Saskatchewan and New Brunswick to push back against the privatization of public water and waste water services. Municipal councils in Regina and Saint John are moving towards risky public-private partnerships (P3) to build new water facilities in their respective cities.

Saint John is pursuing a P3 for a new water treatment plant. Working with allies in Common Causes, CUPE is campaigning to inform Saint John citizens about the dangers of P3s, such as significantly higher costs and lack of accountability.

Similarly, Regina's city council has issued a request for proposals for a P3 to build a new waste water treatment plant. Some councillors and the city's mayor, however, voiced concerns about using a P3 model. They said they

voted reluctantly to issue the request for proposals (RFPs) to access federal infrastructure funding that the Harper Conservative government has made conditional on using P3s.

"Regina is being forced into this P3 in order to access federal funding. Where I'm from, that is not acceptable," said Paul Moist, National President of CUPE, in a telephone town hall meeting organized for community members to voice their concerns on privatizing their public water services.

Moist said CUPE will continue to pressure the federal government to help strengthen and renew public water services in Regina, Saint John and across Canada, without forcing municipal governments into risky P3 schemes.

■ Gregory Taylor



NATIONAL SECRETARY-TREASURER CHARLES FLEURY

Anti-union attacks: The high cost of inaction

In April, CUPE National President Paul Moist and I organized a number of telephone town hall meetings for local union presidents. We outlined key aspects of the campaign by the Canadian Labour Congress and its affiliated unions to raise awareness among our members about the danger posed to us and all Canadian workers by escalating anti-union attacks from right-wing governments.

During these exchanges, several presidents asked a legitimate question: How much is this dialogue with our 627,000 members going to cost? Besides the time and effort required from each of us, the response is simple: very little.

CUPE will be providing training and material to inform the discussions and highlight the importance of unions and the labour movement for Canadian society as a whole. National representatives will also be providing support. Working with your reps, local leaders will be responsible for initiating the movement and involving

members who will help get the message into the workplace.

That said, I find the more important question to be this: Can we, as union members, afford not to take action against the offensive from Stephen Harper's Conservatives and anti-labour provincial governments? Clearly, the answer is no.

This is all the more true as the Canadian right seeks adoption of new anti-union legislation that would give workers the option not to pay dues to the union representing them. This legislation would also limit the power of unions to decide how to use the monies placed at their disposal.

The ability of unions to take political action would also be compromised. This is one of Harper's goals because he knows that unions have the means to mobilize our members and our community allies to oppose his policies that hurt people and our communities.

Individual workers will not be spared under anti-union legislation, since the other main objective of these attacks is ultimately to drive down wages and eliminate benefits.

That's why I encourage you to accept this challenge of standing up against the Conservative agenda. During your breaks, at the end of the work day or at union meetings, talk with your co-workers about the role of your union. Remember that unions have fought long and hard for the benefits you enjoy today. Imagine what else we can accomplish together and share your ideas with us.

Through your contribution and solidarity, CUPE and the entire union movement will come out of this dialogue even stronger. Together, we can fight back against the government attacks targeting our ranks and continue to uphold our common interests as workers and community members.

CHARLES FLEURY ONLINE twitter.com/CUPENatSec





This isn't OK for your family. Why should it be for First Nations?

Clean drinking water is a right for all people. Yet nearly one in five First Nations communities – thousands of First Nation families – cannot depend on having clean, safe drinking water in their own homes.

Join us in telling Prime Minister Stephen Harper –
ENOUGH *is* ENOUGH!

BOIL WATER ADVISORY

You are advised to boil your water
until further notice.

This notice is to advise you that your water
is unsafe for drinking at this time.
Please boil water for **THREE** minutes before
using for drinking, cooking or brushing your
teeth.



First Nations Environmental Health Services, 2008

CALLED TODAY