

# Counterpoint

**FOCUS:  
14 SERIOUS  
CHALLENGES  
YOUNG PEOPLE  
FACE**

**QUEBEC CITY'S  
WORKERS  
RACK UP  
VICTORIES**

**Celebrating our  
50<sup>th</sup> in Quebec City**

Passenger safety:  
no compromise is  
acceptable

**Toronto workers find  
strength in reconnecting  
with communities**

KEEPSAKE POSTER  
ON YOUNG WORKERS



# HE SAID

*“Working people are under attack... by talking to our members, each and every one of them, about the benefits of a strong labour movement to protect their own interests and to build a fair and just society, we can win.”*

*CUPE National President Paul Moist, page 3.*

## Quebec City's blue collar workers rack up victories against contracting out

Quebec City's dispute over garbage privatization ended in late June with a labour arbitrator ruling in favour of CUPE's blue collar workers. The arbitrator ordered the city to pay the union “\$1,519,173 plus

interest in compensation pursuant to the Labour Code,” an amount covering the period between April 1, 2010 and May 31, 2011. The city's waste management services have been in private hands for more than three years.

Other grievances were

also filed against the city's privatization plans which violated the collective agreement with the blue collar workers. Given these other claims, the city could soon see itself paying its workers another major sum in compensation. With the additional years under review, the union estimates the final amount could exceed \$3 million, excluding interest. The amount could rise beyond this as the meter keeps running with every month that goes by.

This estimate does not take into account other areas being privatized (horticulture and janitorial services, for instance) which were also contested by the Quebec City Union of Manual Workers (CUPE 1638).

In 2010, the city promised savings of one million per year through garbage privatization.

At the end of June, the union presented data on the privatization of garbage collection, which it obtained from Quebec City through an access-to-information request. The data shows that the average cost per metric tonne of garbage has ballooned since 2010 – the first year of privatization.

■ **Robert Bellerose and Sébastien Goulet**



Photo: Annie Thériault  
Eddy Jomphe and Marc-André Dufour, respectively union representative and President of CUPE 1638.



## François Pilon, from CUPE to the NDP

The orange wave that hit Quebec during the 2011 federal election led many CUPE activists to the House of Commons. Among them is François Pilon, former member of Laval's blue collar union, and now the NDP MP for Laval-Les Îles.

“The union movement taught me to help people and respond to complaints. It also taught me to handle complex files. That experience came in handy when I tabled Bill C-480, aimed at excluding from income RRSP withdrawals made for funeral arrangements. Unfortunately, the Conservatives voted against the proposal, one that would have helped low-income taxpayers,” Mr. Pilon explained to *Counterpoint*.

François Pilon began his union involvement with CUPE in 1989. At the same time, he became active in the New Democratic Party to promote his values of a more just and equitable society.

In 2004, he ran as a candidate for the first time in a federal election under the NDP banner in the riding of Honoré-Mercier. He ran again in 2006 and 2008, increasing his share of the vote each time.

In 2009, he was nominated in Laval-Les Îles and then won the 2011 election with close to 48 per cent of the vote!

“I will certainly be a candidate in the next election. I love what I'm doing,” Pilon concluded.

■ **Lisa Djevahirdjian and Sébastien Goulet**

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## Working to build a united group

*When she first got her permanent job three years ago as a community-living worker in Charlottetown, Debbie Wilson had no intention of becoming active in her union, even turning down an executive position with her local, CUPE 3373.*

But then she changed her mind. She not only accepted the position of vice-president for her local, she also became a shop steward.

"I didn't feel we were a cohesive group. I felt my co-workers needed to be more informed about our rights under our collective agreement, a contract that protects all of us," she explained. Queen County Residential Services is spread over six work

locations all over the city and some of its 60 employees work on the road visiting clients at home.

Wilson knows firsthand how difficult it is to have a job in a workplace where you have no rights, no protection and no recourse. "Before, I worked in a non-unionized group home and I didn't have any protection. The employees were blamed for everything that went wrong. That's why I decided to get involved. I wanted my co-workers to be knowledgeable of the protection and the rights they have with their contract," she said.

In her role as shop steward, Wilson wants to make sure members are well informed

of their rights. "Our members now know they don't need to go into a meeting with management alone. If they don't feel at ease with the meeting, they have the right to have their shop steward with them." As she said, there's never a simple little meeting with management.

Debbie is now looking forward to steward training to strengthen her support to members facing difficult times at work.

■ Danielle Savoie



## Celebrating our 50<sup>th</sup> in Quebec City

The countdown is on for CUPE's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary national convention, to be held October 21 - 25 at the Quebec City Convention Centre.

More than 2,000 delegates, staff and guests are expected to attend the five-day convention. On top of the usual proceedings, this year's convention will feature a host of special events to mark CUPE's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Retrospectives of CUPE's history will highlight CUPE's accomplishments, and recognize the many leaders, activists, staff and members who helped build our union.

The convention will also recognize the exceptional work and contributions of CUPE members. Awards will include the National Disability Rights Award, the Grace Hartman Award (recognizing outstanding work on women's issues), the National Health and Safety Award, the National Literacy Award, and the Communications Awards.

With the celebrations, there will also be a lot of work to be done. Delegates will debate and discuss resolutions on a host of issues important to CUPE members and their communities. They will set the course for the next two years as CUPE pushes back against attacks on Canadian workers and fights to protect the public services all Canadians depend on.

To know more about the 50<sup>th</sup>, go online at [CUPESO.CA](http://CUPESO.CA), [@CUPENAT](https://twitter.com/CUPENAT) or [FACEBOOK.COM/CUPESCFP](https://facebook.com/CUPESCFP).

■ Greg Taylor

## Unions fight back against Conservative' legislative attacks

The Senate's rejection of Bill C-377, a private member's bill claiming to address the accountability and transparency of labour unions, shows that it is possible to defeat bad legislation and to find, along the way, unexpected allies in the fight against the Conservative government's anti-union agenda.

Bill C-377 was blocked in the Senate by a vote of 49 to 33. More than a dozen

Conservative Senators voted in favour of the amendments proposed by Conservative Senator Hugh Segal.

Though this was a significant setback for the Harper Conservative government, it did not slow them down. Bill C-525, a newly proposed private member's bill, takes the federal Conservatives' attacks on unions to a whole new level.

The bill, introduced by MP Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, AB), chan-

ges the certification and decertification rules for federal sector workers, making it easier to decertify a union while making it harder to form or join one.

This bill changes the rules so that a minority of employees – just 45 per cent – can trigger certification or decertification instead of the current 50 per cent plus one. The proposed process also imposes an absolute majority require-

ment for votes, which means more than 50 per cent of all employees covered by the collective agreement, not just those voting.

Replacing the current one-step process, in which a majority of workers in a workplace sign a card indicating their desire to unionize, with this new two-step process creates undemocratic barriers to forming a union and makes it easier for employers to interfere.

If those rules applied to parliament, no sitting MP could have been elected.

CUPE and our allies in the labour movement are organizing against this bill. We are hopeful that the government will learn, after their setback with Bill C-377, that labour is a force to be reckoned with, deserving of respect and recognition for its key role in the Canadian economy.

■ Tria Donaldson

### NATIONAL PRESIDENT PAUL MOIST

## Recreating the labour movement: Looking forward, looking back

The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our union presents an opportunity to reflect on the struggles we have faced and overcome to grow into Canada's biggest and best union. Today, our challenges are as great as they ever were. Right wing governments are poised to take away our rights to bargain good collective agreements and take on political fights.

At the same time, the economy is failing working people. Downward pressure on wages and government austerity programs are resulting in layoffs, contracting out, privatization of public services while families struggle to make ends meet. The rich are getting richer and the debt load of working people is increasing. It is no

wonder our economy is experiencing such slow growth. Without greater income equality, the economy will continue to wane.

The answer is clear. The economy needs a raise – disposable incomes need to rise to increase demand and create good jobs. And, we need a strong labour movement. A strong labour movement can bargain wage increases and push for public services, social justice and environmental protection.

The time has never been better for us to create an even stronger movement. Working people are under attack. The economy, the environment and equality are all under attack. But by talking to our members, each and every one of them, about the benefits of a strong labour movement to protect their own interests and to build a fair and just society, we can win.

As we celebrate our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary at our upcoming convention, these are the priorities for our union. We look back at our hard-won victories and know that we need to re-create the solidarity that brought us the gains we enjoy today.

PAUL MOIST ONLINE [twitter.com/CUPENatPres](https://twitter.com/CUPENatPres)





# Focus:

## YOUNG WORKERS



# 14 serious challenges young people face

**1 High youth unemployment:** The unemployment rate for youth between the ages of 15 and 24 is twice the national average. There are currently more than 400,000 unemployed young Canadians looking for jobs but unable to find them.

**2 Precarious work:** Youth under-employment is also a major issue – the proportion of young workers working in non-permanent jobs has almost doubled over the past 15 years. To keep labour costs down employers are increasingly relying on part-time, term, casual, and even unpaid internships, which are sometimes illegal. Finding stable employment is an increasing challenge in a labour market where young people are often forced to take anything they can find.



**3 Low wages:** Economists have shown that graduating and entering the workforce during a recession has significant and long-lasting negative effects on future wage earnings. In economic downturns individuals lose out on the wage-growth they would otherwise experience early in their careers.



**4 Two-tier contracts:** Even unionized jobs are not as appealing to young people as they once were, thanks to the increasing prevalence of two-tier contracts where new hires doing the same work as their colleagues receive reduced compensation. Two-tier systems do not just affect morale; they have serious long-term consequences for union participation and solidarity.



**5 Multiple jobs:** Finding gainful, full-time employment is a challenge. Underemployed youth are increasingly resorting to working multiple jobs just to make ends meet.

**6 Growing student debt:** Since the 1980s, government grants to post-secondary institutions have fallen sharply. This has increased the cost of tuition for students and their families dramatically. The current average national student debt is around \$25,000 per student, with a total of more than \$15 billion in student loans owed to provincial governments and the private sector.



**7 Growing home ownership costs:** The average home in Canada currently costs around \$350,000 – five times the average household income. In the 1970s, the average home in Canada sold for just three times the average household income. Young people face increases in housing and education costs that dramatically outpace real wage growth.



**8 Lack of affordable and accessible child care:** As if housing and education costs weren't bad enough, child care can be equally difficult to find and pay for. Many young people have delayed starting a family because of financial pressures.

**9 Weakened social services:** Governments across the country continue to weaken social programs. Changes to the EI program force people to take lesser jobs, while changes to Old Age Security mean young people will have to work longer than their parents did.

**10 Pension issues:** Young workers are entering a workforce where good workplace pension plans are under attack. Of all working Canadians, young workers have the lowest levels of coverage from employer-sponsored pension plans. In 2008, only 12 per cent of young workers had an employer-sponsored pension plan.

**11 Seniority issues:** Younger workers are usually at the bottom of a long seniority list, which can be discouraging. The opportunities to advance quickly can be limited. To make matters worse, the lack of seniority can dramatically affect their compensation when unions sign two-tier agreements.

**12 Stereotyped as entitled:** Media stories painting young people as entitled have only fueled this problem. Generational differences may further complicate these perceptions.

**13 Health and safety concerns:** Young workers in Canada are more likely than adults to get hurt on the job. Workers are the most vulnerable when starting a new job. Each year, over 48,000 young workers are injured seriously enough to require time off work.

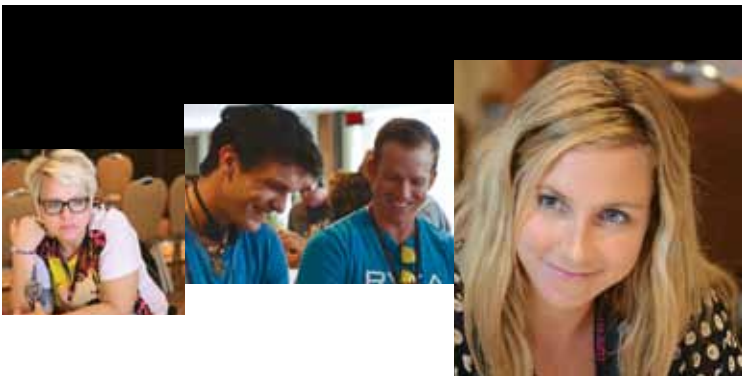
**14 Different communications:** It's true – how we communicate has changed rapidly in the last 15 to 20 years. Young people absorb information differently in the digital age, and many of us in unions haven't quite caught up.

■ Tria Donaldson and Wes Payne



There are currently more than 400,00 unemployed young Canadians looking for jobs but unable to find them.

**all-in** CUPE  
OUR UNION, OUR FUTURE.



## Canada-wide events mark Year of the New and Young Worker

Getting active and shaping the future became a little easier for young workers this year after delegates voted at Vancouver's 2011 National Convention to make 2013 the year of the new and young worker.

Since early this year, events focusing on young workers have spread across the country. Young workers gave a special presentation at CUPE's National Bargaining Conference, highlighting some of the key issues they face today. Many CUPE divisions held special events at division conventions, empowering them to take on greater roles than they've ever had in the union before. And CUPE national hosted the vision-setting Young Workers Strategy Session in Montreal from August 19 to the 21.

At these events, young workers repeatedly expressed their desire to

be involved and the need to disrupt the image that today's youth are apathetic toward their union. It's with these messages in mind that CUPE has developed a new slogan for young workers: *All in! Our union, our future.*

The slogan captures the importance of including many voices in our union, and in particular making sure young people are involved. Their future, and the future of the labour movement, is at stake.

The slogan will help brand materials for new and young workers, and complements CUPE's Unite for Fairness project. As we begin our work to have 627,000 conversations with CUPE members, making sure young workers' voices are heard is as important as ever.

Check out **CUPE.CA/YOUNG-WORKERS.**

■ **Wes Payne**

## Têtes-à-têtes!



## Young workers discuss vision for union's future

Over 50 CUPE members, aged 30 and under, gathered from all across the country in Montreal this past August for CUPE's first ever Young Workers Strategy Session.

The three-day meeting, held between August 19 and 21, presented many opportunities for participants to have their voices heard and to recommend action strategies for CUPE moving forward.

The event also created opportunities for young workers to learn about CUPE's structure and work

and to connect to their union in a meaningful way, including developing a network with other young workers.

The attendees were selected from a pool of over 300 applications to reflect the diversity of CUPE sectors and demographics and to ensure a multitude of voices at the table. Together, they developed a vision for CUPE's future and provided advice to help the union change and evolve with the next generation.

Many of the issues we heard about at the strategy session will be shared through a short presentation to the 2013 National Convention. A full report on the session, along with action items approved by the National Executive Board to address the concerns of young workers, will be sent to all locals early in 2014. To learn more about the strategy session go to **CUPE.CA/YOUNG-WORKERS.**

■ **Tria Donaldson and Wes Payne**



# BC education workers demand fully-funded wage increase

A fully-funded wage increase is the best solution to ending the bargaining impasse between 27,000 CUPE education workers and the BC Public School Employers' Association.

"Education workers keep BC schools clean, safe and inclusive," said Colin Pawson, president of CUPE 1091 and chair of the CUPE BC K-12 Presidents' Council. "Our members can't deliver services if the government won't commit to funded bargaining solutions."

Years of funding cuts to BC's public schools have undermined the quality of education that families deserve. The BC Association of School Business Officials estimates that the funding shortfall for school boards is more than \$134 million per year and growing.

It has been more than four years since education assistants, clerical staff, trades personnel, custodians, bus drivers and other workers represented by CUPE have received a wage increase. The BC govern-

ment's refusal to address the funding shortfall has ground negotiations to a halt, threatening to disrupt services as fall classes resume.

Most of the 57 CUPE locals representing education workers have achieved a strike mandate. Some job actions, ranging from study sessions to picketing, took place in late June. By mid-September (just after *Counterpoint* goes to press), they will have either settled or gone on strike.

Follow the bargaining updates on Twitter at @CUPEBCSCHOOLS or online at BCSCHOOLS.CUPE.CA.

■ Ian Boyko



# No compromise acceptable when it comes to passenger safety

For CUPE and its airline division components, passenger safety must always come first. When the Conservative government allowed airlines to reduce the number of flight attendants on their aircraft, a move that compromises passenger safety, a major campaign was begun to reverse the government's decision.

A petition was quickly launched, thousands of signatures were gathered, federal MPs were targeted for a full day of lobbying, a press conference was held in Parliament with NDP representatives and numerous press releases were issued. All of these events highlighted to the media and to Canadians the Conservatives' irresponsibility when they put company profits ahead of passenger safety.

The Conservatives' decision to allow a new ratio of one flight attendant per 50 passenger seats goes against common sense: if there are fewer flight attendants, the risk for passengers will necessarily increase. In contrast, the accidents involving an Air France Airbus at Toronto's Pearson International Airport in 2005 and an Asiana flight this past July in San Francisco showed quite clearly that having more flight attendants increases the survival chances of passengers when an accident occurs.

For the safety of all of us, the government must admit its error. Do your part by signing the petition in favour of maintaining the ratio of one flight attendant per 40 passenger seats at [WWW.CHANGE.ORG/FLYSAFE](http://WWW.CHANGE.ORG/FLYSAFE).

■ Philippe Gagnon

# Toronto workers find strength in reconnecting with communities



Raising public awareness has proven to be a winning strategy for CUPE 79. The local, which represents 20,000 workers at the City of Toronto, Bridgepoint Hospital and Toronto Community Housing, made gaining public understanding and support for members' work a top priority after tough bargaining rounds in 2009 and 2012.

It's an effective strategy that evolved and grew over time. It started with an ad campaign in 2011 that portrayed members in their various jobs as they were "Taking Care of Toronto". The ad was paired with a strong public communications plan during the last round of bargaining that, together with a CUPE ad campaign, helped focus attention on public services under threat. The results were significant: public awareness of CUPE 79 grew by 17 per cent.

For its next steps, the local looked for opportunities to align itself with the communities its members serve. The local launched two new campaigns: one to mobilize community support for more city-delivered recreation programs; and another for better city services for youth and newcomers. Both campaigns built critical networks with community organizations and residents across the city, while protecting members' jobs. The local also took a stance against a proposed mega-casino in Toronto because of health and social concerns.

More recently, light-hearted activities were organized to engage community members in events celebrating Toronto's history. The "Chill with Will" series of events were inspired by Toronto's first mayor, William Lyon Mackenzie.

These relationships paid off when city officials recently reviewed the outsourcing of custodial services. Working with its community allies, the local helped change the city council's debate from one focused on contracting out to one centered on the city's role in supporting good quality jobs. In July, the council directed staff to develop a "Quality Job Assessment Tool" to evaluate the city's future employment and contracting decisions. The tool will likely be the first of its kind in Canada and will include a 'living wage' standard – which, according to the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and city staff, is around \$17 an hour in Toronto.

in brief



Some politicians want to undermine our ability to bargain collectively by taking away our union's right to collect dues from all members, or by stopping us from taking political action.

The best way to counter these attacks is to build stronger connections between members and our union. Unite for Fairness is CUPE's

national project to reach out and speak personally with each of our 627,000 members.

The project is rolling out in your region now. Check out [UNITEFORFAIRNESS.CA](http://UNITEFORFAIRNESS.CA) to learn more.

■ Wes Payne



# Superboards are super bad

As opposition parties push to create a massive health superboard in Nova Scotia by rolling nine district health authorities into one, with a separate health board to administer the Izaak Walton Killam children's hospital, acute care locals are fighting back. And with a fall election pending, the stakes are mounting.

NS health care workers sprung into action to put a stop to a bad idea, with television ads that ran province-wide and drew lots of attention.

Our message: superboards haven't worked in

other places – like Alberta, where the entire health board was fired by the Minister of Health after refusing to claw back generous executive bonuses; or in New Brunswick, where 450 front-line health care workers were laid off.

The merger would also mean that communities would lose control over what their health care services look like as bureaucrats in Halifax would be making those decisions for them.

For CUPE members, superboards could mean run-off votes between other unions representing health care workers and loss of

seniority and jobs as happened in 1997 when the government moved from independent hospitals to the district health board model.

In phase two of the campaign, CUPE members participated in a summer lobby campaign talking up the issue at barbecues and other community events, and handing out literature to educate the public about what is at stake. A public opinion poll was also conducted to see where residents stood on the issue, and a major lobby effort is being planned for the fall.

■ Gaëlle McNeil



## Solidarity grows for staff at personal care home

When it comes to taking action, CUPE does it right. In July, over a hundred CUPE members mobilized over a four-day picket in support of CUPE 2719 at Maples Personal Care Home in Winnipeg, calling on the employer to address the dire issue of insufficient staff.

In many homes, health care aides and dietary and nutritional workers are consistently working short-staffed. Short-staffing results in employees feeling overworked, stressed out, and unable to provide residents the level and quality of care they pride themselves in delivering. CUPE members strive each and every day to provide care for our elders. But when there are not enough employees working a shift, the quality of care is affected.

The July info pickets were just the start of a larger campaign investigating staffing ratios in Manitoba and working towards a broad solution.

CUPE Manitoba Long-Term Care Coordinator, Paula Raposo, says the issue is not isolated to one facility – it's province-wide. "CUPE members from long-term care facilities as far as Brandon, Manitoba came in to Winnipeg to support Local 2719," said Raposo. "This is what makes being part of CUPE great – we have each others' backs."

■ David Jacks



### NATIONAL SECRETARY-TREASURER CHARLES FLEURY

## C-377: the Conservatives must admit their error

During the spring conventions of the provincial divisions, I had the opportunity to speak with local secretary-treasurers and trustees. They expressed, among other things, their misgivings about the impact the Conservatives' Bill C-377 – a bill aimed at silencing unions – will have on their locals.

In fact, the administrative burden required by the bill's implementation is bound to hinder the work performed by all the components of our union. And this is especially true of political action undertaken for the benefit of all workers.

That is why, if C-377 is enacted, CUPE is committed to providing locals with the support required to meet the onerous reporting obligations that the Conservatives want to impose on unions alone.

While preparing for the worst, CUPE, along with the Canadian Labour Congress, has also undertaken a huge

lobbying operation with senators to ask them to reject the bill passed by the House of Commons. When testifying before a Senatorial Committee, CUPE National President Paul Moist underscored the uselessness of the bill since unions already report to their members.

Our efforts were successful! For once, the Senate proved useful when, at the end of June, it amended Bill C-377 to the point of rendering it inoperative. But the match is not quite over. Because of prorogation, the proposed amendments are swept away and the Conservatives, with their majority, will likely pass the bill in its original form, again.

The fundamentally anti-union saga of Bill C-377 has lasted long enough. The Conservative government must listen to the message sent by a large segment of Canadian society, via the Senate, and pull this bill.

If it persists, the federal government must understand that it will continue to find CUPE and the whole labour movement in its way. The same applies to all provincial governments that are multiplying attacks on unions and their members.

In this difficult political environment, CUPE's Unite for Fairness project, just now getting under way, is particularly appropriate. The broad dialogue that we are undertaking with each of our 627,000 members will allow us to remain strong and united in the pursuit of our collective battle.

CHARLES FLEURY ONLINE  [twitter.com/CUPENatSec](https://twitter.com/CUPENatSec)





**all-in** **CUPE**

**OUR UNION, OUR FUTURE.**

