

Strategic Directions Program for CUPE: 2009-2011

AS ADOPTED
BY THE CUPE 2009
NATIONAL
CONVENTION

TAKING ACTION

Introduction and History

Times have changed since the 2007 CUPE National Convention. The economy is coming through a difficult recession and while the Bank of Canada is predicting a third quarter 2009 recovery there is considerable skepticism that this recovery will be strong or lasting. Most economists are expecting a recovery in the third quarter of 2009, but after this initial bounce, most expect that economic growth will be slow into 2010. The impact of the recession on working people in terms of higher unemployment, lower wages, pension losses and service cutbacks will last longer than the impact on the markets. The collapse of the financial markets hit working people very hard with future retirement incomes losing between 15-20 per cent of their value.

This economic crisis was caused by a profound failure of the capitalist system. Increasingly free market “neo-liberal” policies shrank the role of the public sector, starved workers of real wage gains and resulted in growing economic and social inequality. Deregulation helped create a speculative and financial market boom that disguised deep-seated weaknesses in the economy, leading to a financial and economic crisis. Governments around the world responded with trillions in stimulus spending and record low interest rates. This helped prevent further short-term collapse, but have not fixed our fundamental economic problems. Furthermore, while a runaway financial system helped cause the crisis, it is workers who are now being targeted to pay for the trillions in public funds that have gone in bail-outs to this industry through concessions, public sector cutbacks and increasingly regressive tax changes. Little seems to have been learned about the real causes of the crisis. If this continues, our underlying economy will remain weak and fail to deliver real gains to workers. We cannot return to “business as usual” and must instead forge a new progressive economic approach based on strengthening the power of workers and the role of the public sector.

CUPE’s commitment to its members has always been to make gains when gains can be attained, to protect our agreements from concessions when we are under attack, to fight back against privatization of public services and to promote public services wherever possible. In these difficult economic times CUPE’s commitment is to use its resources and power to create bargaining strength within our locals and sectors, to promote public services for the betterment of our communities and to ensure that our members’ rights are respected and protected. We are committed to ensure that CUPE emerges as a stronger union after an economic recovery.

In 2003, CUPE moved away from debating individual policy papers on single issues to debating and adopting a unified program of action at convention. We are continuing this approach with this current policy paper.

Strategic Directions 2003-2005. In 2003, delegates to the CUPE National Convention adopted the first of this series of policy papers which are all entitled "Strategic Directions Program for CUPE" and specifically detailed the program priorities for the next two years. The priorities for 2003-2005 were:

- a. Strengthen our bargaining power to win better collective agreements;
- b. Increase our day-to-day effectiveness to better represent members in the workplace;
- c. Intensify our campaign to stop contracting out and privatization of public services.

Work plans and political actions were drafted and these priorities implemented and the achievements are documented in *Strategic Directions: 2003-2005 Reporting Back*, presented to the 2005 National Convention. We continue to implement and carry on the recommendations that stem from the 2003 strategic directions as many of them remain as relevant and pressing today as they were then.

In 2005, CUPE delegates expanded on the strategic directions theme by adopting the second major policy paper called "Gaining Ground". The paper set priorities for 2005-2007 in the following areas:

- a. Strengthening our sectors;
- b. Establishing measurable bargaining objectives;
- c. Organizing the unorganized;
- d. Increased participation of women;
- e. Communicating directly with our members;
- f. Strengthening alliance with other unions;
- g. Resisting privatization and contracting out.

The CUPE membership and staff put the necessary work plans and action plans in place to meet these priorities. Once again, our success was presented to convention in the *Strategic Directions 2005-2007 Reporting Back* document.

In 2007, the third strategic directions policy paper, "Securing The Future" was adopted by delegates to convention to set priorities for the 2007-2009 period. The policy outlined three major sets of strategic priorities:

- a. CUPE fightback campaign against all forms of privatization. The campaign was backed by a funding commitment of \$5 million from CUPE National and campaigns were conducted in each region coordinated through provincial divisions.
- b. Strengthening bargaining power and achieving equality. Delegates approved a commitment to ensure that all CUPE members have a pension plan and that benefits and a \$15 per hour wage is a priority in bargaining. Raising the bar on all equality matters was established as a priority and many of the 54 recommendations of the National Women's Task Force were incorporated into the policy.
- c. Meeting global green targets and building international solidarity. CUPE direction on climate change and the environment was firmly entrenched into CUPE policy in this document. And for the first time direction on international solidarity and support for the Global Justice Fund was identified and specified in policy.

The National Executive Board enabled the privatization campaign with appropriate funding and all the policies adopted in "Securing The Future" were incorporated into staff work plans and regional and local campaigns. It was a very busy and successful two years and highlight results of our efforts are in the *Strategic Directions Reporting Back* document which can be found in your convention kits.

CUPE will continue to work on the strategic priorities of previous conventions in order to strengthen the gains we have made and to fully implement priorities that have not yet been fully completed. Policy adopted by delegates to previous conventions forms the critical direction for our union in matters of collective bargaining, social policy and political action. In particular we will continue to implement the direction provided from the 2007 Convention as we are not yet at the end of the two-year period and, while much in the world has changed, many of the problem areas that our priorities sought to address still persist.

Our policy for 2009-2011 must pick up from where the policy for 2007-2009 left off. The basic problem areas persist but our focus must shift to two interrelated arenas: at the bargaining table and in political action. We must increase our capacity to engage in political action at all levels of government in order to achieve legal and legislative gains as well as political action targeted to strengthening our bargaining power.

Strategic Priority 1:

The Economic Crisis: A Workers' Agenda

In mid-2008, Wall Street was immersed in its worst financial crisis since the great depression. It combined a crash of the stock market and a collapse of housing prices in the U.S. with sub-prime mortgages. The consequences quickly became global in scope. Canada's financial industry was better protected thanks to public agencies such as the Canada Housing and Mortgage Corporation, but our economy would not escape the collapse.

When the recession hit, the Harper government first of all said that we were not entering a recession and then had to admit that while we were in a recession Canada, would be the last in and the first out. The government's economic update then proceeded to attack the public sector with an attack on pay equity settlements and implemented restraints on public sector wages and the right to free collective bargaining.

Workers and unions did not cause this crisis. The crisis was a long time in the making and was one that was caused by the economic system itself. It is widely acknowledged that the free market economic policies of the last three decades paved the way for the collapse. These policies permitted deregulation and privatization of the financial industry, slow wage growth, rising household indebtedness, escalating executive salaries, rising inequality, tax cuts, inadequate investment in both the private and public sectors, inadequate public services, increased reliance on the stock market for economic security, free trade and globalization which led to deindustrialization, and reliance on policies related to money supply rather than fiscal responsibility. Low inflation and low interest rates led to easy credit and greater speculation in the markets.

When the immediate crisis hit, it was largely a consequence of corporate greed built on houses of cards designed to maximize profits in the short term. There were billion dollar salaries for hedge fund operators, inflated real estate prices and escalating corporate profits and many expected that these riches would continue with the economy remaining robust. However, the reality is that these were false expectations and the houses of cards came crashing down under massive loads of debt.

While corporations, CEOs and their shareholders benefited handsomely prior to the crash, workers, taxpayers and pensioners gained little in terms of real wage gains during that time. Indeed inequality, financial and otherwise, was on the increase throughout the period. Nevertheless, the consequences of the financial crisis landed squarely on workers' doorsteps. They were the ones who would pay a significant price for the failing financial and economic system.

The economic collapse was the consequence of several factors including the sub-prime mortgage scandal, a failure to regulate the mortgage or investment banking industries, deep cuts to taxes for the wealthy especially to capital gains, high income earners, and corporations. This resulted in the public sector being starved for resources to provide services, to invest in new public infrastructure (both physical and social) and to refurbish existing infrastructure. Canada's infrastructure deficit continued to mount.

The crisis has seen enormous job losses in the manufacturing and resources sectors with consequent secondary impacts on communities reliant on these jobs. There are now more than 1.5 million unemployed in Canada: the highest number of people out of work in 15 years and the national unemployment rate in July was 8.6 per cent, the highest level in the last 11 years.

The collapse of the stock market saw losses for individual investors but more importantly it saw significant losses for pension fund investments in all plans. World-wide the crisis has siphoned \$5 trillion dollars from private employer sponsored retirement plans. This is a decline of 19 per cent of the plans' assets. In Canada, the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board lost \$23.6 billion with its investments, a decline of 18.6 per cent for the year ending 31 March 2009. The Caisse de Dépôt, which manages the Québec Pension Plan and large employer plans, lost over \$40 billion in 2008, a decline of 25 per cent.

Employer-based pension plans lost 15 per cent of their asset base in the fourth quarter of 2008, compared with the same three-month period a year earlier. One of Canada's largest plans, the Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System (OMERS) which oversees \$37 billion in various investments, faced a 15.3 per cent decrease on its asset base. The Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan lost \$19 billion, or 18 per cent of its previous value. The Hospitals of Ontario Pension Plan (HOOPP) lost \$3.6 billion, or 12 per cent of its value.

Employer-sponsored pension plans face significant solvency deficiencies as a result and the retirement savings of workers and their families have been placed in jeopardy. At the same time, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB) began to focus on public sector pensions as being too generous and campaigned actively to have public sector pensions reduced to the lowest possible level. Job losses in the manufacturing and resource sectors resulted in an overall decline in union density and a corresponding decrease in defined benefit pension plans in the private sector. These developments are a major concern for public sector workers and for our communities. Pension plans, public and private, must be protected and expanded. CUPE will launch a campaign to counteract the attack from the CFIB and inform small businesses within our communities as to the benefits of a strong local economy with a unionized workforce.

There has always been pressure to contract out, privatize and engage in P3s (public-private partnerships) to reduce government's up-front costs and to provide private investors with profitable business opportunities. Our policy direction from the 2007 Convention was designed to confront this trend head on. However, the economic crisis did dampen the capacity of large corporations to take on the financial commitment to many P3s as they were unable to finance the money due to debt loads and their inability to secure credit for the large sums of money required. Nevertheless, the trend to privatization and contracting out is part of the overall response of governments to the crisis even if the research does not bear out their expectations.

CUPE's policies historically have targeted the very economic policies that precipitated the economic crisis so we have been on the right track. Our policies seek to increase wages, benefits and bargaining power; reduce inequality; support public investment in public services and public sector jobs; increase social security through better pensions and a better Employment Insurance program; stop privatization and contracting out; support greater regulation; implement progressive tax measures; and promote fair trade.

The current economic crisis provides an opportunity for change as Canadians and CUPE members realize that the status quo is not acceptable and is no longer a blueprint for the future. The time is ripe to effect meaningful social and economic change.

Political Action

CUPE has a long history of both partisan and non-partisan political action and we must continue to be an agent of social and economic change by adopting a concerted political action plan in all our work. Political action will be directed at all levels of government, and will include extra-parliamentary action as required. Organized labour must step forward to accept leadership among civil society organizations in this struggle. Political action is the bedrock on which social and economic change is built. As Canada's largest union and the largest affiliate within the Canadian Labour Congress, CUPE must accept its leadership role and embrace political action as the principle path to securing public sector employment and to making our communities better places within which to live. Active involvement in the political processes within our communities is the one best way to put forward our vision and to work with progressive community groups to ensure that the vision is implemented. CUPE will work with provincial divisions and regional and district councils to develop an activist approach to political action and membership education.

CUPE will encourage members to participate in election campaigns at all levels of government. To that end, CUPE will devote resources to increase voter turnout within our membership and to reach out to the cultural diversity of our membership by translating materials where necessary. Our Union Development Department will develop materials and courses to provide members with information and tools to run for local agency boards of directors, as candidates

in elections at all levels of government, and to participate in political action by becoming campaign workers and managers for progressive candidates. We will pay particular attention to educating diversity groups within CUPE in order to break down barriers to political involvement. Our Union Education Department will develop a plan to provide these courses in an environmentally friendly and accessible way through the internet.

Taking action is what we do as a matter of course in our day to day lives as trade unionists. We take action to bargain collective agreements, sometimes going on strike or engaging in other pressure tactics to ensure that we both protect our rights as well as make gains. Taking action in the political arena is no less important. CUPE will exercise our rights to democratic political activity by supporting politicians and governments who share a common approach and mandate to ensure that our communities have appropriate services, that our society is egalitarian such that no groups are disadvantaged, and that fundamental political and human rights are respected. We will lobby politicians and governments at all levels to maintain those goals.

Over the period 2009-2011, a period which will include a federal election, CUPE will increase our lobbying and political action to ensure that the federal government adopts policy and legislation which eliminates the worst effects of the economic crisis. These policies are most effective when they are implemented in conjunction with provincial and municipal governments.

CUPE will develop a lobbying plan for the union to deepen our capacity to influence both policy makers and decision-makers. We will strengthen our support for political campaigns at all levels of government. We will build capacity for lobbying on our issues by reaching out to the community by working in coalition with community organizations who share common goals. These actions will solidify social and community goals but will also build solidarity for CUPE members in times of collective bargaining with our public sector employers. We will establish education and training for political campaigning and lobbying and develop educational materials and tools to build lobbying capacity.

An Alternative Economic Approach

We call on the federal government to create a new *Economic Recovery Fund* to provide short-term support for public and private non-profit agencies and organizations, to be cost-shared with provinces, municipalities and other levels of government.

The fund would include \$1 billion in federal funding for a *Recession Relief Fund*. This would prevent spending cuts to agencies serving vulnerable people including the disadvantaged, the working poor, immigrants and low paid workers. The fund would increase funding to HRSDC and settlement programs, including doubling the funding through the *Homeless Partnerships Initiative*. This funding would supplement funding that is projected to be lost from private sources by these agencies and to increase funding levels as required.

CUPE will lobby for an increase in federal transfers for post-secondary education (PSE) of \$1 billion. Post-secondary institutions are cutting programs and positions just as enrolment is expected to increase, partly as a result of fewer job opportunities for youth. Some universities have lost hundreds of millions from their endowment funds and are facing a loss in revenue from private donations. Canada needs to develop a more educated and higher-skilled workforce to develop a stronger and more productive economy. An increase in funding of \$1 billion would restore the amounts cut from transfers for PSE in the early 1990s in real dollar terms. This funding would need to be provided together with accountability guarantees that public funds will only go to public non-profit institutions to reduce tuition costs, increase access and programs, and improve working and studying conditions on campus with increased employment and job protection guarantees. Further, CUPE will campaign to raise the awareness of the important contribution that post-secondary institutions make to the local economy. CUPE will demand that government transfers be contingent upon job creation in the public sector and the creation of green jobs available to youth and equality seeking groups in particular.

Green Job Creation is an essential component of the recovery and CUPE will develop tools and materials to lobby for an investment of \$500 million which will generate at least 50,000 new green collar jobs. Federal funding would be matched with funding from other levels of government, non-profit organizations or other eligible partners as employers. Provincial governments are responsible for training and we will lobby them to take an active role in funding green jobs. Funding would go to wages, labour and training costs for new jobs associated with energy efficiency, building retrofits, auditing, education, renewable energy and environmental remediation. Funding would be conditional on jobs providing decent pay and working conditions. CUPE will develop strategies to work with our allies in the labour movement, the community, and with employers and educational institutions to develop appropriate training programs. New job opportunities would be particularly targeted at equality-seeking groups and youth combined with retraining of adults who have become recently or are longer-term unemployed.

Green jobs are jobs in a sustainable economy which makes lower demands on natural resources; is more energy efficient; uses energy from renewable sources; and does not generate damaging pollution and wastes. A sustainable economy is labour-intensive, producing long-lasting, durable jobs.

Green jobs are also jobs which contribute to environmental protection, such as the manufacture and installation of energy from renewable sources, pollution control equipment, goods and technologies that reduce energy demand or pollution, or recycling plants. CUPE will advance and lobby for local purchasing policies which are environmentally friendly and strengthen local economies. This work will dovetail with our on-going work to ensure trade policies are fair and harm neither workers' rights nor the environment.

Green jobs are cleaner, safer, healthier, and more durable than jobs in the traditional economy. But there are cautions and there have to be safeguards. Green jobs must be union jobs, with a public sector infrastructure. Not all green jobs are high-paying quality jobs but they are more likely to be if they are union jobs. The conversion to a sustainable economy will mean job losses in traditional industries and CUPE will lobby for a “just transition” program to ensure that workers are re-trained and employed in good paying and secure jobs. “Just Transition” is about providing fairness to workers when they are redeployed to unionized green jobs such that they do not lose pay, benefits or seniority. *Green Job Creation* will not be possible without Green Infrastructure Investments.

Green job creation must be focused on and led by the public sector. CUPE already represents tens of thousands of workers in green collar jobs. There is massive potential to expand our membership in this area and to further “green” existing jobs and workplaces, and for the public sector to lead in the development of renewable energy. CUPE will be a leading member in efforts to build a green economy alliance at the national and local level together with other unions and progressive environmental, social justice and First Nations’ organizations. Environmental justice and ecological equity must be a fundamental part of this campaign. Without greater social justice and a stronger role for the public sector, we will have no lasting solution to the environmental and climate crisis.

There is also great potential for public sector job growth in other areas. Investments in the public sector don’t just provide for important social needs, they also generate more jobs than spending in other areas and far more than an equivalent spending through tax cuts. For instance, investments in quality early learning and child care generate by far the largest number of jobs of all industry sectors and yield very strong short-term and long-term economic stimulus as well as providing for pressing social needs.

CUPE will call on the CLC to convene an economic summit, to develop effective strategies for an alternative economy that will avoid the boom and bust policies that caused the current economic crisis. It will be important for the entire labour movement to promote economic policies that serve workers and their communities rather than corporations and finance capital. We will continue to press for much stronger regulation and control of the international and Canadian financial systems to protect workers’ savings and to prevent yet another destructive boom-bust economic cycle and crisis from developing. Therefore, this economic summit would be preceded by a summit of labour leaders to address the specific economic concerns and strategies necessary to ensure that each sector of the economy is addressed in a new alternative economy.

The recession impacts each sector of the economy slightly differently. The private sector, especially the manufacturing and resource sectors have been hit most immediately by the recession with massive job losses in some locations. The impact on the public sector is somewhat delayed but will hit hardest when governments implement cuts to public services and start to pay down the debt incurred from deficit budgets. In order to prepare for the attack on the public sector, CUPE will call on the leadership of all public sector unions to meet regularly to devise and implement a coordinated fightback against these attacks and to develop mechanisms of solidarity within the public sector.

Employment Insurance

Over the years the Employment Insurance program (formerly the Unemployment Insurance program) has been diminished as an integral part of Canada's social safety net. Changes to the EI program are more important now than ever. CUPE will work with the CLC and our community allies to develop a strategy to lobby all federal politicians and parties on our key goals which are first-step minimum improvements:

- Raise benefit levels from a maximum of 55 per cent of annual earnings to 60 per cent of earnings calculated on the 12 best weeks of earnings, and eliminate variable benefit rates for part-time workers.
- Extend benefit coverage to 50 weeks for all workers.
- Eliminate the two week waiting period for benefits.
- Provide regular benefits on the basis of 360 hours of work, no matter where workers live and work in Canada.
- Remove the requirement for severance pay to be exhausted prior to accessing EI benefits.

Strategic Priority 2: Defending Free Collective Bargaining and Resisting Concessions

Collective Bargaining

The economic crisis and financial meltdown placed an immediate pall on bargaining in many places. The federal government forced a settlement with PSAC members that contained significant wage restraint measures. The provincial government in New Brunswick immediately introduced legislation that threatened fundamental rights to free collective bargaining including a two year wage freeze on all public sector bargaining. Bargaining at every table across the country immediately became more difficult. Most recently, the B.C. government has suggested zero per cent increases for public employees until the provincial deficit is eliminated, probably four years.

Employers began looking for concessions on benefits and pensions. These concessions are clear takeaways and not agreements reached in the usual course of bargaining. Wage increases in keeping with the previous year were not to be had. As the economic downturn produced more hardship in communities through loss of manufacturing and resources sector jobs, employers began to use the hardship of workers in these sectors against public sector workers. It was easy for them to say that public sector workers didn't deserve benefits, pensions and wage increases when others did not even have jobs. It was a catalyst for employers to take the economic base of their communities to rock bottom. And it was incredibly short sighted to assume that the public sector was less of an economic engine in their communities than the industrial sector was.

Public sector workers had no choice but to fight back and protect rights and benefits which were earned in previous rounds of bargaining and to resist concessions. This is what happened in municipal strikes in both Windsor and Toronto.

Beyond tough bargaining, the right to free collective bargaining is also being challenged through legislation. In the face of these challenges CUPE's National Executive Board adopted a *Plan to Fight Concessions and Defend Free Collective Bargaining* and created a fightback fund to resource our campaigns to combat legislated attacks on free collective bargaining and our right to strike. The *Plan to Fight Concessions and Defend Free Collective Bargaining* was distributed to all chartered organizations and several provinces have developed their own plans using the national plan as a model. Strengthening our bargaining structures and negotiating strong collective agreements are preconditions for our success in implementing our political action and social policy objectives.

The threat to collective bargaining is very real. History tells us that the threat to public sector services and bargaining continues long past the time when governments and economists pronounce a recovery for the economy. We should not be lulled into any complacency feeling that we are safe from funding cuts, downsizing and concessions. CUPE will engage in an active communications strategy to ensure that our members are aware of the magnitude of the threat to our jobs and are prepared to take action.

CUPE will put a renewed focus on implementing our *Plan to Fight Concessions and Defend Free Collective Bargaining*. We will:

- a. Communicate this policy to all CUPE chartered affiliates;
- b. Establish close working relationships among all staff and elected leaderships to develop a comprehensive plan in each region;
- c. Develop mechanisms to monitor on-going implementation of the plan;
- d. Have regional plans filed at CUPE national office;
- e. Ensure that staff representatives alert their regional directors whenever rounds of bargaining turn into attacks on collective bargaining;
- f. Develop an immediate and coordinated response to each difficult round of bargaining;
- g. When attacks on free collective bargaining are identified, an emergency meeting of locals in the area will be convened to develop a strategy to fight back;
- h. Promote solidarity pacts among CUPE locals and with other unions;
- i. Organize meetings of unions in sectors to build common front bargaining;
- j. Win membership agreement to engage in political work stoppages where necessary;
- k. Make it clear to employers and governments that attacks on free collective bargaining, collective agreement rollbacks, and attempts to take away the right to strike are strike issues for our union;
- l. Take coordinated direct political action to defeat governments that attack collective agreements and free collective bargaining;
- m. Strengthen support for public services and public sector unions within our communities;
- n. Defend our legal rights through the courts and international bodies such as the International Labour Organization and the United Nations;
- o. Campaign for anti-scab legislation in all jurisdictions.

The full text of the *Plan to Fight Concessions and Defend free Collective Bargaining* as adopted by the National Executive Board in March 2009 can be found at <http://cupe.ca/concessions/Plan-to-Fight-Conces.>

Many CUPE members work for private sector employers providing services in our communities. Private sector employers are just as aggressive as public sector employers and governments in attacking their workers' rights. For example private sector employers may threaten bankruptcy as a bargaining strategy. CUPE will work with our members in these sectors to develop effective bargaining strategies and responses to such attacks.

CUPE will strengthen our capacity to make gains even in the face of concessions. We will continue to support and promote coordinated bargaining regionally and nationally, and expand the tools available to us by providing education and assistance on freedom of information requests.

Anyone who holds a union position has responsibility for stewardship of the union and we need to have strong stewards to be effective in defending collective bargaining and engaging in political action in these difficult times. Stewards are the backbone of the union and are central to the development of an engaged and mobilized membership. It is time for us to re-invest in our stewards.

Over the next two years, CUPE's Union Development Department, working with other departments and branches, will provide tools, education, training and other resources to build our strength at the base to resist concessions. The Department will explore ways to make this information available to the community. An effective base within our union means an effective steward structure as they are the eyes, and ears of our locals. We will designate 2010 as the "Year of the Steward" in order to kick off this priority. In 2011, the program will continue to implement plans which will strengthen our shop steward structure.

The "Year of the Steward" would involve:

- The launch of a new learning series for stewards with an updated nine-hour introductory workshop for new stewards and a series of three-hour modules which provide in depth education for stewards as grievance handlers, advocates, problem solvers, communicators, leaders and workplace organizers, and human rights' champions.
- A new steward pin to be developed for stewards who have completed the learning series.
- A new web-based stewards' communication network with an electronic newsletter.
- An updated steward's handbook.

As demographics change and our members and staff retire we are losing considerable knowledge, expertise, skill and capacity to represent our members. Mentoring programs become more important than ever as we need to invest in leadership at the local level and in staff within CUPE. In the past year we have embarked on some pilot projects on mentoring. These projects will be assessed and resourcing provided for continued mentoring program development. Our mentoring program will involve young workers and equality-seeking groups as mentoring is integral to succession planning.

Charting a New Course for Pensions

The economic crisis and corresponding crash of the financial markets served to highlight the necessity for radical change in the pension system in Canada. The attack on workers' pensions has been one of the most significant negative outcomes of the global economic crisis. Pension plans that were once thought to be secure are anything but, and many workers are losing and have lost much of their pension income – their deferred wages.

A new course for workplace pensions must be charted to take workers' retirement incomes out of the poorly regulated and risky field of retirement savings plans (RSPs). Pensions should be required as a condition of employment in order to provide secure income in retirement years. Need to get all stakeholders on side – focus on the commonality of interests for all, including corporations. This should not be a competitive issue as everyone would be required to belong. Could be impetus to establish government regulated or owned plans or large multi-employer plans. CUPE is uniquely positioned to do this, especially in civic governments.

CUPE will:

- Continue our campaigns to secure pensions for those who don't have them and create a pension insurance fund to protect pensions.
- Continue to promote defined benefit pension plans as the best plans for CUPE members.
- Defend pension plans against erosion and any dismantling efforts by corporations and/or governments.
- Lobby to have Bill C-51 changed so that there are no penalties for accessing CPP at age 60.
- Lobby and negotiate a living wage and pension entitlement for all Canadians.

We support fixing our pension system and will lobby for many different reforms including:

- A phased-in doubling of the benefits provided by the CPP so that it provides up to 50 per cent of the average wage.
- Expansion of the CPP to other workers.
- Establishing a national system of pension insurance which is modeled on the principles and values of our universal health care system.
- Increasing thresholds for surpluses, tighter restrictions on contribution holidays, and stronger solvency funding rules.

These reforms are largely regulatory changes or are self-funding measures that do not affect program spending.

CUPE will devote resources to participate in and influence the national debate on pensions in Canada. CUPE will support the CLC in their call to convene a national summit on pensions involving labour and community.

We will continue to bargain pensions for all CUPE members by 2013. CUPE Research will facilitate this work by coordinating an assessment of our success to date identifying where we have pension plans and where we don't. This work will facilitate our ability to target potential areas to negotiate pensions where we had none before.

Strategic Priority 3: Continuing the Struggle

Anti-privatization

The major strategic priority for 2007-2009 was to engage in a massive campaign to fight back against privatization and contracting out in all its forms and to promote public funding and delivery of all public services. The National Executive Board enabled this fightback by allocating \$5 million over the two years. The struggle against privatization is far from over although we have had our victories in the last two years. Nor are governments and the public firmly onside with the idea that the public sector should be strengthened to deliver services which make our communities better places in which to live.

CUPE's National Executive Board will continue to allocate significant resources for the continuation of the next steps of the campaign through 2009-2011.

These steps will include continued support for local and regional campaigns coordinated through CUPE provincial divisions. CUPE National will continue to work on polling public opinion on a national basis to test messaging on our key issues and to gauge public opinion on specific privatization and contracting out issues facing CUPE members. We will coordinate a national approach to messaging in a comprehensive national advertising campaign to promote and expand public services.

Our campaign will focus on the necessity to keep public infrastructure in our communities in the public realm – i.e., publicly owned and operated. We will engage in targeted political action campaigns to ensure that infrastructure is not devolved to private sector through public private partnerships and that the operation of public facilities stays with public employees. Further, we will fight to keep all social services, health care, child care and other public services as publicly funded and delivered services.

CUPE will devote resources to these struggles wherever they occur, but there will be occasions where we will isolate a struggle for special attention and additional resources. These instances will be evaluated and selected on the basis of specific criteria including: high profile struggle, new form of privatization, potential to score a victory which will be precedent setting.

The Canadian Medicare system has been under continual attack as the private sector seeks to weaken public funding and delivery as well as to contract out jobs within the each of the health care sub-sectors. Issues of delivery, funding and operations are front and centre for CUPE health care workers and there are constant “reforms” which directly impact on their work and their working conditions. In order to bring our members together for a full examination of all policy and bargaining issues, CUPE will host a sector meeting of health care workers in 2010 and begin planning for this meeting immediately.

In addition to health care we anticipate that privatization and contracting out threats will continue and increase in the municipal sector. In order to ensure that we are prepared for these challenges over the long term CUPE will hold our first-ever municipal sector conference in 2011.

Equality

Applying an equality lens that includes an understanding of women, persons with disabilities, LGBTTI, Aboriginal persons and workers of colour, to all CUPE activities and program is essential if we are to close and eliminate gaps that exist in our society. CUPE will engage in regular monitoring of inequality in society such that we are able to incorporate an equality lens into all aspects of CUPE’s work and policies including research, education, advocacy and lobbying to ensure awareness among the general public and accountability from governments. We will also continue our awareness campaign on equality issues with CUPE members.

CUPE will develop a stronger capacity to engage in political actions that change legislation and societal structures and the processes that create and continue equalities. At the same time, we will continue our commitment to equality in our internal structure and processes.

CUPE’s first National Bargaining Women’s Equality Conference in February 2009 was an unqualified success with more than 400 delegates attending and making recommendations on how to achieve equality for women through the bargaining process. CUPE will provide resources and tools necessary to negotiate language in the following areas:

- Employment equity plans;
- Protection of full-time jobs, conversion of part-time jobs to full-time jobs, and fightback against the casualization of work;
- Full seniority rights for all workers;
- Workplaces free from violence in any form;
- Work family balance;
- Pensions for all CUPE members and in particular bargaining units that are predominantly female;

- Full benefits for both full and part-time workers;
- No contracting-out language;
- Coordinated and central bargaining.

The conference delegates also made recommendations on actions away from the bargaining table and CUPE will incorporate the following actions into work plans:

- Establishing effective coalitions with community groups to advance equality issues e.g., working with coalitions on minimum wage campaigns and adopting the HEU “Living Wage” campaign as a model.
- Continuing to work for more diverse representation of women at all structures of the union and building women’s committees at all levels of the union.
- Sharing and tracking equality bargaining gains using the web site and other communication tools.
- Engaging and involving new members.
- Encouraging all locals to use an equality lens when creating local bylaws.
- Engaging in political action and lobbying for legislative changes on equality issues.
- Continuing equity training for servicing representatives to ensure that equality issues are front and centre at the bargaining table.
- Developing strategies to ensure employment equity for persons with disabilities.
- Providing leadership training for equity-seeking groups and members.

CUPE’s departments of Organizing and Regional Services, Union Development and National Services (Equality, Research, Communications and Legal) will coordinate to conduct an assessment of current actions in these areas and develop a plan of action to take steps to move these recommendations forward.

Pay equity is an extremely important component of achieving equality for women. CUPE’s job evaluation staff has been very successful in negotiating pay equity settlements which put millions of dollars into our members’ pockets and address inequalities in bargaining units. Provisions for pay equity plans need to be negotiated with employers in provinces where pay equity legislation does not exist. CUPE will provide resources and tools (technological and educational) to assist locals to negotiate pay equity language and plans, provide the necessary education for staff and members to increase awareness and provide support for negotiating the plans and their implementation. Mobilization and political action are necessary to achieve legislative and bargaining successes to eliminate wage discrimination.

The Harper government's 2009 budget announced that litigation is no longer an option for women seeking pay equity in the federal public service. This is a particularly outrageous act given that women working in federally regulated workplaces have historically had to take complaints to the Human Rights Commission in order to achieve pay equity. This avenue of recourse is now closed. CUPE will work with the CLC and affiliates in the labour movement as well as with our community partners to have this position reversed. We will lobby all parties and the federal government and will support legal challenge to the government's announcement.

Achieving equality for workers of colour and racialized workers must be a priority for all chartered organizations within CUPE and for CUPE National. Workers of colour are negatively affected significantly by privatization and contracting out and by labour market changes which marginalize and casualize work. Immigration policies often result in government practices that are discriminatory. Harassment in workplaces is a common problem. Employment equity is an important step in the struggle to improve conditions for workers of colour. CUPE commits to lobbying, political action and education to further the goals for equality for workers of colour. As part of that commitment CUPE will lobby for employment equity in all workplaces including CUPE and provide tools and assistance for bargaining employment equity with employers.

CUPE commits to advancing equality for persons with disabilities. This will include education and awareness campaigns within CUPE, lobbying and political action for employment equity and workers' rights in all workplaces, and improved conditions and accommodations for all workers with disabilities, both chronic and episodic.

Aboriginal Issues

Work on Aboriginal issues will continue under the direction of the Equality Branch and the Senior Officer for Aboriginal Issues. CUPE was a pioneer in negotiating representative workforce strategies with a plan negotiated with the Saskatchewan government and the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations in 2000. We were on the verge of negotiating some new partnership agreements with the Indian and Northern Affairs Canada in the federal government but the election of the Harper Conservative government effectively stopped all activity within the federal government in this area.

It is now time to renew our efforts to negotiate representative workforce partnership agreements such that our Aboriginal members can benefit from increased opportunities for training and employment. CUPE will lobby the federal government and work with receptive employers to have new agreements signed and funding in place during the next two years.

Access to a potable water supply is one of the greatest challenges facing Aboriginal communities today. Every day over 100 Aboriginal communities are subject to boil water orders as their water supply is contaminated. This is incomprehensible in today's world and must be rectified.

Access to potable water must be a fundamental human right and rights to water should not be held in private hands. Water bridges fundamental human rights, privatization, environmental, and health issues. We know that public control over water supplies is better than private control on all counts. Still Aboriginal communities are placed at significant risk because the federal government does not have the political will to implement policies that are contrary to the needs of the free market. As part of CUPE's overall water policy, we will lobby the federal government to provide the necessary funding and make the necessary changes to ensure water potable supplies to these communities.

Privatization of water is a threat in Aboriginal communities as much as it is in non-Aboriginal communities. CUPE will reach out to Aboriginal organizations and communities to work in coalition with them to ensure that water supply and delivery is not sold to large multinational water corporations who want to create and maintain a market for water. Our work will respect the principles of Aboriginal self-governance.

Health care in Aboriginal communities is often at crisis levels with inadequate or non-existent access to quality health services, social services and supplies. Educational and training opportunities are also limited and poorly devised for the Aboriginal population. CUPE will work with our allies in First Peoples' communities and with other progressive organizations to lobby the federal government for increased funding of health, education and social services programs in Aboriginal communities to bring those communities to the highest quality of service.

Overall, CUPE must develop new alliances within the First Nations and Aboriginal communities to engage in actions which are mutually beneficial no matter what the issue may be.

HIV/AIDS

CUPE hosted a successful strategic planning meeting on HIV/AIDS this year. It was extremely beneficial in assessing the work that CUPE has been engaged in both currently and historically and brought together CUPE members, staff and representatives from outside organizations. CUPE commits to a) updating CUPE's policy on HIV/AIDS; b) developing education and awareness materials to implement key aspects of the revised policy; c) through our Equality Branch developing a work plan on HIV/AIDS for the next two years; d) developing international alliances and partnerships on HIV/AIDS through our international program and through attendance at international conferences on HIV/AIDS; e) sharing all CUPE work and information on HIV/AIDS with all national committees, and f) hosting another meeting on HIV/AIDS within three years in order to conduct a review and update of progress in our work at that time.

Child Care and Early Learning

CUPE's policy and strategic campaign initiatives on child care and early learning are solid and on-going. We support a pan-Canadian program that would deliver quality, affordable, public and non-profit, accessible, and inclusive child care programs for parents and their children with the following elements:

- A national plan to make high quality, non-profit early childhood education and care a reality over the next decade.
- Increased federal funds, starting with an additional \$2.2 billion in transfers to provincial child care programs in 2009-10, and \$2.8 billion in 2010-11, with the goal of reaching \$5 billion by 2013.
- Federal legislation (recognizing Quebec's distinctiveness) to establish conditions, criteria and principles with accountability for the use of federal funds in the provinces and territories.
- Improved maternity/parental leave policy to complement the child care program.

CUPE will continue to provide resources for research, education and communications and work with coalitions to lobby all governments for legislative changes to make a national child care program a reality.

Environment

CUPE has made significant progress in developing new internal environmental policies and actions in the last two years. The CUPE national office is a gold level certified LEED building – the highest level yet achieved in the Ottawa area. We are working to implement a monumental cultural shift in the way we think about the distribution of information and the way we conduct meetings.

The National School Boards meeting earlier this year was as close to paperless as we could make it. The National Environment Committee is conducting paperless meetings. At this convention we have implemented many environmental measures to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions including limiting paper and materials distribution in the gallery and replacing it with electronic distribution through the use of USB keys. We have retained an environmental consultant to guide us through this process, to conduct an audit of the environmental impact of our convention and to provide us with recommendations for future events.

CUPE will act on the results of the audit's recommendations to implement additional measures as appropriate and required such that CUPE's internal operations are as green as possible.

While reducing CUPE's carbon footprint is important, we must turn our focus to our employers and governments if large scale changes are to be made. We will strengthen our capacity to lobby governments to take more aggressive actions to meet Kyoto and other environmental targets as may be established at the UN Conference on Climate Change in Copenhagen in December 2009. CUPE will be present in Copenhagen to work with our international allies to ensure that strong environmental targets are established such that they are consistent with scientific evidence on the requirements to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

We will undertake to create and promote additional materials on the need for environmental change. We will develop policies and collective agreement language that can be negotiated with employers such that CUPE is a leader in making workplaces green. We will champion "green jobs" as part of the new economy and we will champion "just transition" programs with training programs as work which is currently not environmentally-friendly is converted into green jobs in a green economy. Educational materials on environmental issues will be developed and delivered in a variety of formats including web-based.

Water is an overarching area which impacts on so many others. CUPE will develop a coordinated approach to our water work which incorporates our environmental objectives and links then to other areas such as anti-privatization, aboriginal issues, and health. We will develop strategies to address the sustainability of our water system through conservation and other measures. We will begin this work by co-sponsoring and participating in Blue Summit in November 2009. Blue Summit is a celebration of 10 years of water watch work within CUPE and other community organizations such as the Council of Canadians.

Health and Safety

More than five hundred delegates attended CUPE's highly successful 10th National Health and Safety Conference in October 2008. Participants made recommendations to move our health and safety work forward, and affirmed the importance of health and safety as a vital part of our union's work. While we have made significant progress in helping members and locals defend their health and safety rights, much more remains to be done. CUPE will continue our commitment to health and safety and will provide tools and resources to:

- Continue to research, educate and communicate with members about current and emerging health and safety hazards.
- Bargain health and safety into collective agreements as part of our free collective bargaining plan.
- Provide member health and safety training at all levels.
- Encourage health and safety militancy to protect our members' lives.
- Ensure the "Year of the Steward" actions include health and safety training for stewards.

International Solidarity

CUPE will continue the international solidarity program from the 2007-2009 Strategic Directions policy paper and our international program for the next two years will be expanded to include the following three areas:

- a) A concerted effort to increase funding to our Global Justice Fund. The fund is healthy but is underfunded as expenditures on international projects consistently exceed revenues for any given period. At present the only way to ensure stability in the fund is to periodically place a moratorium on new projects and renewals for existing projects. CUPE will engage fundraising expertise to provide advice on how the fund can become financially stable. For example, if each CUPE local made an annual contribution of \$100 to the fund, the fund would have annual revenues of over \$200,000 and considerable ability to sponsor projects to defend and promote fundamental human and labour rights around the world. The Global Justice Fund sponsors worker to worker projects and support from CUPE locals will go directly to such projects.
- b) Access to water as a fundamental human right, struggles against the privatization of water, and the environmental sensitivity of the world's water supply are key issues the world over. CUPE will develop and implement a coordinated approach linking our international work to our domestic work on water. We will continue to strengthen our work with coalitions and labour allies around the world, and strengthen coordination among, and between, CUPE's national committees.
- c) CUPE will strengthen our capacity to engage in political action and lobbying to ensure that human rights are protected wherever they are under attack. CUPE will develop materials and educational programs that focus on successful lobbying techniques. We will work to refine our systems for disseminating information and for engaging in electronic campaigns. We will campaign to ensure that pension funds are not invested in corporations that contribute to human rights abuses in Colombia, Burma and other countries where human rights are neglected.

Implementation

CUPE will resource and implement this strategic directions program and all resolutions adopted by delegates to the 2009 National Convention.

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