



A 10-week strike at the Lanark County Community Living Association ended September 10, when CUPE 1521.02 members ratified a two-year contract. The contract expands RRSP coverage to all employees, removes management's contracting-out proposals and commits management to flow ministry funding earmarked for workers in 2007. Look inside for more from the regions in *Work bytes*.

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CUPE National's quarterly publication

cupe.ca

Fall 2009

Counterpoint

Keeping it public

Canadians choose public employees as the group in which they have the highest confidence.



Canadians are confident in public employees, identify with them, and trust them to do important work.

By **KARIN JORDAN**

CUPE members are the eyes and ears of an early warning system that detects and stops privatization before it starts. No matter what the form, privatization hurts services, communities and jobs.

Part of CUPE's anti-privatization campaign work, has been to take the pulse of Canadians about public services and privatization. The goal was to learn how we can build support for our campaigns by reaching the hearts and minds of Canadians.

The results are in, and there's plenty of good news for CUPE members working to protect and promote public

services. The research confirms what we already know in CUPE: our members are our greatest strength.

Two major polls and analysis of a series of focus group discussion, conducted by respected polling firms Environics and CROP, show the public is on our side.

Canadians are confident in public employees, identify with them, and trust them to do important work. Repeatedly they chose public employees as the group they have the highest confidence in – ahead of private corporations, business leaders and governments.

When asked who they trusted most to provide accurate information about public services

and privatization, 82 per cent put their trust in front-line workers delivering public services.

Despite the anti-union orientation in media coverage and misconceptions that unions exist to serve their own interests; the public is open to hearing from CUPE, especially when they know they are getting a message directly from the workers delivering the services.

Key public strengths, in particular arguments about universal access, quality of life and openness about spending, resonated strongly when we tested messages to build support for public services among Canadians.

The project has useful insights

about public-private partnerships (P3s). Outside of local situations where there is a high-profile issue, most Canadians aren't familiar with P3s. And, as we've seen in local campaigns, the word "partnership" cloaks the schemes in a "best-of-both-worlds" disguise.

Working to keep the focus on the strengths of the public sector keeps the debate on our turf and lets CUPE members use arguments that resonate with Canadians – elements of a winning strategy to keep it public!

Watch for more information about CUPE's national anti-privatization polling project at cupe.ca/privatization

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Shoulder to shoulder – CUPE holds the line



National President Paul Moist (centre) with members of CUPE Local 1521.02 Association of Community Living workers, on strike for 10 weeks before reaching a settlement.

BY ALLISON GIFFORD

As CUPE members gather for convention this fall, we confront a new reality for working people. Employment is down, manufacturing sectors have fallen, and world markets have been gripped by one of the worst financial crises since the Great Depression. Meanwhile, the income gap is widening; a small minority is making huge gains, but the average worker has gained very little.

Now, more than ever, working people must stand together to prevent the income gap from stretching further. Workers didn't cause the recession, and they shouldn't be forced to pay for it.

"Even as economists declare a tentative recovery, we will see debt-ridden governments attempt to balance the books. For workers, this means a tough bargaining climate even after the recession," says CUPE National President Paul Moist. "Employers will use the recession as ground cover to attempt to roll back wages and benefits we have fought hard for. City coun-

cils will consider privatization as a way to avert labour disputes. And conservative critics will tell us that the labour movement has outlived its usefulness, that we're lucky to have jobs at all."

Moist urges workers across the country to stand together – and be ready to fight.

"We will have to rededicate ourselves to fighting against privatization, fighting for our members' job security, and to preserve the collective bargaining rights of all workers. It wasn't as much of an issue two years ago, but it is an issue today."

The good news is that our union is strong. "We saw two very high profile strikes end recently in Windsor and Toronto. I was extremely proud of the tremendous courage our members showed in standing up in defense of their collective agreements," said Moist.

Moist says the election of the first-ever NDP government in Nova Scotia is a reminder to all members how important it is to get politically involved. "CUPE members were front and centre in that campaign.

The NDP victory in Nova Scotia was the culmination of years of political work, and because of those efforts, working people in Nova Scotia have a stronger political voice."

As CUPE members weather the end of the recession and brace for a tough bargaining climate ahead, Moist urges workers to remember two things: that their work is valuable, and that solidarity is more important than ever.

"The quality services that CUPE members provide are the greatest strength we have in terms of our credibility with the public. Our front-line workers are our best ambassadors," says Moist.

"We need to be proud of the incredible work we do, and we need to stand in solidarity within our union and with other workers in our communities. We know historically that one worker can't negotiate his or her wages, and that one worker can't take on their employer by themselves. We need to band together."

cupe.ca/paulmoist

Call me Sister, call me Brother – call me neighbour

BY CATHERINE LOULI

With all the brouhaha in the press about striking workers this past summer, it would be easy to overlook the tremendous contributions CUPE members make in their communities on a daily basis.

Despite the commitment of unionized workers to improving

life in the community, workers have been the ones that have shouldered the wrath of the media and public disapproval for the current economic troubles.

Yet it is inspiring to witness the support and help CUPE members offer to grieving families, as was the case when the New Brunswick Council of

Hospital Unions donated \$5,000 to the Mowbray family after a tragic car accident that killed three generations of Mowbray women. In the broader community, CUPE's commitment to improving the quality of life for everyone remains strong with over \$1 million raised for the United Way.

Landmark decision in health care

A landmark, negotiated agreement with no concessions has been reached between the Ontario Council of Hospital Unions/CUPE and the Ontario Hospital Association.

The agreement features wage increases, vacation, benefit, shift and weekend premium improvements. It also includes the groundbreaking right of a worker transferred in health care restructuring, privatization or a sale or partial sale of business to post back into their hospital at any point during the four-year term of the contract, using and carrying back the full seniority they left with.

The agreement directly covers 18,500 hospital workers represented by CUPE. Another 11,500 CUPE-represented hospital workers, whose employers do not participate in central bargaining, will follow this pattern.

cupe.ca/ochu

Coming this fall!

The cross-Canada tour for public child care

Canada's private approach to child care has produced a patchwork of unplanned programs that vary in quality, affordability and availability. This approach has also sparked an alarming trend in the growth of for-profit child care.

CUPE believes child care is a public good, not a market commodity. Be a part of the movement to build publicly-funded and delivered early childhood education and child care services.

The union has coordinated a series of public events to engage community members in the discussion for a 21st century vision for early childhood education and child care services. Come and hear Martha Friendly of the Childcare Resource and Research Unit in Toronto and Susan Prentice a sociology professor of the University of Manitoba as well as local CUPE and community child care activists, share their views on building a better future for Canada's children.

The tour begins in Fredericton, New Brunswick on October 27 and then moves across the country. Learn more about the tour including dates and locations by contacting Sister Darcie Beggs, dbeggs@cupe.ca
cupe.ca/child-care

Love of freedom, freedom to love



Building on the success of the 1st International Conference on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Human rights in Montreal in 2006, the 2nd International Conference on LGBT Human Rights was held in Copenhagen, Denmark in July 2009.

NDP MP Libby Davies (centre) attended the conference and was an active participant. CUPE members Peter deGroot, Line Blackburn, Victor Elkins (HEU), Martine Stonehouse, Jane Walsh, along with CUPE staff Joanne Martin and Michael Butler attended on behalf of CUPE. Our delegates maintained a daily blog of the conference and it can be found at: <http://cupe-scfpatworkersout2009.blogspot.com/2009>. The focus of the conference was on strengthening rights of LGBT people in the workplace.

cupe.ca/workersout

Montreal "cols bleus" workers on 24-hour strike



Montreal's blue collar city workers, members of CUPE Local 301, laid down their tools for a 24-hour strike at the end of August. The local chose to maintain access to essential services – while sending out a warning cry to the public on the failure of elected officials of Montreal city council to take their responsibility seriously.

This round of negotiations provides an opportunity to improve Montreal's infrastructure by committing strongly to quality public services, rather than allowing those services to be sold off piecemeal to the private sector.

However, two years of negotiations have failed to reach

a settlement. Over the past two years the number of workers on the Island of Montreal has decreased, while the layers of management and organizational structures have exploded – resulting in poor coordination of services, disorganization, and poorer public services.

cupe.ca/quebec

The P3 model: lame ducks lose their feathers

An interview with **Claude Généreux**, national secretary-treasurer of CUPE

By **SÉBASTIEN GOULET**

SG: Claude, what has happened with “public-private partnerships” (P3s) now that engineers, architects and employers are joining forces with us to challenge them? Could we say they have suffered a setback?

CG: Indeed, a huge setback. Before the economic crisis, the private sector was borrowing money from banks at interest rates that were already higher than rates for public institutions, such as municipalities, school boards and governments. At first sight, this didn’t seem excessive because the difference was an additional 0.5 to one per cent. Seemingly insignificant, this percentage nevertheless made a big difference when converted into dollars. Thus, right from the start, using the private sector to finance public services was not financially sound. Last year, the situation worsened because the differential increased by two, three or even four per cent. Imagine something costing 100 million dollars, and then suddenly costing 200 million dollars!

SG: Apart from the financial drawbacks, what other factors make P3s a poor formula?

CG: P3s started to gain a following as a way of delivering services in the 1990s, when it arrived armed with numerous arguments shaped by “P3ism,” an ideology advocating radical privatization. One of its arguments was that P3s would be transparent. However, we have seen that this was false: the books remain closed on the pretext that there is a need to protect commercial secrecy.

Another key argument claimed that there would be a transfer of risks. However, over

the last 10 or 15 years there have been numerous cases in which the private sector failed to absorb the risks. A telling example is what happened to the City of Hamilton, which transferred control over water to a series of companies that failed to get the job done: an English company, an American company and a French company. Eventually, control was handed over to a German company that ended up declaring bankruptcy. The City of Hamilton was forced to take back the water system, which once again came under public control. This was a costly transfer.

Another argument they trotted out was that of flexibility. The “privatizers” said: “Look at what happens when it’s under public control: there are collective agreements of 200 to 300 pages!” Now, even Gérald Tremblay, the mayor of Montreal, is claiming that P3s are straightjackets – because they don’t come with contracts of 300 pages: indeed, some have contracts with as many as 10,000 pages!

In some Canadian provinces, we have external auditors and investigative forensic accountants who have warned us: “Be careful, we’re not getting good value for our money and we’re getting into long-term debt for a couple of generations.” Then there is Elliott Sclar, an American economist at Columbia University, who has put us on guard by invoking the sub-prime scandal that brought down global finance capital. He said: “I believe that the next bubble of this sort will involve P3s.”

Let’s hope it doesn’t come to that!

cupe.ca/claude-generoux/podcast



National Secretary-Treasurer Claude Généreux celebrates with CUPE Local 825 contracting in of garbage and recycling service.

National long-term care tour coming this fall



Over 67,000 CUPE members work in long-term care facilities across Canada. All of our half-million members wonder what their lives will be like when they grow old. This fall, we will shine a light on the places where almost a quarter of a million people work and more than a quarter of a million live: Canada’s long-term care facilities.

cupe.ca/long-term-care-tour

National Executive Board highlights

The National Executive Board met on September 16-17, 2009 in Ottawa; these are the highlights of their deliberations and decisions.

NEB Resolution – United Steelworkers of America

In Sudbury and Port Colborne, Ontario and Voisey’s Bay, Newfoundland and Labrador members of three USW local unions are engaged in a strike against Vale Inco. Vale Inco is 100% owned by Brazilian interests. The company wants to wipe out gains made over many years by moving to a two-tier pension plan substantially reducing pension entitlement for new employees, attack seniority rights and limit bonuses paid that ensure workers share in profits. The company has resumed production with the use of scab labour.

The NEB adopted a resolution that provides financial assistance to USW in the amount of \$10,000. The resolution also calls on the federal government to ensure that majority ownership of resource based companies remain in Canadian hands. Letters will be sent to the Premiers of Ontario and Newfoundland/Labrador asking that they take

the necessary steps to stop the use of scab labour during this dispute.

Financial Matters

Financing of fifteen cost share campaigns were approved, totaling \$198,995.82, which will help locals improve member awareness, raise public profile, prepare for bargaining and protect public services. In addition, our legal/arbitration support for locals totals \$271,581.58 in response to ten applications to assist locals.

Economic Climate for Bargaining

Despite pronouncements by some economists that the recession is over, CUPE members will continue to face challenging times as governments will attempt to turn deficits around. The quarterly “Economic Climate for Bargaining”, produced by CUPE’s senior economist, addresses a number of issues for CUPE members. While government spending has slowed down job losses more government stimulus funding is required to stop Canada’s growing unemployment problem.

cupe.ca/economics/economic-climate-bargaining---september

Work bytes



The Hospital Employees Union (HEU) launched a series of television ads in September, profiling the union's Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) members and their expanded roles in patient care. The latest ads are part of the union's ongoing advocacy for LPNs as nursing professionals.

On strike to save lives – B.C.

With CUPE 873 ambulance paramedics entering their sixth month of strike action in September, the provincial government continued to stall negotiations. While respecting essential service orders, paramedics ramped up public support for quality service with various communications initiatives themed "On Strike to Save Lives." Extensive local media coverage has generated positive responses.

B.C. government budget cuts hit CUPE library workers hard in August. A provincial campaign, "Stop Library Cuts Now" helped reduce proposed cuts of close to 80 per cent down to 22 per cent. And cuts continue across the public sector – negatively affecting CUPE members and public services.

The majority of CUPE locals are preparing for bargaining in 2010. K-12, colleges and universities geared up for sectoral campaigns with strategic initiatives and cost-shared campaigns. University and K-12 locals are formalizing bargaining coordination and working to build CUPE's profile provincially. Community social services locals began preparation with a member survey.

The recent B.C. provincial government budget stipulates there will be no wage increases for public sector workers as long as the government remains in deficit.

cupe.ca/britishcolumbia

Alberta health and education under fire

New regulations from Alberta Health Services threaten 1,600 CUPE health care workers from speaking out about changes to public health care.

Paramedics and Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) alike are affected by the changes to the Code of Conduct, which could lead to employee termination if workers speak out about conditions in their workplaces.

Meanwhile, CUPE Locals 474 and 3550 are being proactive on potential funding shortfalls from the Alberta government's education ministry, pointing out in letters to the editor and advertisements the contribution that support staff, custodial staff, and educational assistants make to our schools.

CUPE Alberta has joined Twitter to spread labour news across the country with members and allies. Follow us at "cupeAB." cupe.ca/alberta

Employer shifts position on 12-hour shifts in Saskatchewan

The Prince Albert health region recently scrapped a controversial plan to change the shifts for about 200 CUPE special care aides in Prince Albert from 12 hours to eight hours. The employer wanted to make the change without any consultation with staff.

CUPE Local 4777, which represents about 1,700 health workers, organized a secret-ballot vote to allow members to have a say on the issue. Of the 176

special care aides who cast a ballot, 98.2 per cent supported the 12-hour shift rotations; 1.7 per cent wanted an eight-hour shift.

A thorough review of the literature conducted by CUPE research contradicted the employer's assertion. There are many areas where our health care system can be improved – but changing the shift rotation is not one of them. In late summer, the health region reluctantly agreed. cupe.ca/saskatchewan

Manitoba builds capacity

CUPE Local 500 members lobbied politicians and worked with community groups to stop the creation of the Municipal Corporate Utility. While the city council voted in favour of the Utility in July, the public is now more aware of the risks of privatization and there is a growing support for keeping services public.

A major union-building exercise is underway in Manitoba to train and mobilize members to strengthen their locals. In the social service and child care sectors in particular, a major campaign begins this fall to build support and improve bargaining capacity through training, community collaboration and advocacy. cupe.ca/manitoba

Standing strong defending our rights in Ontario

In the face of an extraordinarily difficult bargaining climate, CUPE members across Ontario are

holding strong against employer attacks on theirs and future generations' wages, pensions and benefits.

Members of CUPE Locals 82 and 543, representing outside and inside workers at the City of Windsor, have returned to work with their heads held high after a 101-day work stoppage. CUPE Locals 79 and 416, representing inside and outside workers at the City of Toronto ratified collective agreements following a 39-day strike, sending a clear message across the province that working women and men are not prepared to pay the bill for an economic crisis they didn't cause.

At the time of writing, a tentative agreement was reached between CUPE Local 1521.02 and Community Living Association Lanark County. The Power Workers Union-CUPE 1000 in Ingersoll remains on strike.

A campaign of civil disobedience, public outreach, and lobbying succeeded in convincing Simcoe County councillors to impose a one-year moratorium on construction of a landfill atop the Alliston Aquifer, one of the purest groundwater sources on the planet. cupe.ca/ontario

Quebec's Common Front

In Quebec, negotiations between public sector workers and the government of Jean Charest are set to begin. This round of bargaining will see all of the public sector unions belonging to the same Common *Continued on page 6*



CUPE activists gathered at the Garrison Grounds on Citadel Hill for the Halifax Gay Pride Parade. Regional Director Jacquie Bramwell (4th from left), along with NDP MP Megan Leslie, Division President Danny Cavanagh, and Marlene Gaudet, CUPE Nova Scotia's representative on the National Pink Triangle Committee, led the way.

Front. With 475,000 workers, this is the biggest common front in Quebec history.

Around 30,000 CUPE members in the health, social services and education sectors are directly affected by these negotiations. However, at least 15,000 CUPE members in other sectors will be following the negotiations carefully, since the wages provided for in their collective agreements often mirror public sector bargaining patterns.

At the time of writing, the unions expect to submit their negotiation demands to the negotiations table by October 30; organizers anticipate a big demonstration in the streets of Quebec on that day.

The Common Front hopes to conclude the negotiations by March 31, 2010.

cupe.ca/quebec

N.B. Worker's Rehab Centre stays public

WorkSafeNB will remain public. Working in coalition with other workers' organizations CUPE Local 946, launched a successful campaign to save the centre from privatization.

Campaign success continued

with members of CUPE Local 2745, the educational support staff. After the local spent a busy summer setting up information pickets, holding rallies and going door to door speaking about the impact budget cuts would have on students, families and staff, the provincial government announced a reinvestment of \$2.9 million.

cupe.ca/newbrunswick

On the P.E.I. front

CUPE PEI has been successful in working with other groups to save three small schools that were slated to close.

The Rural Alliance and CUPE members successfully lobbied the Eastern School District to maintain in operation three of the 11 schools that were slated to be closed.

cupe.ca/pei

Collective Bargaining moving forward in N.L.

Despite the economic downturn, collective bargaining efforts continue to show positive results in Newfoundland and Labrador.

CUPE NL has successfully achieved a first contract for 130 cafeteria support staff employed

by Compass Group Canada (Chartwells). These workers – all women – work in the eastern region of the Eastern School District.

Collective bargaining in the municipal sector has also yielded great results. CUPE Locals 706 and 768 in the City of Corner Brook and CUPE Local 1761 with the Town of Placentia all have signed new agreements with their respective employers.

cupe.ca/newfoundland

N.S. election victory

It's not often that CUPE and its activists get to say they were part of making history, but that was most certainly the case when the union helped rewrite the political landscape in Atlantic Canada by forming a majority NDP government in Nova Scotia.

CUPE activists across the province made direct contact with the union's 16,000 members explaining why CUPE was supporting the NDP. The union has an unprecedented opportunity now to make significant, positive changes in the lives of not only CUPE members but in the lives of all Nova Scotians.

CUPE pride continued during the Halifax Gay Pride Parade. Local activists flew the CUPE flag distributed tattoos, bracelets and other goodies to the thousands gathered along the parade route.

Marlene Gaudet, CUPE Nova Scotia's representative on the National Pink Triangle Committee, led the way with Division President Danny Cavanagh and Regional Director Jacquie Bramwell.

cupe.ca/novascotia

HEU readies for bargaining

HEU/CUPE activists are gearing up for a tough round of collective bargaining with a series of occupational and sector conferences, culminating in the union's wage policy conference in November.

The upcoming negotiations are taking place against the backdrop of \$350 million of government-ordered health cuts, plans for a massive consolidation of critical health support services, and a public sector wage freeze.

Health and community social services agreements covering more than 90 per cent of the HEU/CUPE membership expire March 31, 2010.

heu.org

Watch out!

COME CELEBRATE WATER WATCH'S 10TH ANNIVERSARY AT THE:

BLUE SUMMIT
November 27-29 2009, Ottawa
Marriott Hotel
cupe.ca/water or canadians.org/water

THE COUNCIL OF CANADIANS / LE CONSEIL DES CANADIENS

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Winner of the Flip camera

Mark Trischuk from the University of Saskatchewan has won a Flip Video Camera for taking part in a contest in the inaugural edition of Counterpoint, CUPE's new national newsletter.

Trischuk's name was picked at random from the people who either downloaded the newsletter online, or got a copy from their local, and entered the special code on a page on CUPE's national website.

Thanks to all our readers.

Watch for upcoming contests.