

# ORGANIZE

Special 2005  
national convention  
issue



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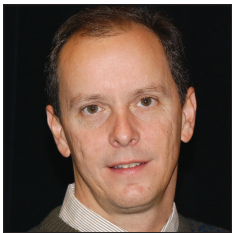
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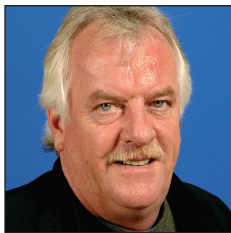
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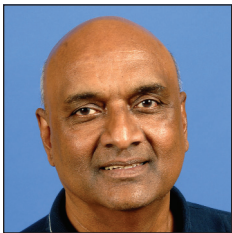


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# Convention 2005: passion, pride and power



This issue of Organize reports on our 22<sup>nd</sup> national convention held in Winnipeg in early October. I am immensely proud of our union. Some 1,700 delegates debated the issues, pledged support for striking members and formed policy to guide CUPE over the next two years.

On the first day, I asked first-time delegates to rise. I was both surprised and pleased when about 40 per cent of the room stood up. This is a good sign as a new generation of activists takes over from those who helped build our union.

The adoption of our strategic directions program for the next two years charts an ambitious, progressive course for our union. Strengthening our union's internal structure to maximize bargaining power, focusing on organizing and addressing equality issues are crucial priorities.

I was excited to share the preliminary results of our first nationwide membership survey in several years. This membership feedback is important for all of us. I urge you to read the more detailed article on the survey in this issue of Organize.

Reaching deep into their pockets, members and locals pledged nearly \$90,000 to assist striking CUPE locals and CUPE National was happy to match that

amount. We also observed a moment of silence in memory of a young Winnipeg aboriginal girl's tragic death and pledged financial support for her family. These and other emotional moments spoke volumes to me about our members' values.

On a personal note, I want to express my gratitude for your confidence in electing me to a second term as national president. It is also with heartfelt appreciation that I thank delegates for welcoming my parents and family, who were at my side for my re-election. The warm reception they received was deeply touching. More than ever, I feel privileged to belong to such a caring and compassionate union.

In solidarity,

Paul Moist  
National President

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By Catherine Loui

#### 10 Convention 2005

Seven pages of coverage and photos



# ORGANIZE

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## Women break barriers in new education program



*CUPE women from B.C. and Alberta attended the Women Breaking Barriers workshop at Harrison Hot Springs, B.C.*

The first component of CUPE's new training and education program for women was launched recently in British Columbia. Called "Women Breaking Barriers," the weeklong workshop is already drawing rave reviews.

Participants described the training as "worth every minute" and a ("life-changing experience") that challenged them to move beyond their comfort zone while learning about economics, politics and social change from a woman's perspective.

"This workshop has already proved to be a great benefit to me as a leader in the union," said CUPE 2145 president Cathy Whalen, who works for Bulkley Valley School District. "I came home to lead my local through some very trying and difficult times during the recent B.C. teachers' protest, where CUPE members stood strong with the British Columbia Teachers' Federation."

"I feel I have been given a boost of energy with a whole new attitude to bring back to my local," added Dee Beattie of CUPE 728, Surrey School Board.

Liz Purves, president of CUPE 3623, Grande Spirit Foundation, Alberta, said she was moved by the "support everyone had for each other."

"The thing that surprised me was that even though we all came from different areas, jobs and lifestyles, we basically all want the same things: to ensure that members are treated equally and fairly," said Purves.

CUPE has scheduled more Breaking Barriers workshops for Nova Scotia and Ontario. Shorter half- and full-day sessions that will train women members in specific union leadership skills are planned for early in 2006.

■ **Doreen Meyer**

# Celebrating strong communities

Municipalities across Canada celebrated Communities Day on Oct. 5. Towns and cities officially proclaiming the day included Ajax, Brantford, Milton, Pickering, Port Hope, Stratford, and Vaughan, Ont.; Dauphin and Thompson, Man.; Saskatoon, Sask.; Yellowknife, N.W.T.; and Edmonton, Edson, and Bon Accord, Alta. Here are a few highlights:

## Nova Scotia

The Nova Scotia highway workers at CUPE 1867 lobbied the province to proclaim Oct. 5 as Provincial Highway Workers' Day. Acting transportation minister Michael Baker signed the proclamation, recognizing the work of CUPE members who keep the province's highways safe.

## Alberta

CUPE 1606 members in Vermilion collected winter clothing as part of their Communities Day activities. Support staff at the Buffalo Trail Regional School Division saw a need in their community. "Our local knows that every year, children come to school without the proper gear," said CUPE 1606 president Margaret Templeton.

"We decided we could help our students while highlighting our position in the community."

## Winnipeg

During CUPE's national convention, delegates held a rally to draw attention to the importance of investing in public services and reducing poverty.



These communities and others like them know that public investment in local services keeps them strong.

■ Barry Doyle



Above: CUPE 1606 members held a winter clothing drive for students at Alberta's Buffalo Trail Regional School Division. Top left: Other Alberta locals held a "tummies and toes" campaign, collecting socks and food for the homeless.

# Productivity and the public sector: it adds up

Productivity: it means different things to different people.

For bosses, it often means squeezing more work out of their employees. Business sectors use the word to push for lower wages, lower taxes and privatization. Now, politicians are talking about Canada's productivity crisis.

There's little doubt that productivity is going to be front and centre in the next federal budget. The Bank of Canada has said it will raise interest rates because of slow productivity growth. This means higher mortgage and loan rates – and fewer jobs.

Productivity is a measure of how efficiently we produce goods and services. Better technology, more skilled workers and more efficient methods of production help us to be more productive.

For an auto worker, productivity can be measured simply by how much time it takes to produce a vehicle. For public

(cont. on p. 4)

sector workers, measuring productivity is much more complicated.

CUPE members ensure the strength, safety, health and well being of their communities, so we should never just measure the value of our work in terms of the bottom line. But in addition to having a positive impact on society and the environment, our members also make the economy much more productive.

Statistics Canada has calculated that businesses save 17 cents a year from every dollar invested in public infrastructure. That's a pretty high rate of return – much higher than most stock market investments.

Child care spending is estimated to yield \$2 in economic benefits for every dollar invested. Improvements in health are responsible for a quarter of the increase in productivity over the past 30 years.

In contrast, the \$100 billion in corporate and income tax cuts that the federal government provided over the past five years has led to few gains. Corporate profits soared while inequality increased, investment rates dropped and productivity stagnated.

Many European countries are much more productive than the U.S. or Canada. Places with high levels of social investment, strong unions and healthy minimum wages also tend to enjoy higher productivity levels.

It's time our leaders did the math: reinvesting in public services benefits our society and our economy.

#### ■ Toby Sanger

***Toby Sanger is CUPE National's new senior economist. He will be contributing to Organize from time to time.***

## CUPE members “high” on Labour College



Ask Margaret Templeton about Labour College and her enthusiasm soars.

“High wouldn’t be a wrong term. It was just the most amazing experience,” says the CUPE Alberta member about her month in residence at Ottawa’s Algonquin College in last May.

Unionists from across Canada attend the challenging five-week graduate program sponsored by the Canadian Labour Congress. Delivered in two parts – four weeks nationally and one week regionally – the annual program consists of related courses in economics, political science, labour history and sociology.

Templeton is the president of CUPE 1606 and a librarian at an elementary school in Vermilion, Alta. Although she is university-educated, she was surprised by how much she learned.

“I just didn’t really expect to suddenly have an eye-opening experience,” she says. “You’re all trade unionists, but there are different aspects of that viewpoint that you don’t even think about.”

Morna Ballantyne, managing director of union development at CUPE, says Labour College’s pro-worker curriculum “values and validates” members’ experience.

“It makes connections between the real-life experiences of the students and a theoretical perspective of issues in a way that very few institutions do,” she says.

CUPE 3928 president John Atwater, from New Glasgow, N.S., agrees.

“It was probably one of the best things I’ve done in a long time. I just learned so much,” says Atwater, a youth counselor at a children’s aid society.

CUPE supports members who attend with scholarships that cover wages and expenses. CUPE National sponsors six scholarships, which were increased this year to \$7,000 each.

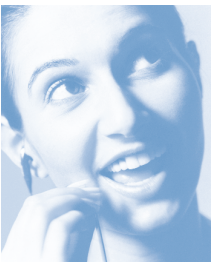
“Anybody who qualifies should have the right to go without any financial barriers,” notes Ballantyne. “Without the scholarships, very few students would be able to participate.”

Both Templeton and Atwater received scholarships. Atwater attended on the new Barbara Kowalski scholarship.

“This kind of experience gives you the confidence to go forward and deal with other things,” Templeton says. “Once you’ve grown, you don’t shrink.”

Visit [www.labourcollege.ca](http://www.labourcollege.ca) for information on how to apply.

#### ■ Doreen Meyer



# CUPE members love their jobs, national survey says

Nine out of 10 CUPE members say they are satisfied with their job, and most believe their work is valued by their communities, their employer and their co-workers.

These were among the key findings of a recent CUPE survey of its membership, the first poll of its kind in several years.

Keeping a promise made at the 2003 national convention, CUPE commissioned a telephone survey of a random sample of 2,425 members from all 10 provinces. This survey followed a series of 10 face-to-face discussion groups held in six major cities earlier this year.

National President Paul Moist presented the survey to delegates at the Winnipeg national convention in October.

“The results will help us better understand members’ concerns and will allow us to improve how we meet their needs and choose our priorities,” said Moist.

Here are a few of the more interesting facts and figures:

## Job satisfaction

An overwhelming majority of CUPE members (90 per cent) are satisfied with their job, including 47 per cent who say they are very satisfied.

Likewise, most of you feel your work is valued by the people you help, the public, your employer and, most of all, your co-workers.

## CUPE services and campaigns

The services that matter most to members are protecting job security, negotiat-

ing good wages, benefits and pension and protecting health and safety at work.

Promoting quality public services, opposing contracting out and dealing with grievances were also rated as important.

More than two out of three of you feel it is extremely important for CUPE to promote equality, human rights and fair treatment for everyone.

## CUPE's performance

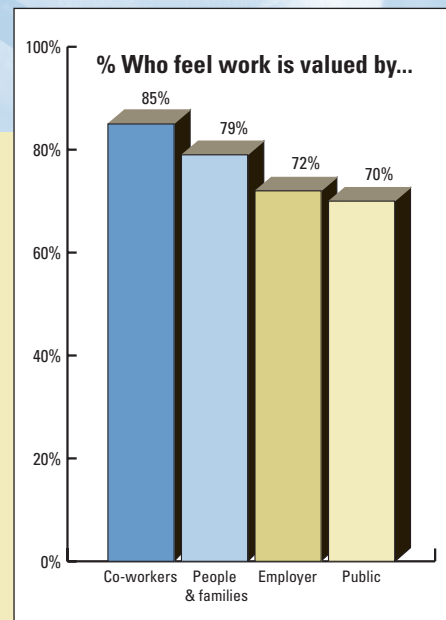
Encouragingly, almost seven out of 10 of you feel you are better off in CUPE. You said we do a good job protecting job security, promoting public services and fighting contracting out, delivering union education and negotiating good wages, benefits and pensions. Services that received the lowest marks include taking a strong stand on national issues, negotiating paid family leave, dealing with grievances and lobbying the government.

## Privatization and contracting out

Almost 80 per cent of members are worried their job will be contracted out or privatized. The biggest concerns are pay cuts and that the quality of the services they provide will be compromised. A large majority is also concerned about fewer hours and increased workload.

## Communications

When it comes to receiving information from CUPE, almost half of you said you prefer to receive your local's newsletter at work. Forty per cent prefer the newsletter be sent to your home. Almost as many



members say they want to receive e-mail, while others would prefer personal contact either with their shop steward or at a union meeting.

Almost everyone surveyed has access to the Internet, either at work, at home or both.

Almost half of the members who receive written information say they have seen or read Organize.

## Workplace education

Almost 80 per cent of you believe it's important for CUPE to negotiate workplace training to help you do your job more effectively or to get promoted. Almost two out of three members say their employer currently provides workplace training.

## Who did the math?

CUPE commissioned Winnipeg-based pollsters Viewpoints Research. The margin of error for the total sample is more or less 2 per cent, 19 times out of 20.

■ **Natasha Gauthier**

# Your money, your future

*Catherine Louli looks at the ins and outs of one of the hottest topics for the trade union movement today: your pension.*

In November 2005, more than 65 CUPE pension plan trustees representing every province and nearly every sector met for the first time in Toronto to discuss the crucial role they play in ensuring a secure retirement for their co-workers. A key topic on everybody's lips? How to get more people involved, interested and educated in managing their pensions.

If you're under 30, you probably don't think about your retirement very much. If you're closer to 60, you may take your pension for granted. But at CUPE, pensions have surfaced as one of the hottest political topics of the day.

Over the years, CUPE has committed a lot of resources and time to examining the question of pensions. The pressure is on: over the next decade, Canada's six million Baby Boomers – the largest single group in the country – are expected to retire.

"The issue of pensions is so much more than the negotiations of benefits for when our members retire," says Michel Lizée. Lizée represents CUPE Quebec on the pensions committee of the Quebec Labour Federation and also sits on the CUPE National pension advisory committee.

"Pensions are directly linked to our defence of the role of the public sector and the role of government in relation to public services," he says. "When we talk about pensions, we need to understand the political context of investments of the pension fund. When dealing with pension investment, we deal with issues like the environment or the privatization of public services – basically, all the political work that CUPE is engaged in."



*Cidalia Ribero, Air Canada flight attendant.*

More and more people at all stages of their working lives are beginning to see the light when it comes to pensions. Cidalia Ribero is a CUPE flight attendant with Air Canada. "I was 22 when I started at Air Canada and I didn't really know a lot about pensions," she says. "I thought I was going to be at Air Canada for a very short period of time and it wasn't really an issue for me. But now that I've been here for 10 years, I realize

how important an issue it is and that we have to fight for our pensions in every round of collective bargaining."



## What kinds of pension plans are out there?

When most people think of pensions, they think of the Canada Pension Plan (CPP). Introduced in 1966

and today worth more than \$70 billion, the CPP is an active part of most people's retirement income.

The CPP is a good foundation to build on, part of our national safety net. However, it is not the sole source of retirement income for many Canadians. Workers and their employers have invested a lot of money in other pension plans over the years. As of Dec. 31, 2004, the assets of the top 100 Canadian employer pension funds with CUPE member participation sat at more than \$2.19 billion.

Pension plans can be divided into two types of schemes. The one preferred by workers and recommended by the union is a defined benefit pension plan. The one preferred by many employers is the defined contribution plan. In a defined benefit plan, your total contribution is not known in advance. It can increase or diminish over time; value is assessed throughout the life of the plan. However, under this model, the amount you will receive after retirement is known and guaranteed.

The defined contribution plan, on the other hand, is similar to a Registered Retirement Savings Plan (RRSP). The amount that will be drawn after retirement is unknown and

not guaranteed because it depends heavily on market fluctuations before and after retirement.

For CUPE, the choice is clear: defined benefit plans offer more security and a collective approach to pensions.

"The difference between me and someone in a defined contribution plan is that I know how much money I will be receiving every month after retirement," says Helen Fetterly, secretary treasurer of the Ontario Council of Hospital Unions (OCHU/CUPE) and chair of the Hospitals of Ontario Pension Plan committee. "If I had a defined contribution plan, it would be anybody's guess what my monthly income after retirement would be. There are pros and cons [to a defined benefit plan]. But when I retire, I'm going to know what I'm going to get for a pension. We have control – this is key."

## How much control do we have over our pensions?

For CUPE, the single most important pension-related issue is the democratization of pension plan boards through joint trusteeship.

Participants at the Toronto meeting in November know how crucial it is for workers to gain more control over their retirement security.

"In the past, employers usually decided the level of benefits paid, how administration would work, how investment

## The Multi-Sector Pension Plan

**CUPE participates in the Multi-Sector Pension Plan (MSPP). Members join this multi-employer defined benefit pension plan through their own collective bargaining process. Regardless of how small the bargaining unit is, members have the opportunity to join a good workplace pension.**

**The MSPP is open to members across the country. The plan is fully controlled by CUPE and the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), not the employers. Joining is simple. Each bargaining unit negotiates the plan into the workplace. CUPE bargains the level of worker and employer contribution, and**

**the employer provides necessary employee data. All members share the cost and the formula used is determined with expert actuarial help.**

**"Originally, we thought we would cover some smaller social service agencies, child care workers and cleaners, but we soon discovered the need was much greater," says Ian Thompson, CUPE co-chair of the MSPP. "We now have about 2,500 people participating in the plan, everyone from golf course workers and First Air flight attendants to paramedics."**

**The plan represents an especially important gain for CUPE women, since**

**they are often the ones without a workplace pension and are therefore completely reliant on the Canada Pension Plan (CPP).**

**"One of the challenges of the CPP is that it hasn't expanded and there are no guarantees of inflation protections," says Thompson. "A lot of the workers we are bringing into the plan have minimal pensions. How do you live on less than \$20,000 per year in Toronto?"**

**Now in its third year, the MSPP provides a strong push toward CUPE's goal of having all members retire with decent pension incomes. Visit [www.mspp.ca](http://www.mspp.ca).**

policy should be made, even when to communicate to plan members,” says Darcie Beggs, a CUPE National researcher who specializes in pensions. “Far too often, they exercised this control at workers’ expense – taking their surpluses for their contributions, freezing or reducing benefit levels, and keeping plan members in the dark about their deferred wages.”

Joint trusteeship is more than an advisory committee that makes recommendations. It also means more than simply bargaining for improvements, as workers are sometimes able to do at the negotiating table. A lot happens in a pension plan between bargaining rounds.

“Joint trusteeship means workers have the power to make decisions when it come to hiring agents, developing investment policy, improving benefits, and communicating with plan members,” Beggs notes. “But the most important concrete advantage to joint trusteeship is the right to share decision-making about funding surplus and deficits. Where we have won joint trusteeship of plans, we were able to insist that the surplus be used to improve the plan instead of to pay the employer’s own contributions.”

Over the past few years, CUPE has obtained joint trusteeship of a significant number of our members’ pension plans. There is now at least one major CUPE pension plan held in joint trust in almost every province, with more on the way.

Joint trusteeship also offers an opportunity for increasing knowledge about the plan. Selecting trustees and keeping them accountable becomes a vital part of regular union business. Maria Wahl, a CUPE member from Port Moody, B. C., is one such trustee.

“Our board of trustees is composed of 11 union members and 11 employer members,” says Wahl, a trustee of her province’s municipal pension plan. “Being a trustee enables you to understand what is happening with the investment of the pension money. It can be an intimidating experience, with the actuaries, the lawyers and the consultants who talk a whole different language.”

Wahl says union education is key to gaining self-assurance amid the “suits”. “Education prepares us so that when we enter those meetings we understand what is being said, and we don’t have to feel so intimidated,” she says. “These are our pensions. We have a right to be at that table and participate in decisions that will effect our futures.”

However, Wahl admits that it’s challenging not only to find interested members, but to train them properly before they take up their position on the board of trustees. Unfortunately, pension trustees are often trained or advised by industry consultants and professionals who may not share CUPE’s perspective on such things as public investment priorities.

Trustees at the November meeting in Toronto agreed that they need more education, more communication and more support. Among other things, attendees discussed establishing a website and developing an activist network so they can share information in between meetings.

CUPE has developed a week-long course for pension trustees that prepares them for their role. In particular, this course provides trustees with the background information needed to debate the issues and press for a positive, pro-public sector investment policy for their plan.

### Using pensions to fight privatization

The pension funds of CUPE members represent billions of dollars of investment capital for governments. CUPE argues that some of this money could be harnessed for public investment in infrastructure. When they have invested in government bonds, workers’ pension funds have played a positive, passive role in infrastructure renewal. This role could be enhanced if our plans became more proactive.

In 2003, CUPE commissioned a report by economist Monica Townson on the investment of pension funds in public infrastructure. Among her findings, she noted that “pension funds can play a positive role in helping finance public infrastructure, providing a good rate of return for pension plan members while at the same time assuring governments of capital at reasonable rates.”

Townson pointed out a revealing illustration of the alarming trend toward privatization: the 1998 amendment of the investment policy for the CPP reserve fund, which currently sits at more than \$56 billion. From the time the CPP was established, this fund was invested entirely in provincial bonds used to finance local governments, schools, hospitals, universities, roads, and other public priorities. The bonds held by the CPP paid a reasonable, federal government rate of return.

However, in 1998, the federal government moved into a diversified stock and bond portfolio instead, eliminating one of the largest public infrastructure investment mechanisms at its disposal.

The government attempted to justify this change on the grounds that greater income was needed for the CPP fund to meet demographic pressures. Moreover, the decision was entrenched in legislation, which makes it harder to change. CUPE has been steadily pressuring the government to return to its previous role in issuing bonds to finance public infrastructure projects.

## Once a defined benefit, always a defined benefit?

Some Canadian employers are trying to change the rules of pension schemes midstream. Several have introduced two-tier pension plans, whereby new hires are not eligible for the defined benefit plan and instead are enrolled in a defined contribution scheme. The real issue is that, as older employees retire, the two-tier system will become single-tiered, and defined benefit plans will eventually be phased out completely.

Two-tier plans did not appear out of thin air. In many cases, the desire to opt out of defined benefit plans is a result of employers taking “contribution holidays”. In the 90s, there was a terrific financial market boom and many plans enjoyed excellent returns on their investments. However, Canadian law dictates that when you reach a certain point of return on your investment, you are required to take a break from your contributions. Many employers and some unions took this contribution holiday during those fat years. Now that the market has slowed down, those employers have lost the habit – and the inclination – to budget for contributions to their pension plans.

In 2004, Air Canada was in bankruptcy protection and was shopping around for a new owner. Victor Li, a Hong Kong businessman, came forward with an offer, but stipulated that the deal was contingent on the air carrier agreeing to change its pension plan.

“We found ourselves having to educate all our members, new and old, as to why two-tier was not the way to go and why, collectively, we had to stay together on this issue,” says Cidalia Ribero.

In the end, CUPE’s fight was successful. Air Canada blamed “union intransigence” for allowing the Li deal to fall through, but the company was eventually able to find another investor and came out of bankruptcy protection with its pension plan intact.

## Looking toward the future

In Toronto, CUPE pension trustees heard about another recent successful pension fight from Carolyn Widener, chair of the California State Teachers Retirement System (CalSTRS). In January 2005, when Republican Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger tried to pass legislation to reform the state employee defined benefit pension plan, CalSTRS joined forces with other public unions to take on the Terminator – and won. Widener shared some of the wisdom her group gained from the experience.

“What we learned in California is that we can’t defend just the public plans, if the private plans are going to go under,” she told the group. “We have to ask what is a safe, secure retirement income for everyone. Private employer pension plans in the U.S. are in freefall. Defined contribution plans are not working. Americans have said quite clearly to President Bush that they don’t want to privatize social security. Now we need to reach across the lines and public and private trustees need to start talking to each other.”

As Ribero admitted at the start of this article, many young workers lack awareness about their pension fund and how it will affect them. When you’re 22, retirement can seem like a distant, foggy shore. Some young people may even resent having to contribute to a pension fund, especially if money is tight. But CUPE members who are on retirement’s doorstep know that a little education and foresight can go a long way toward ensuring a better, more secure future for all.

“When I started to pay into the pension plan, I was a single mom with three kids and boy, did I feel it,” says Maria Wahl. “I would say, ‘I can’t afford this’. But you can afford it. I know it’s hard. Like I say, I looked at those deductions on my cheque and thought, ‘I need that money for my kids’. But now I’m 52, and I’m going to have a decent pension. I am forever grateful that I did not have a choice to opt out of the pension.”



CalSTRS Chair  
Carolyn Widener

Credit: CalSTRS



# **Winnipeg 2005:** ***We came, we froze, we conquered!***

**F**rom debates on the convention floor to braving rallies in the howling wind and snow, CUPE members made their mark at their union's 22<sup>nd</sup> biennial national convention.

Nearly 1,700 delegates from across Canada drew up strategies to protect public services and demonstrated their resolve against privatization. They welcomed Manitoba Premier Gary Doer and federal

NDP leader Jack Layton,

both of whom described what better governments can do for working people – and vice-versa.

They listened to inspiring speeches by labour activists

from the U.S., South America, the Philippines and South Africa. An amazing variety of singers and musicians brought people to their feet throughout the week. Even snow squalls on Communities Day, Oct. 5, couldn't keep members at bay.



National President Paul Moist, a native Winnipegger, and National Secretary-Treasurer Claude Généreux were both re-elected to two-year terms, as were many other members of the National Executive Board. For the first time, CUPE's national committees presented their reports to the full convention floor, giving delegates the opportunity to ask their questions and make their comments directly.

Delegates also passionately tackled heady internal issues such as the presence of women in union leadership positions. While a constitutional amendment to create five temporary seats for women on the NEB was voted down, delegates did decide to establish a major task force to get to the roots of the barriers to women's full participation in Canada's largest union. They also voted overwhelmingly to support the National Anti-Poverty Organization's campaign for a living wage.

All this and more transpired over a hectic week of wall-to-wall committee and sectoral meetings, caucuses, plenaries and social activities.



## **Doer praises CUPE for leading social change**

Manitoba Premier Gary Doer applauded CUPE for taking a leadership role on social issues.

"CUPE is making a difference on improving public services for Canadians," he said, recognizing the union's push for a national child care program and its fight against privatization.

Doer called on the federal government to follow his government's example by establishing a national workplace safety program and funding access to low-cost prescription drugs.



## Neither sleet, nor snow, nor P3s...



said, as delegates gathered with flags, whistles and signs outside the Winnipeg Convention Centre.

Moist also called on the federal government to renew its commitment to health care and education, calling the state of Canada's child care and post-secondary education "deplorable" and identifying them as areas where changes are most needed.

He also expressed concern over the declining availability of manufacturing jobs and said he's worried about the grave harm economic crises like mad-cow disease and the softwood lumber dispute are doing to smaller communities.

Hundreds of members braved an early blast from old man winter to attend CUPE's Communities Day rally on Oct. 5, voicing their support for public services and their commitment to fight poverty and injustice.

National President Paul Moist told the shivering but enthusiastic crowd that public-sector employment is integral to building healthy communities and that governments have a responsibility to keep public services strong.

"The services we provide define Canada and the work we do is worth defending," Moist



## Layton: stem privatization tide

The federal New Democrats plan to introduce legislation making a non-profit health care system the law of the land, leader Jack Layton told delegates.

"We must stem the tide of privatization," Layton said. He called the recent Supreme Court Chaoulli decision "the most grave threat to medicare we have faced. If Paul Martin won't step up to the plate, we will."

Noting that health care is not the only sector where "multinationals have their eyes on the cash flow," Layton said that, after SARS, forest fires and other recent disasters, Canadians have a new appreciation of what it means to be a public servant.

"Public service is what you do in our communities," he said. "And the people who work in public service deserve better than what the Liberals have delivered. You have been attacked, downsized and privatized."



## Linda Rae Murray: unions are for the common good

“A weakened public infrastructure is like a house with termites,” Dr. Linda Rae Murray told delegates. “It may look good on the outside, but inside, everything is crumbling.”

The medical officer and workplace health and safety expert from Chicago delivered an impassioned keynote speech on how democratic, militant trade unions have the power to hold governments accountable.

Without unions, people don't learn to band together for change, Murray said. “No major progress has occurred without the active involvement of the trade union movement.”

Public sector workers have a special role and responsibility, she noted.

“Our job,” Murray said, “is to make our neighbours and friends understand that they are a lot better off standing next to us than alone. It is in democratic trade unions that we learn how to organize, to win and, sometimes, how to lose, regroup and come back again. The essence of trade unions stands in opposition to insane individualism. We are the best weapons that human beings have.”

# Convention raises \$1



## North Bay activist wins first National Literacy Award

Keith Allen, a North Bay municipal worker and member of CUPE 122, was presented with the first CUPE National Literacy Award.

“I am very proud to receive this award,” Allen said. “It is very important that we promote literacy in the workplace and in the community.”

Allen has worked for the City of North Bay for 24 years as a

labourer, truck driver and heavy equipment operator. He has been instrumental in making clear language matter to his employer, his supervisors and co-workers. He is also chair of the Literacy in the Workplace committee.

The National Literacy Award recognizes members or groups who have championed workplace literacy and clear language.



# 80,000 for strikes

Delegates and locals raised more than \$89,000 for striking workers across Canada. National Secretary-Treasurer Claude Généreux pledged that CUPE National would match the contributions, bringing the total to \$180,000.

## Jordan wins Grace Hartman Award

Former National Executive Board member Colleen Jordan was recognized with the 2005 Grace Hartman Award.

The honour was created at the 1999 convention to celebrate the leadership role of CUPE's first woman president.

Jordan, who recently retired as CUPE BC's secretary-treasurer, was chosen among five other women candidates for her life-long activism as a social justice advocate, especially on behalf of women.

The former president of CUPE 379 (Burnaby schools) is now a Burnaby city councillor.



## Women's NEB seats resolution defeated

After passionate but respectful debate on how to increase the proportion of women leaders in CUPE, resolution C-27 failed to reach the required two-thirds majority.

The resolution – a constitutional amendment calling for five new female VPs on the National Executive Board – dominated convention debate. Female leadership at the national level is at its lowest level in decades. Discussion hinged on the barriers women face in running for and getting elected to top leadership positions.

Following the vote, a motion to refer the resolution back to committee was approved.

In the meantime, CUPE is moving forward with developing a framework for a Women's Task Force, as adopted at convention through the amended Resolution 106.

Paul Moist and Claude Généreux met with the national women's committee in early December to discuss the task force and gather input. National women's caucus members, all women on national committees and working groups, women divisional leaders and all women members of CUPE staff unions, as well as interested men, were also invited to provide feedback on such questions as task force size, ensuring regional input, educating membership, and other issues.





**"As someone one lock up a movem**  
**– B.C. regional V.P. Mark H**

## CUPE Communications Awards

The CUPE Communications Awards for websites and newsletters recognize locals of all sizes who work hard – and smart – to reach their members. Twelve awards and four honourable mentions were handed out. Winners received a certificate and writing and editing guides in English or French. Go to [www.cupe.ca](http://www.cupe.ca) for a complete list of winners.



## Blogging trend takes off at CUPE convention

At least two delegates set up online journals, weblogs or “blogs” to record and share their personal experiences and observations at national convention.

Blogging is an online phenomenon that has millions of internet users turning themselves into publishers and authors at the push of a button. Bloggers write about their moods, their lives, their politics, and in this case, their conventions.

As a sample, here’s an excerpt from one blog:

*Personal observations: the polite, respectful way that Paul Moist runs the convention. The patience exhibited by him and the delegates. The other side of the convention: a small info hall, with CUPE booths, and a chance to network with other delegates. The weather... I need say no more.*





**e said, you can lock up an activist but you can't  
ent. So bring it on, Gordon Campbell!"**

ancock at the mike about the B.C. teacher's strike.



## Fighting for global justice

Delegates learned the true meaning of 'global justice' when two dynamic and inspiring international speakers shared their stories.

South African activist Xolile Nxu and Josua Mata, from the Alliance of Progressive Unions in the Philippines, were participating in the Global Justice Forum.

Nxu explained how his country has moved increasingly toward privatization since their first free elections in 1994.

"They said that would increase community participation to decrease poverty, but it is not true," said the vice-president of the South African Municipal Workers' Union.

Nxu said South Africa is still deeply divided along racial, class and gender lines and that privatization is exploiting existing inequalities. He also told delegates that unions need to reach beyond their members.

"We think we need to fight privatization on our own. But we have been successful when we have gone into the communities, to the people in the cities, and got them to join in our fight."

Mata described how his country has been ravaged by globalization and corruption. He also spoke about a massive popular movement to replace the current government, whose policies have led to soaring unemployment and backlash against the working class.

"We are used to overthrowing leaders like Ferdinand Marcos, and we found it so much fun that we're ready to oust this one," he said.

Mata said Filipinos need to learn from their errors. But they also need support from organizations like CUPE.

"We need people not to live comfortable lives at the expense of workers in the third world," he said. "If we want to change the world, we need to change this capitalist system that exists solely by exploiting the working class."

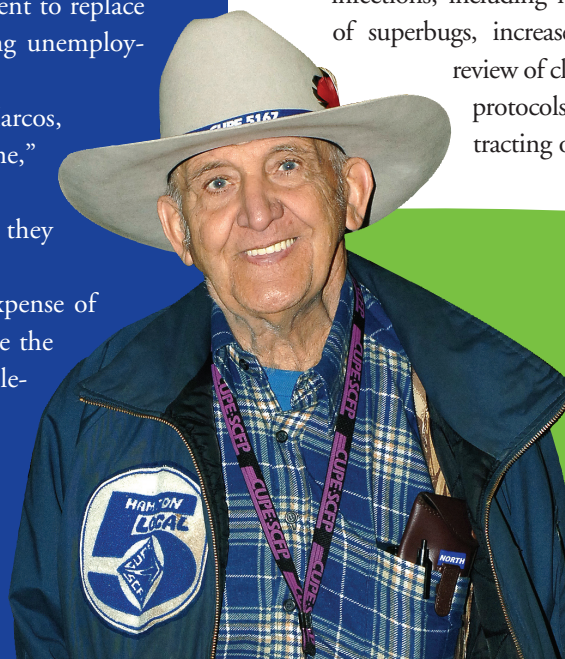
## Health care workers call for ambitious anti-privatization strategy

Despite the efforts of CUPE's 150,000 health care workers to highlight the risks associated with for-profit health care, medicare is under increasing threat. That was the consensus of delegates attending the convention's health care sector meeting.

Delegates identified three key forces threatening medicare: a well-organized and well-funded lobby pushing for-profit health care, the recent Chaoulli court decision in Quebec, and provincial governments determined to dismantle our public system.

In response, the national health care issues committee introduced an ambitious two-year plan to fight health care privatization and strengthen health care workers' collective bargaining power. The committee's proposed national strategy includes:

- Campaigns for minimum standards in long-term and community home care;
- Working with other unions to demand more federal funding for health care and to create a pharmacare program;
- Participating in legal actions to defeat new threats to public health care;
- Supporting media and PR campaigns to defend medicare;
- Support for action on hospital-acquired infections, including mandatory reporting of superbugs, increased cleaning staff, a review of cleaning and infection protocols, and a ban on contracting out cleaning.





**“We were the richest kids in Winnipeg...  
in ways much more important than money.”**

– Paul Moist, elected for a second term as National President,  
with his parents, Lloyd and Mae Moist.



## **Don Postar wins Health and Safety Award**

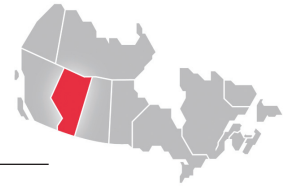


Don Postar of CUPE 5555, a school board worker from Kawartha, Ont., received the sixth National Health and Safety Award.

Postar, the unanimous choice of the award committee, has worked tirelessly to raise awareness of health and safety risks and issues in his workplace. In his acceptance speech, he said he wanted to share the honour with the other seven nominees because it's teamwork that succeeds.

“Health and safety has to be put back on the front burner,” he said, “because it's a human right. My family needs me to come back home every night, and yours need you.”





## Edmonton sends EPCOR plan down the drain

The effort to privatize water systems in the western provinces received a huge blow in September after Edmonton City Council voted against a proposal to transfer sewer and drainage assets to EPCOR.

EPCOR, a power and water utility owned by the City of Edmonton, has been leading the charge to privatize municipal water systems across western Canada. In 1996, Edmonton gave EPCOR control of its municipal water system, but drainage and sewer systems remained a city department.

CUPE 30 president Alex Grimaldi explained that EPCOR needed to control both branches in order to make a credible case in favour of running the water systems of other cities and towns.

“It’s been embarrassing for EPCOR to approach Red Deer or Nanaimo and say ‘privatize your water utilities,’ only to have their opponents point to the fact that EPCOR’s shareholder won’t do the same,” said Grimaldi.

CUPE 30 members, particularly those working in drainage, fought a vigorous campaign against the proposed transfer. Grimaldi said that even though Edmonton owns EPCOR, a transfer would be the same as privatization, as far as the community was concerned.

“EPCOR has an exclusive mandate to generate profit,” said Grimaldi. “And even though drainage makes a few bucks, it is first and foremost a public service.”

“Public services don’t always make money, but they are still valuable,” said Grimaldi. “Putting drainage in EPCOR would have been a recipe for higher fees and a lower level of service.”

When city council held public hearings on the issue, all but one of the 32



*CUPE 30 president Alex Grimaldi spoke out against privatization at an Edmonton city council meeting.*

speakers were against the move. Groups as diverse as developers’ organizations, engineers, community activists, environmentalists, planners, and former politicians all showed up to urge the city to retain the status quo.

A key point made by many of the presenters at City Hall was the inaccessibility of EPCOR as compared to city departments.

“If a citizen has a problem with drainage, they can call their councillor who can immediately get on the phone with a manager in drainage, address the problem and get right back to the constituent,” said Grimaldi. “But with EPCOR, the councillor has no such right.”

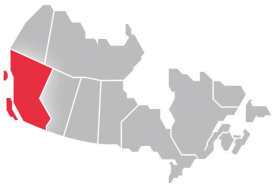
Grimaldi noted that while most city issues were dealt with in open council meetings, all relations between EPCOR and the city are done in private, without public accountability.

In the end, a narrow vote by council – 7 to 6 – killed the issue. However, a visibly upset Mayor Stephen Mandel began working on a reversal almost immediately.

“Council put the public interest first,” said Grimaldi. “Edmonton has no business giving up control of 45 per cent of its assets just so EPCOR can privatize more water systems across Canada.”

“[EPCOR CEO] Lowry told the media they’ll be back, and I don’t doubt they will,” added Grimaldi. “But CUPE will be back too. In fact, we don’t intend to leave.”

■ Lou Arab



## Ten days that rattled B.C.

October's 10-day wildcat strike by British Columbia's 38,000 teachers became a cause célèbre for unionized education workers in B.C. and across Canada.

Ordered by government legislation to accept a non-negotiated contract, teachers walked off the job on Monday, Oct. 7. Almost immediately, 25,000 CUPE support staff joined the civil disobedience movement in solidarity.



*Unions and the public held a massive pro-teacher rally in Victoria, B.C.*

At the recent CUPE national convention in Winnipeg, delegates pledged their support for both CUPE members and teachers in their fight against the regressive legislation. With broad support from all of CUPE, teachers maintained their position in support of issues such as class size and special needs as well as their right to free collective bargaining.

From Oct. 17-21, despite intense government and media criticism, CUPE members from all sectors began a region-by-region roll out of massive support for the democratic right to free collective bargaining and for quality education. Workers from other unions joined the protests. Between 15,000 and 20,000 active and retired workers as well as students and parents participated in a massive rally at the B.C. legislature. Many other communities saw some of their largest protest rallies in years.

In the end, B.C.'s teachers, supported by CUPE members on and off the lines, were successful in pushing back the heavy handed approach of an anti-union provincial government. It was a big step forward for all working people.

■ Louise Leclair

## Protecting public water in B.C.



Public water advocates celebrated a significant victory this past summer in Nanaimo, B.C. A well-organized community campaign supported by CUPE BC convinced the Regional District of Nanaimo board to cancel negotiations aimed at handing over operation of the area's water systems

to EPCOR, a private corporation.

The Nanaimo victory follows other CUPE successes, including stopping the Greater Vancouver Regional District from putting a public-private partnership in place for the huge new Seymour water filtration plant. Anti-privatization battles have also taken place in Kamloops, Ladysmith and Vernon.

"These campaigns have given us experience to fight back successfully when it comes to protecting our water and wastewater," said CUPE BC president Barry O'Neill, speaking at the Western Canadian Municipal Employees Conference in September. But that's not where it ends. Now we need to expose those privateers who would have our water privatized, and insist that public services stay just that – public."

CUPE BC is stepping up the fight against water management with a renewed Water Watch campaign. Water Watch coalitions with community partners have been organized throughout the province to fight attempts to privatize water and wastewater management.

On Vancouver Island, an Island Water Watch campaign was established in the lead-up to the Nov. 19 municipal elections. Because many Island communities are facing the same pressures felt by Nanaimo, CUPE hired a Water Watch campaign coordinator for the Island and worked with local, provincial and national organizations to raise awareness and encourage activists.

The long-term goal is that Water Watch coalitions will be ready to respond whenever private companies approach local governments with empty promises of savings and better management.

■ Roseanne Moran



## Walking the virtual picket line in Regina

Earlier this year, three bargaining units – CUPE 21, CUPE 7 and transit workers represented by the Amalgamated Transit Union – formed the Regina Civic Coalition, standing together for the first time to demand a reasonable wage increase. When negotiations stalled and the 1,800 workers walked off the job Aug. 31, they broke new ground again with an innovative website.

Working with CUPE communications staff, the coalition built and maintained an extensive website that explained the issues and helped the two unions strengthen their picket lines.

The site was updated daily and featured news, letters of support or criticism from across the country, a “who’s hot/who’s not” list and stories written by members about their experiences on the picket line. The most popular section was the photo gallery.

“With members from three bargaining units who didn’t know each other, it really gave us an opportunity to put names to faces,” said Eva McKaeff, president of CUPE 7, Regina inside workers.

The coalition highlighted the site address in newspaper and radio ads and in a leaflet delivered to more than 80,000 Regina homes.

Although the employees went back to work Sept. 26, the site is still being used to thank supporters and share post-strike information.

Visit [www.reginaciviccoalition.ca](http://www.reginaciviccoalition.ca) or go to <http://cupe.ca/www/webhosting/> to find out how your local can set up its own website.

■ Ian Clysdale

## Winnipeg trash services getting messy



In September, BFI Canada Inc. was awarded a contract to collect garbage from 5,270 autobins and 65,000 homes in the south end of Winnipeg starting March 2006. But even before the contract begins, costs are already higher than what the city had anticipated.

The 11 per cent increase in costs comes from rising fuel prices and a hike in the amount of garbage thrown out by homeowners in the past few years. BFI’s winning bid is based on 1998 garbage volume figures.

CUPE 500, representing Winnipeg’s municipal workers, has warned the city that the 11 per cent increase in the

south end, combined with a recent 24 per cent increase in privatized waste collection costs elsewhere in the city, will put a crush on public funds.

The city voted to privatize trash collection in July, despite a valiant campaign by CUPE 500 to keep the service public. At the time, Winnipeg Mayor Sam Katz announced the city would save \$34.57 per household a year. However, councillor Jenny Gerbasi has said the quoted savings are inflated because they don’t take into account the efficiencies city workers were willing to offer nor the increase in costs.

■ Barry Doyle

## Back to class at the School of the 3Ps

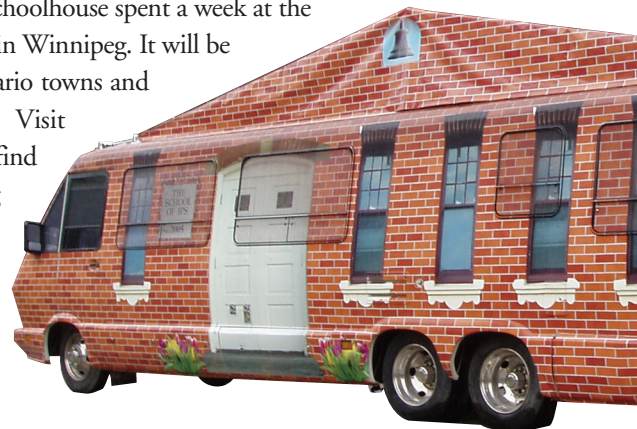


A motor home designed as a red brick schoolhouse has been touring Ontario to teach people about the destructive ways of public private partnerships. CUPE Ontario launched the “School of the 3Ps” campaign in late September at Queen’s Park in Toronto. It will travel around Ontario until the next provincial election in 2007.

Inside the motor home are displays with information about different forms of privatization, the high costs to taxpayers and their eroding effects on public services and workers. Visitors can also send a message to their MPP about their privatization concerns. Natalie Mehra’s *Flawed, Failed, Abandoned* report on 100 Canadian and international P3s is also featured prominently.

In October, the mobile schoolhouse spent a week at the CUPE national convention in Winnipeg. It will be appearing in dozens of Ontario towns and cities over the next year. Visit [www.cupe.ca/events.php](http://www.cupe.ca/events.php) to find out when it will be coming to your town.

■ Barry Doyle





## New course on women's health and safety

In October, some 20 members of CUPE Quebec attended the launch of a new health and safety course on the special needs of women in the workplace.

Jeanne Cazabon, a CUPE education officer, points out that there are special issues surrounding the nature of work performed by women.

"Women's injuries may not always be dramatic, but they're just as real," she says. As an example, she cites repetitive strain injuries, the source of many health problems for secretaries, clerks, cashiers and lab technicians, most of whom are women.

The new course is not restricted to women, and there were a few men attending the first session.

The course has three objectives:

- Through the workers' experiences, explore various aspects of work performed by women so they can improve their working conditions;
- Through discussion and information, deepen participants' understanding of women's health and safety issues; and
- Through role-playing, encourage active involvement in the union and inspire participants to take charge of their health and safety in the workplace.

Cazabon notes that the content – which was designed by the educational service of the Quebec Federation of Labour (Fédération des travailleuses et des travailleurs du Québec) – has already received a very positive response from our members. Starting in January 2006, the course will be offered at CUPE locals throughout Quebec.

■ **Robert Bellerose**

## Laughter therapy is serious business



*CUPE 1252 member Thérèse Michaud spreads joy as her alter ego, Mary Sunshine.*

Three soft knocks and Mary Sunshine sticks her nose through the door of the hospital room with her loveliest smile.

"Can I sing you a little song?" She asks impishly.

Mary Sunshine is Thérèse Michaud, a member of CUPE 1252 and a registered nurse practitioner who has worked for 18 years in the regional hospital at Campbellton, N.B. She is also a volunteer clown in the hospital's laughter therapy program.

"The hospital put an ad in the employees' newsletter," explains Michaud. "The volunteer service was looking for people interested in participating in a laughter therapy program. They wanted people who were natural clowns so I jumped at the opportunity."

Michaud says she loves making people laugh. "I get it from my father. If he saw that someone was sad, he would always try to make them laugh."

For a clown, she takes her job pretty seriously. "I took a week-long class at clown school. I studied improvisation, make-up and animation."

The laughter therapy program is inspired by the "Patch Adams" character developed by an American doctor to help his patients incorporate laughter, joy and creativity into the healing process. Therapeutic clown programs have been gradually making their appearance in New Brunswick hospitals.

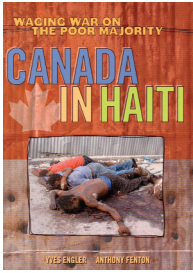
For the past year, Michaud has devoted at least four hours a month to laughter therapy. She sees patients in the geriatric department and the war veterans unit and also visits nursing homes.

"My goal is to make them forget about their illness, even if it's just for a few minutes. Laughter is the best medicine."

For Mary Sunshine, it's also a special way to contribute to her community.

■ **Danielle Savoie**

**Canada in Haiti: Waging war on the poor majority**  
 By Yves Engler and Anthony Fenton,  
 Redbook Press, 2005



Most Canadians are probably not aware of their government's involvement in the February 2004 overthrow of Haiti's government and the coup's bloody aftermath. *Canada In Haiti* fills in the blanks.

The authors admit they want to spur Canadians to "stop a crime that is still being committed," so readers should expect a damning indictment.

Yves Engler and Anthony Fenton are Canadian activists dedicated to social jus-

tice issues. The two men traveled to Haiti to interview community leaders and pored over government documents in Ottawa to present the case that our government's actions are radically different from its rhetoric. They weave together personal stories, interviews, research and analysis of government documents in a straightforward, accessible manner.

Engler and Fenton present compelling evidence that links Canada to a plot with the U.S. and France to get rid of the democratically elected government of Jean-Bertrand Aristide and hundreds of other officials. They charge the Canadian government with complicity in the coup and subsequent human rights meltdown. Among other things, the authors detail how the RCMP and various municipal forces trained Haiti's police, whose gross

human rights violations have been well documented. Canadian foreign minister Pierre Pettigrew has dismissed these charges as propaganda. The authors also report that Canada paid the salary of the interim Haitian deputy minister of justice, whose job it was to oversee the police.

Readers will notice the absence of footnotes and references – presumably a cost and space-saving measure, but a shortcoming nonetheless. The book concludes with a list of resources for further reading and states that footnotes will be posted to [www.canadahaitiaction.ca](http://www.canadahaitiaction.ca), but as of this writing, the information was not there.

Unsparring and unforgettable, *Canada in Haiti* challenges the reader to question Canada's reputation as the world's boy scout.

■ Reviewed by David Robbins

## Another world is possible

From Seattle in 1999 and Quebec City in 2001 to Argentina and Hong Kong today, activists around the world are fighting globalization because they believe in a better world. What's more, we're winning.

In November, I was honoured to lead a CUPE delegation to the People's Summit of the Americas in Mar del Plata, Argentina. This event was organized to oppose the Summit of the Americas, a gathering of business and government leaders looking to business and government leaders looking to sign the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) pact and expand trade across the hemisphere.

However, the leftist governments of Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Venezuela and Bolivia soundly defeated the FTAA by refusing to open their borders to greater exploitation from American multi-nationals. At the same time, labour is proposing development alternatives that will protect public services and make poverty history.



*Claude Généreux and CUPE Ontario President Sid Ryan at the People's Summit of the Americas in Mar del Plata, Argentina*

The People's Summit was truly inspiring. On the same trip, we participated in a Public Services International conference on trade and health care, as well as the Health Care Workers Exchange. The latter was a CUPE initiative to bring together health care unions from all over the

Americas to work toward common goals. As a group, we agreed to increase communication between our unions. We also declared April 7 as an international day of action for health care.

In mid-December, Paul Moist and I led a CUPE delegation to the World Trade Organization negotiations in Hong Kong. Labour representatives from around the world worked with social justice groups toward progressive trade rules that promote equality and justice.

Globalization is threatening public services in Canada and around the world. Our international work is important to our work at home. And our work at home can help make 'another world' possible.

In solidarity,

Claude Généreux  
 National Secretary-Treasurer

A close-up portrait of a woman with long, wavy brown hair and bangs. She is smiling warmly at the camera. She is holding a white pencil in her right hand, which is resting near her chin. She is wearing a dark blue collared shirt. The background is a solid green color. A semi-transparent grey and blue graphic element is overlaid on the bottom left of the image.

*My work keeps  
my community strong*

*Jod-Dee Dagneau, CUPE school board worker  
Canadian Union of Public Employees • cupe.ca*

**Rebuilding  
Strong  
Communities**