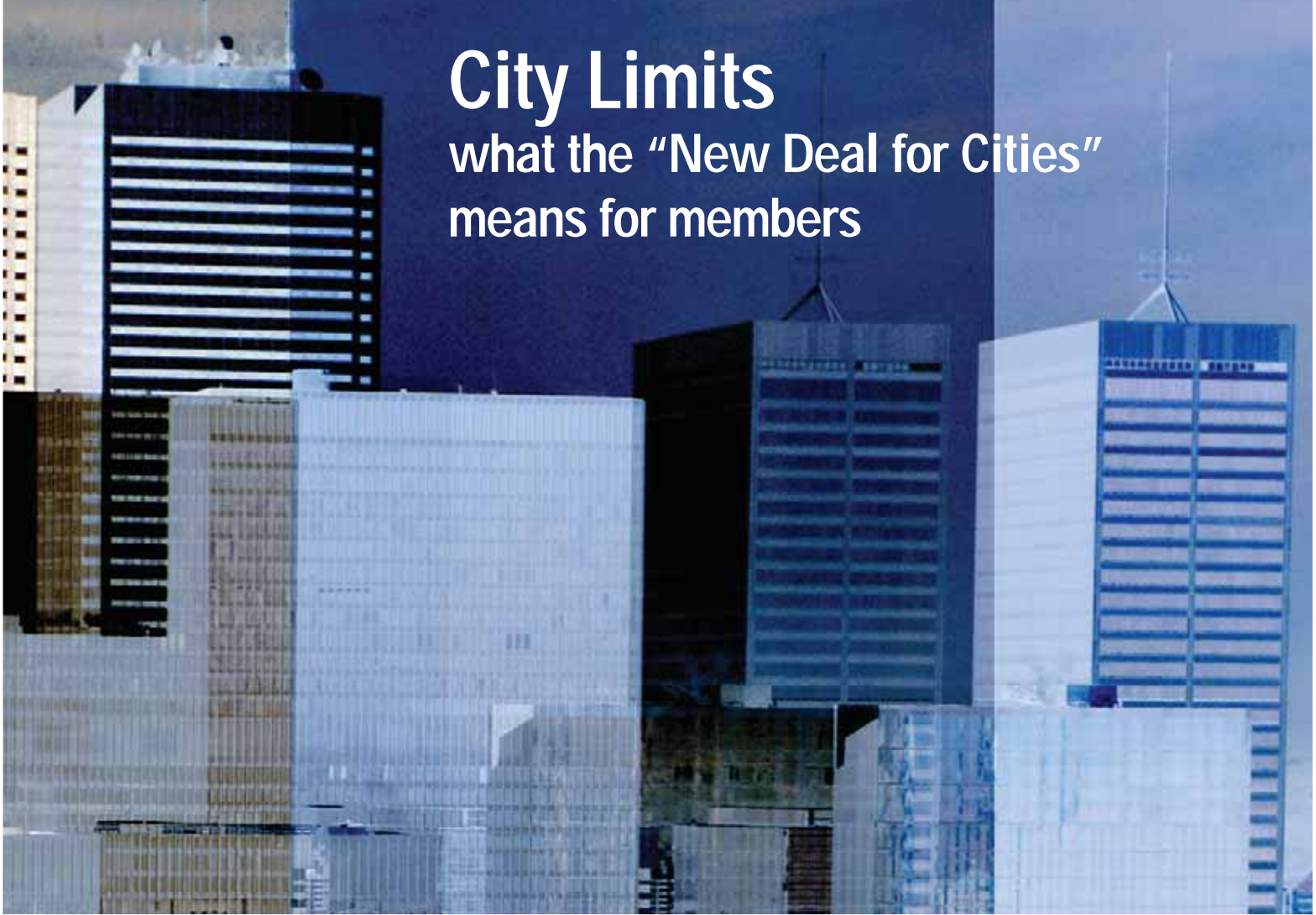


ORGANIZE

City Limits what the "New Deal for Cities" means for members





*My work keeps
my community strong*

Mary Waddell, CUPE library worker
Canadian Union of Public Employees • cupe.ca

**Rebuilding
Strong
Communities**

Meeting our employers

We need to be where they are with our ideas



Paul Moist at a Bell Canada pay equity rally in Montreal, June 2005

Usually, when we meet with our employers, it's during a crisis. We might be on a picket line or locked out. We may be across the table at bargaining. We may face them in arbitrations or even in court.

These are highly charged situations that don't allow for a meeting of minds on a common concern. Sometimes, these confrontations are unavoidable. At CUPE, we

don't back down and we will continue to fight unfair employers and those bent on privatizing. But we also want open dialogues with our employers where an exchange of ideas is helpful and healthy.

Since our last issue of *Organize*, I've been meeting your employers. I have exchanged views with mayors, councillors and city managers, health care administrators and chief librarians, among others. I have talked to them about issues that could affect our workplaces. I have given our views on decisions they might make, backed by a well-researched rationale for adopting our Rebuilding Strong Communities approach.

I have also met them at major gatherings, like the annual conference of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) in St. John's, Nfld., in June. About 1,800 delegates from across Canada attended, giving our top national leaders a chance to engage them in discussions on everything from public private partner-

ships to the federal government's "New Deal for Cities and Communities."

More than 500 of them visited our Strong Communities booth at the FCM trade show. We gave them literature on how to build strong communities, told them about co-operative initiatives like Water Watch and City Watch, and compared notes on workplace education.

Following that meeting, CUPE National helped some of our library locals when they met their employers at the annual conference of the Canadian Library Association (CLA) in Calgary. It was a first for CUPE in this sector.

Again, we were talking to your employers in a friendly forum about your issues. We need to do more of it ... and we will as part of our continuing Strong Communities initiatives.

Paul Moist

Paul Moist
National President



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ORGANIZE

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CUPE Communications
21 Florence St.
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Visit CUPE's website at www.cupe.ca
or contact us at cupemail@cupe.ca

Communications Director: Ron Verzuh
Editor: Natasha Gauthier
Graphic Design: Julie Turmel

Communications Staff: Lou Arab, Robert Bellerose, Alexandre Boulterice, James Chai, Ian Clysdale, Pat Daley, David-James Fernandes, Karin Jordan, Dan Gawthrop, Diane Kalen, Robert Lamoureux, Chris Lawson, Louise Leclair, Dennis Lewycky, Catherine Louli, John McCracken, Shannon McManus, Doreen Meyer, David Robbins, Danielle Savoie, Beth Smillie, and Stella Yeadon.

Editorial Assistant: Marjorie Savoie



Canadian Union of Public Employees

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CUPE National Convention 2005

October 3-7
Winnipeg Convention Centre
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Don't miss out! Visit www.cupe.ca for full program, updates and registration information. See you in Winnipeg!

FRONTLINE

CUPE wins big at CAMA awards

CUPE locals across Canada are committed to improving and enriching their members' lives through literacy, education and learning opportunities. Now, this dedication is getting national attention and praise.

At this year's annual gathering of the Canadian Association of Municipal Administrators (CAMA), CUPE 759 (Cape Breton Regional Municipality outside workers) captured a national award in the category of "Development of effective and successful partnerships" for its workplace education program. Developed with support from the Cape Breton Regional Municipality and the Nova Scotia Department of Education, the program helps workers obtain their General Educational Development (GED) certification (high school diploma equivalency) as well as a certificate in basic computer skills.

"What makes us really proud is to see the added confidence our members have in their everyday lives as a result of workplace education," says Mike Mombourquette, CUPE 759's vice-president. "That's what gives us all the drive to continue these programs. I know exactly how these members feel because I was also a graduate of a GED course put on by the union and our employer back in 1997."

Dayna Paltridge, a member of CUPE 500 also picked up a national award at CAMA. She received the Learner Achievement Award, which recognizes individuals who have shown a strong commitment to literacy and lifelong learning. Paltridge, who suffers from poor eyesight and dyslexia, dropped out of high school, but later put herself through a GED program at a local community college.

Through CUPE's essential skills program, she has taken courses in computer training, foremanship and skills building. Her employer also provided funding for her to complete an arborist certification course, which has opened up new job opportunities.

"I usually don't take compliments very well," says the Winnipeg outside worker. "I don't think I'm anything special. But this is one time where I can say I feel proud of what I've done."

Paltridge is eager to sign up for more courses in everything from journal keep-



From L. to R.: Mike Mombourquette, CUPE 759 VP; John Evans, chief shop steward; Gloria Charsley, Atlantic union development representative; Ross Grimes, Atlantic regional director; Jacquie Bramwell, CUPE national representative. CAMA held its annual conference and awards ceremony in St. John's, Nfld., this year.

ing to conflict resolution. She also plans to volunteer as a peer literacy tutor. "It's amazing how many people in Winnipeg can't read," she says. "I don't take reading for granted. It's a gift I want to pass on to others. If you can read, you can do anything."

■ John McCracken

Making poverty history



This past June, thousands of people traveled to Barrie, Ont., for the massive "Live 8" concert, part of Canada's participation in the Make Poverty History campaign. One week later, many concerned Canadians were among the protesters at the G8 Summit in Gleneagles, Scotland, pressuring the leaders of the world's wealthiest countries for more concrete action against poverty.

Every day, poverty kills an estimated 50,000 people worldwide, including 30,000 children. Make Poverty History challenges the Canadian government and other G8 nations to provide more and better aid to developing countries, make trade fair and cancel the debt of the poorest countries. The campaign is supported by a

wide cross-section of charities, trade unions—including CUPE—faith groups, students, academics and artistic and sports celebrities. It is part of the Global Call to Action Against Poverty, a 70-country international campaign.

Apart from the Barrie Live 8 concert, the Canadian campaign features white Make Poverty History wristbands, a celebrity video and ad campaign, and vigorous lobbying of Prime Minister Paul Martin, Finance Minister Ralph Goodale and other MPs through e-mail, letters and phone calls.

Although he has promised to double Canada's aid to Africa by 2008, Martin has refused to commit to raising foreign aid spending to 0.7 per cent of gross domestic product by 2015. U2 frontman and anti-poverty activist Bono expressed his disappointment with Martin and has urged Canadians to call and write the Prime Minister to demand he meet the 0.7 per cent goal.

Go to www.makepovertyhistory.ca or www.oxfam.ca to find out how you can help fight poverty.

Opening the door to the World Wide Web

CUPE education and communication staff are offering locals a two-day course on how to use CUPE's free local website hosting service.

The union started providing member locals with free website hosting in 2003. In addition to providing an online how-to manual and telephone support, CUPE is also organizing two-day courses on using this tool.

"If locals provide their own content, the course can take them from having nothing to having a basic website in two days," says Chris Lawson, a Web expert at CUPE National and one of the course instructors. "Practically anyone can do it. If you know how to use a mouse and can type with at least two fingers, you're in."

CUPE has given three courses in the last year: in Winnipeg, St. Catharines, Ont., and Summerside, P.E.I.

Between six and 12 participants are needed to hold a course. Locals are also responsible for finding an appropriate venue in their area.

"Because it's a hands-on computer course, we need a lab with one Internet-connected computer for each participant," says Lawson. "Community colleges, school boards and even some employers have computer training labs that can be rented inexpensively."

Locals interested in having the course come to their area can contact their regional education representative.

Visit <http://cupe.ca/www/webhosting> for more information.

CLC delegates acclaim CUPE member for second term



Marie Clarke Walker, a Toronto school board worker (CUPE 4400), was acclaimed executive vice-president of the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) for a second three-year term at the CLC's 24th constitutional convention, held in Montreal June 13-17.

CLC president Ken Georgetti faced a challenge from Carol Wall, a Communications, Energy and Paperworkers union member who won more than a third of the vote.

CUPE delegates went to the floor microphones on dozens of resolutions on better health care, child care and municipal infrastructure. About 250

CUPE delegates joined debates and passed policy papers on public private partnerships, workplace training and lifelong learning, and a labour agenda for industrial and economic development. CUPE National President Paul Moist and other CUPE delegates also joined a pay equity rally in support of Bell Canada workers.

The convention adopted an action plan calling for the overturning of the Supreme Court decision in the Chaoulli private health care case; a strategy to help organize Wal-Mart employees; the promotion of a national child care program; the creation of a national post-secondary education and training act; better public pensions; partnership agreements to increase aboriginal representation in the workforce; and support for the "New Deal for Cities and Communities."

■ Ron Verzuh

CUPE communicators win at CALM Awards



The Nov. 2004 issue of *Organize* won for best layout and design

CUPE took home several awards from the Canadian Association of Labour Media (CALM) conference held in Ottawa in June.

CUPE's health services division in B.C., the Hospital Employees' Union (HEU), won best overall publication by staff for *The Guardian*. The November 2004 issue of *Organize* won the graphics award for excellence in layout and design. CUPE National's binder on bargaining equality won the Breaking Barriers award for a communications initiative that enhances member participation and access and overcomes discrimination.

Doug Smith's article "We need each other in Canada," published in CUPE National's *Rebuilding Strong Communities* magazine, won the Ed Finn Award for best feature. CUPE 79's *News and Views* won for excellence in writing for locals with 1,000 or more members.

The best moving billboard went to CUPE BC's "Public Education Builds Strong Communities" campaign materials. The best print ad award went to HEU's "Not Wanted," while the best radio ad went to CUPE BC for "Confessions of a Translink director." Best illustrations were "The Custodian" commissioned for CUPE 3570 (drawn by Ted Dave and Deb Rooney) and CUPE 2950's "Bewildered" (created by volunteers).

■ Doreen Meyer



Organizing through diversity

In May, workers of colour and other equity-seeking groups met for a three-day workshop in Toronto to discuss strategies and approaches for strengthening CUPE's diversity and membership.

The working sessions trained participants in legal matters, communications and education, providing them with the tools they will need as member-organizers in future campaigns.

"This is an important endeavour for CUPE as we strive to make sure our union reflects the full diversity of Canada's communities," said Dharam Boodhoo, national diversity vice-president. "Equity is not just about reaching out. It's about reflecting the values, issues and workplace challenges of all our communities."

■ Robert Lamoureux

Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives turns 25

One of Canada's leading progressive think tanks is celebrating its silver anniversary.

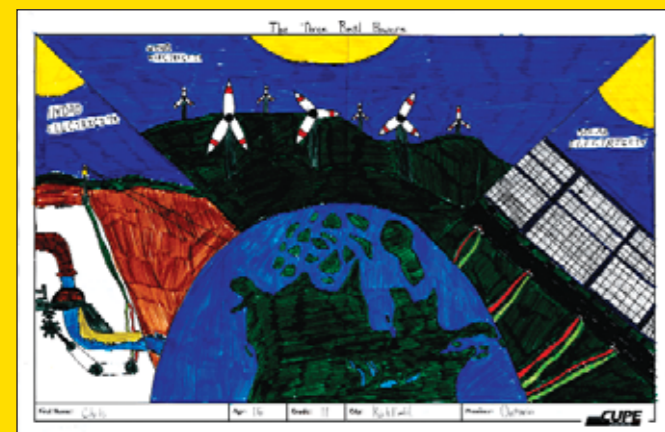
The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) is an independent, non-partisan research institute concerned with issues of social and economic justice. The CCPA offers analysis and policy ideas to the media, general public, social justice and labour organizations, academia and government. Its information is produced by an alliance of left-leaning academics and researchers working to provide a much-needed counterpoint to the conservative, business-friendly views.

Founded in 1980, the CCPA has grown from a three-person shop plagued

by deficits and structural uncertainty to a respected national voice with a well-staffed national secretariat in Ottawa, regional offices in British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario and Nova Scotia, and an annual budget of more than \$3 million.

Representatives from CUPE National recently attended the institute's gala birthday bash in Ottawa. Held at the National Arts Centre, the evening was emceed by CCPA president Larry Brown and featured guest speaker Avi Lewis, the well-known Canadian documentary filmmaker and broadcaster.

Go to www.policyalternatives.ca to learn more about the CCPA and its research.



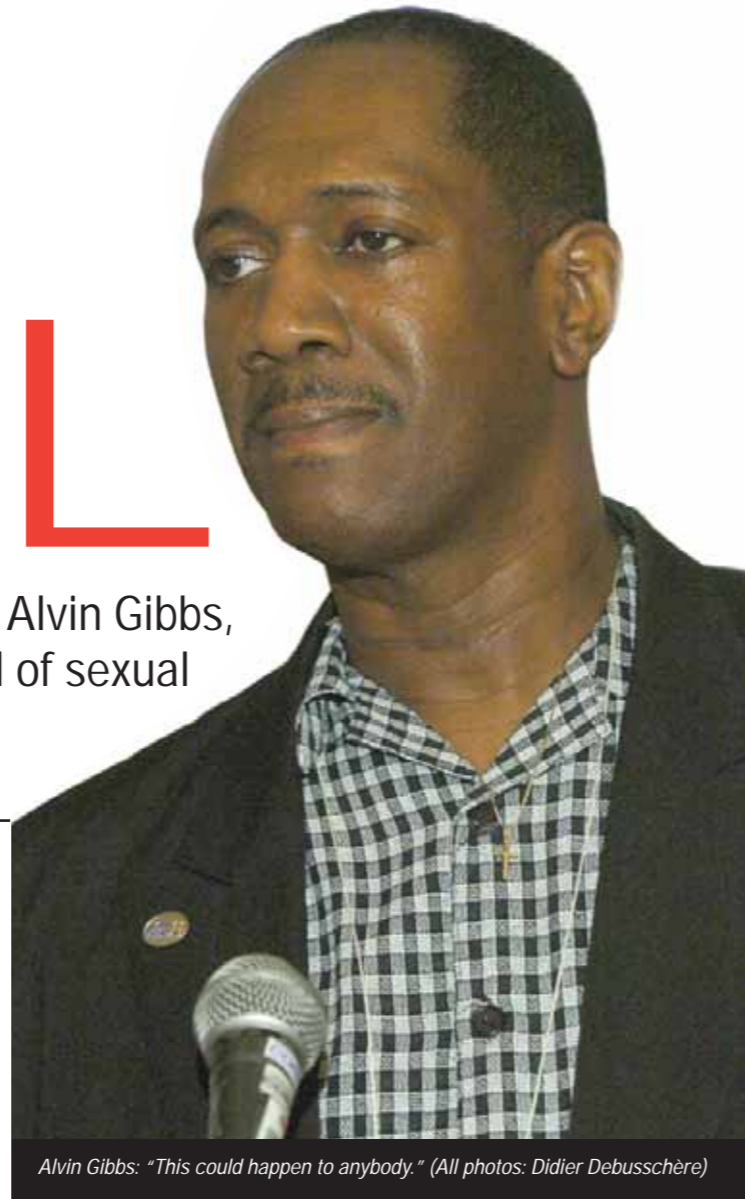
"The three best powers" by 16-year-old Chris from Ontario

Earth Day contest winners

Nine children have won environmentally friendly radios for their creative efforts in CUPE's third annual Earth Day (April 22) poster contest. The winners, aged 6 to 16, come from almost every province. Their posters tackle everything from endangered species to pollution and recycling. The contest is sponsored by CUPE's national environment committee through the work of the Health and Safety branch in Ottawa. Visit www.cupe.ca to view all the winning posters.

Five years in

HELL



Robert Bellerose shares the story of Alvin Gibbs, a Montreal educator falsely accused of sexual assault against minors.

After five years, Alvin Gibbs' nightmare finally seems to be ending. Falsely accused of sexual assault against minors, the educator, a member of CUPE 2718, has been cleared on all counts. Battered and shaken, he is now trying to put his life back together, with the support of family, friends and his union.

"I don't know where I would be today without CUPE," says Gibbs, who works at the Batshaw Youth & Family Centres, a Montreal institution for troubled anglophone children and teenagers. "I would probably be sitting in jail for something I didn't do. That would have killed me."

His story seems to come straight from the pages of a Franz Kafka novel. Accused of sexual assault by some youths at the centre, Gibbs was first suspended from his job in October 2000. Then, in March 2001, Gibbs' employer dismissed him. Batshaw management believed the allegations that he had engaged in sexual acts with teenagers. In September 2001, criminal charges were laid.

But in November 2003, after 23 days of hearings conducted over a two-year period, arbitrator Jean-Marie Lavoie threw out all charges and ordered the immediate reinstatement of the educator. On June 1, 2004, Judge Élisabeth Corté of the Court of Quebec also rejected the five counts of the criminal indictment against Gibbs.

Throughout his legal saga, Gibbs' CUPE sisters and brothers, convinced he was innocent, continued to offer moral, financial and legal support.

Alvin Gibbs: "This could happen to anybody." (All photos: Didier Debusschère)

THE TRUTH SHALL SET YOU FREE

In light of the arbitrator's ruling and the judgment of the court, it was clear that the youths who first accused Gibbs had given false statements to the police. One of the teenagers even admitted that he had pretended to be a victim so he could sue the centre.

"I have always said that the truth would prevail," says Gibbs. "When you know you have nothing to hide, you can put up with a lot. But what really bothers me is that the story dragged on for so long, people who didn't know me had time to get the wrong idea. Especially since I was accused of horrible things. Strangers would call me at home and insult me or just hang up. That was painful."

You would think that Gibbs' ordeal would have ended with the acquittals. But in spite of the judgments, the Batshaw Centre contested the arbitrator's decision ordering the return of the educator to his job. In September 2004, the Superior Court vindicated

Gibbs once again, rejecting the employer's request for a judicial review of the case.

PULLING HIMSELF UP

Deprived of his income for five years, Gibbs has barely been able to make ends meet and preserve his dignity. He even had to give up his house and move in with his sister.

"I went from a full-time salary to welfare, which gave me less than \$500 a month to live on. My colleagues and my local passed the hat around to help me out every month; otherwise I would have been in serious trouble."

After his court victories, Gibbs tried to get back his lost salary. Unfortunately, the arbitrator rejected his claim. Although Gibbs had been exonerated, the employer argued that the court had issued an order forbidding Gibbs to be in the presence of minors until the case was settled. By accepting this argument, the arbitrator deprived Gibbs of three years' salary. He was counting on that money to pay off his accumulated debts, amounting to about \$60,000.

Unfortunately, since Gibbs was a victim of perjury, Quebec's criminal victim compensation program was of no help. Once again, the union took charge.

At the CUPE Quebec division convention in Quebec City in May, individuals and locals contributed nearly \$15,000 to the "Alvin Gibbs Fund." Mario Gervais, president of CUPE Quebec, and Claude Généreux, CUPE's national secretary-treasurer, each pledged to match the total amount donated.

"Just today, I received a cheque from the union that will let me pay off part of my debt," says Gibbs. "I'll finally be able to sleep at night; my sister won't lose her house because of me."

At the end of March 2005, Gibbs returned to work at Batshaw. He started part-time, but should eventually be on the job five days a week. His employer has him working with one of the most difficult groups, the 14- to 17-year-olds.

"It's one of the toughest units," he says. "After I disciplined one of the youths, he wrote graffiti about me on the bathroom wall. It's hard. But I want to prove [to management] that I'm stronger than they think. My union and my colleagues have always believed in me, and I'm going to make it."

To people who think this could never happen to them, Alvin Gibbs offers some advice:

"I also thought I was safe. But this can happen to anybody—white, black, yellow, it doesn't matter. Thank God my union was there for me." ■

Clockwise, from top left : Delegates to the Quebec division convention dug deep to help out their brother. Gibbs standing tall with CUPE 2718 president Yves Paprocki. Gibbs shakes the hand of National President Paul Moist.



Living for the

CITY

Is the New Deal for Cities really a good deal for our communities? **Karin Jordan** and **David Robbins** talk to CUPE municipal workers across Canada to get their view.

Crumbling municipal infrastructure and services had been worrying Kirk Oates for a long time. So when the Edmonton municipal worker heard about the New Deal for Cities and Communities – the federal government's program to transfer money to municipalities for infrastructure renewal – he was inspired to run for municipal office.

"The New Deal is the reason I ran for office," says Oates, a member of CUPE 30 for more than 20 years. "At the [2004] meeting of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), I believed the politicians when they said that money was coming for municipalities."

For Oates, CUPE's Rebuilding Strong Communities campaign is more than a slogan; it was a call to civic action. In October 2004, he ran for a town council seat in nearby Bon Accord – and won.

A year later, the New Deal cheque still seems to be in the mail, and Councillor Oates has gained insight into the pressures municipalities face.

"I see a city worker on the street and see what tools they have in their hand," he says. "And when I'm sitting at council table, I think about how to get them the tools."

Bon Accord is a bedroom community of about 1,600 people north of Edmonton. It's facing growing pains, with councillors juggling the high cost of infrastructure needs with insufficient funds.

The New Deal is supposed to eventually pump billions of dollars back into municipal coffers through things like the Goods and Services Tax (GST) rebate for cities and gas tax transfers (see sidebar). For cash-strapped cities and towns across the country, the money can't come a minute too soon.

"In Edmonton, parks maintenance has been cut back," Oates says. "The roads are not to the same standard as 20 years ago."

David Gould, president of Saint John, N.B.'s outside municipal workers at CUPE 18, also feels the pressure municipalities are under. His city council just made its first permanent hire since 1968. "The city is holding up but, same as other cities, we're looking for the funding," he says.

Bill Guthrie is vice-president of CUPE 416, Toronto's outside workers. Guthrie has been a Toronto municipal worker for over 30 years, and he says he's never seen the roads so bad.

In Montreal, the sorry state of the city's nearly 50-year-old system of freeways has become a running joke. Twice this summer, passing thunderstorms severely flooded sections of the main highways in and out of the city.

These cities, and dozens like them, want relief – and they want it now. But they also know that money alone isn't the solution.

City lights, city fights

"The New Deal is not just about funding cities properly," Toronto Mayor David Miller recently told CUPE members. "It's a fight about Canada, about people, about public servants."

Miller was speaking at a gathering of CUPE municipal locals in Toronto. (This groundbreaking, town-hall style meeting was just the start of a concerted push for a more connected and coordinated municipal sector within the union.)

Miller acknowledges that lifting the GST and getting a share of the gas tax are big wins for cities. "But," he cautioned, "neither is the endpoint of the New Deal. There is much more to do." Miller's wish list includes housing, transit, child care, support for immigrants and environmental initiatives.

Before they can start tackling that list, Miller says cities have to gain more power. "Although cities are much more important today than ever before, that reality is not recognized in Canada's constitution," he told delegates. "The forced amalgamation [Toronto] lived through showed that, by law, cities only exist by provincial will. They are creatures of the provinces. So we want new powers."

To build a stronger community, you also need respect. "It's about city governments being partners with federal and provincial governments," Miller said. "Toronto has the second-largest child care system in the country after Quebec. But when there are talks about a national child care plan, we aren't at the table."

James Knight is chief executive officer of FCM. He also thinks there should be more dialogue between the different levels of government, and he's pleased that the New Deal appears to recognize this.

"It's important to stress that [the New Deal] is about relationships," he says. "And while the financial relationships are really important, our current focus is more on the intergovernmental side."

Oates says he's glad that governments are talking. "But we need to continue the commitment," he says, referring to one concern about the New Deal: it only sets out funding for five years.

The FCM has pegged the overall municipal infrastructure deficit at over \$60 billion. Knight agrees that the five-year span of the New Deal could have been extended, but he has no doubt it's a long-term program.

"They could have done a 10-year or a 15-year program, and probably should have, so municipal governments can plan with certainty," he says. "But I think it would be politically very difficult to reverse it after five years. It would be very destructive of the progress we're achieving if this program fell off the table."

Guthrie doesn't believe the New Deal will instantly fix every problem. "But eventually, over the coming few years, it will be a good deal for Toronto," he says. "It has a better chance of working as long as public accountability is built in and councillors are the ones making the decisions."

WHAT'S IN THE NEW DEAL

According to the federal government, the New Deal for Cities and Communities initiative has four main components: vision, relationships, funding, and a "cities and communities lens."

Vision

All levels of government should work together to meet Canadians' needs.

Relationships

Building new relationships through consultations and dialogues with municipalities, provinces, territories, the private and the not-for-profit sectors.

Funding

Full GST rebate (\$7 billion over the next 10 years); \$1 billion under the Municipal Rural Infrastructure Program (MRIF); \$5 billion in gas tax funding spread over the next five years – to be delivered to municipalities through bilateral agreements with the provinces and territories (the actual amount might increase with the passage of the NDP-influenced budget this summer). The government says the new funding will complement, not replace, existing federal infrastructure programs.

Cities and communities lens

Recognizing that there is no "one-size-fits-all" solution to the challenges facing Canada's cities and communities, the aim of the New Deal is to "look holistically" at all programs to help make them work better at the community level.

Guthrie has cause for concern. Some Toronto councillors have recently proposed that the city strike an executive committee that would make key budget decisions away from the scrutiny of the whole city council. This anti-democratic drift is being actively opposed by a broad-based community coalition, including Toronto municipal workers.

"The biggest problem is if there are strings attached on how the city is going to be governed," says Guthrie. "It's in our interest to be an open city and not have a small committee running things."

Ann Dembinski, president of CUPE 79 representing Toronto's 18,000 inside workers, agrees. She supports Miller's lobbying for an improved New Deal and a better relationship with the province.

"Toronto needs more control over how money is spent," she says. "Our members have seen the impact of downloading and cutbacks, and how services have suffered. It's time to rebuild them."

Strong communities for future generations

When public services are neglected or privatized, the whole community loses – starting with youth. In St. John's, Nfld., Greg Baker sees young people leaving the province to work in Alberta's lucrative oil patch. Contracted-out city work only pays \$6 or \$7 an hour, compared to the unionized \$18 wage.

"The cost of living here is very high," says Baker, president of St. John's outside workers, CUPE 569. "[Kids] are not going to hang around here and struggle to make ends meet, living at home with their parents until they're almost 30."



Toronto Mayor David Miller, speaking to CUPE members: "Workers are all about building a great city."

Baker's local is exposing the problems with contracting out and privatization at every turn. Their strategy also includes a push for a fair wage policy.

"Any contractor that bids on union work should have to pay at least 80 per cent of union wages," he says. "That way, everybody's on the same playing field. It should be the law right across this country."

Baker says the St. John's mayor and council have to move now to protect the city's future. "If they're not willing to invest in young people in this city, then this community is a dead community. Ten or 15 years down the road, there will be a bunch of senior citizens out plowing the streets. We need to get young people back and keep them here to revitalize our workforce and our union."

On the other side of the country, protecting public sector jobs for the next generation was at the heart of a hard-fought lockout in Nelson, B.C., in the summer of 2004. The lockout was forced over CUPE 339's refusal to give up a clause that protected 55 public city services from being contracted out.

"If we lost [that clause], it would have just paved the way for privatization," local president Bev LaPointe says. "The city promised to secure our jobs, but once we retired, there would have been nothing. No more public services. No more union jobs for the young people in line."

Beating back the P3 Goliath

As a member of CUPE 30, Oates has been fighting privatization schemes in Edmonton for years. Like his sisters and brothers across Canada, he knows that one of the keys to rebuilding strong communities is keeping the privateers out of public municipal services.

There is a growing mountain of evidence that privatization not only hurts public workers – it usually ends up costing taxpayers more money for diminished services. In addition, privatization in the era of powerful international trade and investment rules is doubly dangerous. Such rules make it harder for services to come back under public control once they have been privatized.

Despite these and other warning bells, the federal government makes no secret of its pro-P3 orientation. Neither do many provincial and municipal governments. Infrastructure Canada, the federal department that coordinates programs like the New Deal and makes "strategic investments" in infrastructure, is pushing the P3 model. In Quebec, Liberal Premier Jean Charest established the Public-Private Partnership Agency, which advises the provincial government on privatization issues.

While he won't condemn privatization outright, the FCM's Knight strongly believes in the advantages of keeping municipal services public.

"The reality is that public services in Canada at the municipal level are pretty efficient," he says. "Broadly speaking, we do public services rather effectively and certainly with great reliability. And that presents some challenges to the private sector, in terms of being competitive."

Besides, Knight adds, keeping services public is good for the bottom line. "Municipal governments can borrow at a lower rate than the private sector because they are totally solid credit risks," he notes. "They're not mandated to be profitable."

However, with the blue-sky scenarios painted by privatization's profit-oriented supporters, it's perhaps not surprising that many city leaders and ordinary citizens have come to believe that there is no alternative. This makes the influence CUPE members have – whether as elected officials or as local lobbyists – even more vital.

At the recent gathering of CUPE municipal locals in Toronto, members from across the country shared information, strategies and success stories. One point that many participants kept emphasizing was the importance of forging alliances and building a broad base of support, from residents to sympathetic councillors.

"We won because the population was on our side," said CUPE 1983 president Claude Benoit of his local's winning fight against a transit P3 in Montreal. "We distributed 100,000 leaflets explaining the risks of P3s for the whole community, and we found many, many allies. We made it clear that keeping it public benefits everyone."

"It's hard to break in when you work alone," says anti-racism activist Tam Goossen, who took part in the town hall. "We all feel powerless as individuals, but we're not alone in the fight."

The Toronto Environmental Alliance's Shelley Petrie has seen the results strong partnerships can achieve. "When we work together, we're no longer just running reactionary campaigns," she told participants. "We can also be agenda-setters. The campaign for pesticide-free parks in Toronto is just one example. We couldn't

have done it without the workers. We've had many wins hand in hand with labour."

Another good approach is to build awareness of city workers' contributions to their communities outside of crisis situations. Many members all over Canada already participate in their local charities, churches, sports and cultural events. These activities also provide opportunities to remind people that if they can enjoy attractive parks, tidy streets and safe facilities, they can usually thank a municipal worker.

"People don't live in Regina for the weather," jokes Tim Anderson, president of that city's outside workers, CUPE 21. "They're here for the quality of life, and good municipal services are part of that."

Time after time, Regina's municipal services get top marks in resident surveys. "For example, we look after the recreation side of life," he says. "When you get home from work, there's always somewhere you can go to get away. There are affordable sporting programs for kids. That's a really important comfort zone."

Mayor Miller is on the same wavelength. "Workers are all about building a great city," he told members. "It's not just a job. [They're] doing it for the families that live in our cities. And [they] are among those same families."

Rocking the vote

At CUPE's town hall, another message came through loud and clear: concerned members have a responsibility to use their influence to affect the outcomes of municipal elections.

"It's not going to be by accident that we take over our cities," the Canadian Labour Congress' Mike MacIsaac told delegates. "It's going to be by planned, strategic votes."

Talk to just about any CUPE municipal worker, and they're planning to work harder – and smarter – in their next municipal election.

Ken Davidson, a Vancouver outside worker and president of CUPE 1004, says the local labour council played a big part in electing a progressive mayor and socially conscious councillors in the city's 2002 elections. The council helped coordinate, support and train activists.

In Nelson, B.C., CUPE 339's president says her members know what's expected of them in this fall's municipal elections. "We have to elect councillors who don't buy into the lie that private is better," LaPointe states. "Then we stand a fighting chance."

"Keeping on top of city hall in between elections is as important as getting involved in elections," says Davidson. "We really have to pay close attention to who we get elected and how we hold them accountable. It can't just be action and contact every three years. It has to be every day."

LaPointe and Davidson, like municipal workers across the country, realize the stakes have never been higher.

"Municipal services are the heartbeat of the community," LaPointe says. "They weave the social fabric. The taxes I pay go right into workers' wages, and they spend that money in town. You have a say, it's transparent and you can see what's going on. That's local economy. That's local democracy." ■



Read it and weep

Funding woes, violent patrons, privatization ...

Barry Doyle checks out what it takes to survive as a Canadian public library worker.

It's a sweltering summer day in the nation's capital. But inside the downtown branch of the Ottawa Public Library, it's cool and quiet. People are patiently queued up at the reference desk. An elderly couple flips through magazines in the periodicals area. In the children's section, a mom is helping her little ones choose some books and movies, perhaps for a long car trip. A bare-foot man in a filthy coat discreetly makes his way to the washroom, eyes cast down. On almost every floor of the building, you'll find patrons perusing the shelves, using the Internet, reading, studying, or just catching a break from the heat and humidity outside. It's a scene you'd be able to find at just about any public library in Canada.

"The pride of a library is not the mere possession of books," said George Locke, who served as Toronto's chief librarian from 1908 until his death in 1937. "It is the explanation of the significance of those treasures in the development of interest and pleasure among those who may have the taste, but not the material means of satisfying it."

It's a sentiment that resonates with the hundreds of CUPE members who work in more than 3,000 public libraries and service points across the country. "Free public libraries are a commitment to being civilized," says Rh'ena Oake, president of CUPE 1169, which represents workers at the Calgary Public Library. "Libraries are community centres, promoters of literacy,

resource tools, and repositories of community history."

Public libraries are the most widely used cultural resources in Canada, and provide vital social spaces and services for their communities. Language and literacy classes, job and career seminars, public lectures, author readings, book clubs, reference services, computer courses, books-on-tape, large-print and braille books and film screenings are just some examples of the services offered at many libraries.

Because they serve people regardless of age, ability, education, or economic status, public libraries reflect some of society's noblest values: social justice, democracy, learning, creativity and curiosity. And it's CUPE members who deliver the services that make libraries one of our most enduring public institutions. In fact, CUPE has more library workers than any other union in Canada.

However, despite their importance in the community, library workers are increasingly under attack. Low wages, weak benefit plans and pay equity struggles. Serious health and safety concerns. Layoffs and privatization. The strain is enormous – and the workers are being asked to cope in spite of woefully inadequate funding and training.

As with so many services, federal funding to public libraries has shrunk since the 1990s, and provincial and municipal governments have largely failed to pick up the slack. In June, the Ontario government announced it would be cutting \$700,000

in funding to public libraries – essentially negating a \$700,000 pledge announced earlier in the year.

It's not just CUPE members who are sounding the alarm about library funding. "The funding issue is huge," says Don Butcher, executive director of the Canadian Library Association (CLA). "The cuts of 10 years ago are still having their effect. Our public libraries haven't recovered."

Statistics compiled by a group representing public libraries serving larger towns – places with more than 50,000 people – are telling. Between 2001 and 2002, although total funding remained stable, per capita spending on libraries declined by 13 per cent. This means that funding has not kept pace with growing populations, especially in bigger cities.

Gary Day is president of CUPE 2669 at the Saskatoon Public Library. He says one of the problems funding cuts have led to is that workers spend too much time tracking services and not enough time delivering them. "Because libraries don't turn a profit, city hall doesn't see the service as valuable and it doesn't get the budget allocations it deserves," he says. "The library bends over backwards to prove its worth with statistics of books borrowed, reference questions answered and the tracking of other statistics."

A question of equity

The issues of low wages and pay equity for library workers are significant. Women make up the vast majority of library workers and are paid very little compared to equivalent municipal jobs. Traditionally, male jobs in the municipal sector are almost always paid at a higher rate than largely female jobs in the library sector. A labourer for the city of Lloydminster, Alta., starts at \$12.60 an hour while an assistant branch librarian starts at \$6.85 an hour. The wage gap between library and white-collar jobs is



CUPE had a strong presence at this year's CLA conference in Calgary. Here, members of CUPE 1169 (Calgary libraries) with CUPE Alberta treasurer Tom Dick.

Canadian public libraries: a snapshot

- Libraries are among the most heavily used public facility in Canada, with 83 million visits per year. That's more than any other cultural and sporting event. (The Toronto Blue Jays get around two million visitors per year.)
- There are 3,100 public libraries in Canada, including branches and bookmobiles. That's three times as many libraries as McDonald's restaurants.
- Annually, workers at a typical public library answer 26,000 inquiries, circulate 265,000 items and facilitate on-site use of another 99,000 items.
- A typical public library employs 15 staff, owns 93,000 items, subscribes to 170 periodicals, and spends \$932,000 annually on operating and capital expenditures.
- There are 89 million publications in public library collections across Canada.
- Every year, 242 million publications are borrowed from public libraries in Canada.
- There are 6,557 Internet workstations in Canadian public libraries.

(Source: National Core Library Statistics Program, 2002)

library workers, including Ontario, have improved the situation. In Mississauga, senior librarians were compared to city planners and saw their annual salary increase by \$10,000 in the 1990s. City of Toronto library workers had their jobs compared to traditionally male inside city jobs and witnessed increases of 10 to 35 per cent.

Nobody goes into library work to get rich. But if governments don't come through with improved funding for things like decent wages and adequate staffing, the fear is that nobody's going to want to go into library work, period.

"Recruiting and attrition are big issues for us," says Steven Burdick, president of CUPE 1582-01 at the Toronto Public Library. "We have an aging workforce with more and more library information graduates, but we have a lack of space for new hires because of cost cutting."

At its annual convention in Calgary in June, the CLA released "The Future of Human Resources in Canadian Libraries". The report states that funding crises have led to "recruitment problems that will not necessarily create a short-term crisis but will definitely create a long-term one."

"The key time for public libraries will be between 2009 and 2014," says the CLA's Butcher, referring to the point when significant numbers of senior library staff are expected to retire. "That's when we'll need staffing and we will have to find ways of encouraging leadership among library workers."

A disaster waiting to happen

On the health and safety front, library workers face many challenges, from poor air quality to aging facilities and ergonomics. The risk of repetitive strain injuries (RSIs) for library workers continues despite great efforts from CUPE members

to address the issue. For example, members at the Vancouver Public Library (CUPE 391) have created the Ergonomic Design Guidelines for Librarians.

RSIs for library workers are intimately tied to stress levels and work organization issues. "Staffing issues have caused so much stress for our members," says Wyman McKinnon, president of CUPE 4705 in Sudbury. "We don't have enough full-time workers and too many part-time workers."

Toronto's Burdick agrees. "There is stress arising from decreased staffing levels, financial and employment insecurity, technological and organizational change." Muscle tension, distraction and fatigue from stress increases the likelihood of injury.

"Bad indoor air, falling plaster, leaks, poor ventilation and overheating are just a few of the physical hazards we've been dealing with," says Dawn Lahey, president of CUPE 2329, Newfoundland Public Libraries Board. "I've been fighting bad indoor air for 24 years and it affects us and the public who use libraries."

Even Canada's prestigious Library and Archives aren't immune. In the past few years, the decaying main national library building in Ottawa has suffered from burst pipes and leaky roofs, leading not only to safety hazards but to the destruction and loss of more than 25,000 items. In 2000, then-National Librarian Roch Carrier – a Liberal appointee – told a parliamentary committee: "I must say bluntly that I do not have the tools in some areas to fulfill our mandate to preserve the published heritage of Canada. The national treasure of original Canadian newspapers is sitting in horrendous conditions out in an industrial area of Ottawa, with bare, hot light bulbs dangling from the ceiling not far from very brittle, dry newsprint. This is a disaster waiting to happen."

Privatization hits the books

Privatization within the public library system is big business. Here's a run-down on three areas of concern:

Collections acquisition: There are now at least 25 private companies that purchase books and reference material for public libraries in Canada.

Cataloguing: Library workers have traditionally been responsible for cataloguing, but this is now contracted out in many public libraries and has caused layoffs.

RFID: Radio-frequency identification (RFID) of collections is starting to happen in Canada. RFID involves tagging individual books with a chip that can be read by radio-frequency readers at checkout. Instead of a human exchange, patrons now just walk through a reading device that picks up the information on their library card and the books they are carrying. Layoffs seem inevitable.

These and other issues need to be addressed through collective bargaining and ongoing CUPE campaigns to stop contracting out and privatization.

Violence on the rise

Libraries have a reputation for being soothing, calm places, but one of the most common health and safety hazards for library workers is violence from patrons.

"In the last couple of years, there has been a rise in violent incidents in terms of screaming and confrontational patrons," notes Gary Day.

"We had one patron who was very toxic," says Lahey. "He kicked walls, punched doors, threatened staff and held a stapler to the head of one staff member. He was finally banned and charged, but it took so much work to get action. And he's not the only one. We have patrons who are aggressive toward staff all the time."

Sometimes, it's not just the staff who are in danger; it's vulnerable patrons. "Children [are] being stalked and followed into bathrooms," says Oake. "Unfortunately, libraries are not safe for unattended children and this is one issue that no one in management wants to tackle. Directors of library boards do not want negative information to reach the public but that means that library workers have to fight for extra resources to deal with situations."

Oake recalls a particularly disturbing incident in Calgary. "Our driver saw a car with its hazard lights on in a parking lot and was getting out to offer help when shots were fired with a shotgun from within the car." The driver was physically unhurt but shaken. Oake says the supervisor didn't even suggest time off.

"Nobody at the library board wanted to discuss the incident for fear of bad publicity," Oake says. "So I put an article in our newsletter and two aldermen called and the issue finally became a public debate in terms of safety for library workers."

Staff shortages—yet another result of funding cuts—compound the problem. Many libraries in small communities have only one employee. "I know of a member who was slapped and hit by a patron at a rural library in Newfoundland," says Lahey. "The member was alone and wasn't even going to report it. That indicates to me that there is probably an underreporting problem so we only end up hearing about a fraction of violent incidents."

Library or social service agency?

The last 20 years have seen massive cutbacks to social services across Canada. People with mental conditions, addiction problems, the homeless and other disadvantaged groups are using public libraries more than ever, partly because it's one place where they know they'll be treated with dignity. Problems arise because workers are given little or no training to deal with the special needs of these people.

"We have people looking for resources at our library when they should be getting support from government and various agencies," says Oake. "We have recent suicide survivors asking reference librarians for help. A young woman recently diagnosed as HIV-positive came into the library looking for resources, but she also needed to talk. We have people doing drugs and having sex in the washrooms. We are caring people, but our workers

simply aren't trained as counsellors. These people need proper counselling and help."

The problems may seem overwhelming, but the solutions are basic, says Oake. "We need the support of management in tackling problems. We need their support to protect workers from violent patrons and to recognize problems like lack of training. We also need to recognize the lack of militancy among [library] workers and get them to demand protection from management."

Butcher sees some hope in the 2005 federal budget's New Deal for Cities. "The full Goods and Service Tax (GST) rebate paid by municipalities and the sharing of a portion of gasoline taxes means there should be more funding within municipalities for critical community development infrastructure such as public libraries", he notes.

CUPE National also wants to make sure that, in the battle to save our hospitals and schools, institutions like libraries aren't forgotten. CUPE had a strong presence at the CLA's Calgary conference this year, a first for the union. CUPE National, CUPE Alberta and CUPE 1169 were all prominent sponsors of the event.

"CUPE will continue to lobby all levels of government to restore and increase funding to public libraries, a cornerstone of our communities," says CUPE National President Paul Moist. "The link between vibrant public libraries and strong communities is undeniable. Well-funded, properly staffed libraries give Canadians access to resources that enrich their lives."

When a community loses its library, it loses a chunk of its soul. It's knowing this that makes CUPE's library workers show up at their jobs every day, in spite of the risks and frustrations.

"There is lots of stress about impending change for libraries," says Lahey. "But I love what I do, as do most library workers. We just have to keep fighting to get what we need." ■

CUPE 1169 president Rh'ena Oake, left, with CUPE 905 (Vaughan public libraries) president Kim Perry.





Cape Breton school board workers celebrate stunning victory



After nearly three weeks on the picket line, 1,400 teacher assistants, secretaries, bus drivers and other support workers with the Cape Breton Victoria Regional School Board won wage parity with their colleagues throughout the province.

It was a major victory for the members of CUPE 5050 and their president, Todd MacPherson. For decades, school board workers in Cape Breton have been paid less than people doing identical jobs elsewhere in the province. And casual employees were paid as little as 80 per cent of the full-time rate. Wage rates for school board workers throughout the province, in fact, have been all over the map.

That inequity has been eradicated. April's landmark settlement will implement wage parity over the next five years. Add an unprecedented commitment to provincewide bargaining – brokered with the help of New Democrat allies in the provincial legislature – and you have a historic victory.

Liz MacDonald, chair of the strike committee, said the respect and support from the community was “absolutely phenomenal.” Students, parents and passers-by all visited the lines, offering words of encouragement, coffee, even financial support.

“What makes me proudest,” said MacDonald, “was working alongside people so dedicated to what they were doing that they gave up so much more than four hours per day for picket duty. It was an honour to see people from all backgrounds and job classifications coming together for one common goal.”

■ David Robbins and John McCracken

New president for CUPE Nova Scotia



Delegates at the 2005 CUPE Nova Scotia convention elected a new president last spring.

Danny Cavanagh defeated longtime president Betty Jean Sutherland. Sutherland will remain a member of the CUPE National Executive Board as regional vice-president for Nova Scotia

until the October convention in Winnipeg.

Cavanagh is a municipal outside worker from Truro and president of Local 734. He was previously the division vice-president and is its longest-serving executive member. He sits on the national environment committee and literacy reference group. He is also a member of the provincial New Democratic Party council and has been president of the Truro and District Labour Council for the past 12 years.

Married with three grown children, Cavanagh was born and raised in Truro. He has worked for his municipality for 25 years and is currently employed in its water department.

■ John McCracken

Joining forces to improve Ontario's community living sector



Among other things, community living sector workers teach developmentally challenged people skills that make them more independent.

CUPE members working in Ontario's community living sector are discovering how much power they really have when they join forces to coordinate bargaining.

Chronic provincial underfunding has compromised community-based services and support for people with developmental disabilities. And workers are feeling it at the bargaining table.

Determined to strengthen developmental services across the province, the association for community living bargaining committee (ACLBC) – a sub-group of the Ontario division social services committee – has developed an innovative, coordinated provincial plan to tackle problems like lack of funding, high staff turnover, low wages and heavy workloads.

“The quality of the services we provide is important to us,” says ACLBC chair Jim Beattie, president of CUPE 3943, Community Living Hamilton. “We also know that quality programs are linked to good wages and working conditions. The research shows that.”

It took ACLBC members and CUPE National staff several months to prepare the ambitious bargaining strategy and the detailed communications plan. The committee decided that combining a campaign to increase provincial funding for developmental services with a bargaining campaign aimed at increasing wages for workers made strategic sense.

CUPE represents more than 5,000 members in 40 local unions in the sector. While each local maintains control over their own negotiations, all have agreed to a set of clear goals, including fair wage increases and a common expiry date for collective agreements.

It's the first step in a multi-year bargaining plan that will lay the foundation for a future central bargaining model for the sector.

Central bargaining is a plus for employers because they no longer have to hire high-priced consultants to negotiate

for them individually. Employers would also be able to offer provincewide benefit plans that would cut agency costs and help attract and retain qualified staff. This less confrontational approach also results in better labour-management relations and increased staff stability.

“By focusing on the quality of services and the important work CUPE members do, we are raising awareness of a sector that is usually below the radar in our communities,” says Beattie. “Advocating now for quality services and increased funding for the sector will also have a long-term benefit as another 20-plus CUPE ACL locals head into bargaining this fall and in 2006.”

■ Stella Yeadon and Margot Young



Winnipeg sanitation workers: “It's city managers who stink!”

CUPE workers who collect garbage in Winnipeg have had enough trash thrown at them, and they're not going to take it anymore. They are going public and taking on management and city officials who want to give their work to private contractors.

Managers in Winnipeg's water and waste department want to privatize all solid waste collection for the city. About 80 city workers, all members of CUPE 500, collect trash in the south end of the city. Canadian Waste, a subsidiary of the private corporation Waste Management Inc., picks up the rest.

CUPE 500 president Mike Davidson doesn't mince words when he describes the situation. “It stinks,” he says. “Manage-

ment has been undermining our work for years and now they want to let a multinational corporation take over the city. Privatizing the rest of the collection service will mean the city loses any control over the contractors and ultimately we know that residents will get less service at higher cost.”

The debate in Winnipeg over public versus private collection of solid waste has gone on for decades, but escalated with the election of a pro-business mayor last year. He and others have strongly advocated privatization and have shown disregard for workers. For example, on CBC Radio, one councillor recently referred to temporary workers who would lose their jobs through privatization as mere casualties of war.

(Cont. p.18)



Alberta: Tackling a raid head-on



When Carol Boklaschuk learned the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees (AUPE) was planning a raid on her Lethbridge hospital local, her first feeling was one of dread.

"I knew we were in for a long, ugly fight," said Boklaschuk, president of CUPE 408. "I didn't relish it at all."

With her local heading into bargaining, Boklaschuk feared the raid would promote division and acrimony among CUPE 408's 800 members. "The only

winner in a civil war like this is the employer. They can take advantage of the division to push back wages and benefits."

Since 2001, AUPE has centred its organizing efforts on raiding other unions. This has earned them sanctions and suspension from the Canadian Labour Congress and their parent union.



Making the difference in B.C. election

After witnessing British Columbia's New Democrats stage a major comeback in the May 17 provincial election, CUPE activists have every reason to be proud.

While few observers expected the party to form a government this time, the rejuvenated NDP won 33 seats – a net gain of 31 from their 2001 tally, in which the party was nearly wiped out. Among the new seats were 10 ridings that had been targeted by CUPE's "Strong Communities" campaign. In at least three of these ridings, the efforts of CUPE activists made the difference.

From January through May 2005, more than 250 members volunteered to contact their sisters and brothers about the election, some spending as many as 15 nights on the phones asking fellow members to register to vote, join the NDP or help on a campaign. All told, the CUPE phone banks made nearly 47,000 calls.

Just before the election, the "Strong Communities" working group produced fact sheets on 15 key issues. Four of the

sheets were translated into Chinese, Punjabi and the Filipino language Tagalog and 120,000 were distributed to CUPE members during the campaign.

One lesson gained from the campaign was that one of Premier Gordon Campbell's favourite bogeyman, "Big Labour," did not resonate with the voting public, as witnessed by the number of labour activists elected. In addition to CUPE's own Robin Austin in Skeena and Hospital Employees' Union representative Raj Chouhan in Burnaby-Edmonds, there were four members of the B.C. Teachers' Federation, two International Workers' Association activists, a veteran social services advocate and a community activist who once worked for CUPE BC.

The "Strong Communities" working group is now turning its attention to the November 19 municipal elections. "The lessons we learned and the databases we compiled from the provincial campaign will come in handy, that's for sure," says CUPE BC's new secretary-treasurer Mark Hancock.

■ Dan Gawthrop

"Alberta has a high percentage of workers with no union at all," CUPE Alberta president D'Arcy Lanovaz notes. "Yet AUPE prefers to pick fights with CUPE and other unions. When AUPE raids, both unions spend thousands of dollars fighting each other instead of

petition with the labour board for certification. On paper, it appeared that 40 per cent of CUPE members wanted to leave – but those results were questionable.

"Over 50 people told us they thought they were simply filling out a form to receive more information," says



Quebec: Two major victories in the fight against P3s

After months of campaigning against public private partnerships (P3s), members of Quebec's public transit sector won two major victories this spring.

In early May, the Montreal bus drivers' union (CUPE 1983) received public reassurance from the president of the Société de transport de Montréal (STM) that he won't resort to P3s.

A month later, the directors of Longueuil's transport system followed suit. The two public statements were obtained after several demonstrations, public actions and public awareness campaigns.

At the same time, the employees of the Société de transport de Sherbrooke (CUPE 3434) led a fight against the creation of a private transport line that would serve mainly to shuttle people to and from a Wal-Mart. Under the theme "Our public transport – let's keep it public!" they informed users about the dangers of privatization and quickly collected about 7,500 names on a petition.

Thanks to this campaign, the local union forced the creation of a parity committee where any new modifications to service lines will be discussed. The issue of P3s will be a major point in this fall's negotiations.

■ Alexandre Boulerice



CUPE 408 president Carol Boklaschuk, left, and member organizer Marle Roberts handed out "Vote No" cupcakes on the day of the vote.

fighting for a better contract. The membership of both unions gets short-changed."

Boklaschuk says CUPE 408 members decided to tackle the raid head on. "Our members were concerned about their contract negotiation, and we were worried that the raid would hurt our chances at the bargaining table. So we decided to fight the raid by fighting for a good contract."

The strategy paid off. In other health regions where employees are represented by AUPE, support staff were getting nowhere in contract talks. But in Lethbridge, CUPE 408 members won a trendsetting contract that included 9 per cent wage increases, a short-term disability plan, improved premium pay and more family leave. The day the workers ratified their contract, AUPE filed a

Lanovaz. "They were mighty surprised to find out they had actually signed a petition to join AUPE."

Boklaschuk and her team were facing a labour board vote, and they knew they had to campaign hard. A key tool in that campaign was a comparison with a deal AUPE had negotiated in Edmonton that contained rollbacks and losses.

"Two unions, both representing general support staff in the hospital sector, negotiate deals on the same week," Boklaschuk says. "CUPE makes breakthroughs, AUPE loses its shirt. It was a no-brainer for most of our members." By a margin of almost two-to-one, the employees voted to stay with CUPE.

■ Lou Arab

\$1-million grant for N.B. labour history project



The 1914 Saint John streetcar strike. Photo by Herbert J. Blois, courtesy of the New Brunswick Museum.

“As the years passed, I kept telling myself that we were losing more and more of the witnesses and artisans of our labour history,” muses Raymond Léger, a CUPE National researcher and historian.

He’s part of a team working on the first major research project on the history of labour in New Brunswick.

“For several years, a number of historians have been working individually to increase our knowledge of trade union and labour history in New Brunswick,” he says. “Our dream was to come together to tell the story over a longer period and with greater means. We needed more resources. That’s how our project got started.”

The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada recently granted the project \$1 million over five years under the Community-University Research Alliances program.

“There’s a lot to be done,” says Léger. “The project will respect the province’s linguistic diversity, and our researchers are connected with both the Université de Moncton and the University of New Brunswick (UNB).” They will also work with the New Brunswick Museum, the Centre d’études acadiennes and the Provincial Archives. The



New Brunswick Federation of Labour (NBFL) and the main unions, including CUPE, are also partners.

The project will explore five major subjects: the contribution of the labour movement to the improvement of working conditions; the Acadians; the forestry sector; women; and public recognition of workers. Special atten-

tion will be given to the history of the NBFL, founded in 1913.

Over the next five years, the team will publish articles and organize exhibitions and workshops. They will also collaborate with New Brunswick to incorporate their research into the provincial social studies curriculum.

■ Danielle Savoie

CUPE NB: We are one!

A few years ago, the slogan “We are one” began appearing on CUPE New Brunswick materials. It was a catchy phrase for letterhead, pins, and newsletters, but it was not until last year that the membership truly understood its meaning.

In 2001, CUPE NB went through a strike in the health care sector. It resulted in heavy-handed back-to-work legislation that found CUPE under-prepared to confront the provincial government. So the union decided to get ready for the next time.

Sure enough, “next time” was just around the corner. In September 2004, CUPE 1252, the N.B. Council of Hospital Unions, walked off the job. This time, the workers were ready to defy back-to-work legislation to protect free collective bargaining.

CUPE held bargaining conferences in January 2003 and 2004 to put together a bargaining action plan. In 2004, after an awareness campaign, CUPE NB adopted a resolution to coordinate a plan that would include a “solidarity pact.” This pact mandates CUPE NB to mobilize its 20,000 members in provincial strike action if

the government interferes with free collective bargaining.

“The solidarity pact is not a bargaining chip,” says Daniel Légère, CUPE NB’s new president.

“It’s a tool to fight any attack on free collective bargaining. The government knows that for the labour movement in New Brunswick, free collective bargaining is like the Holy Grail; we will do whatever it takes to protect it.”

Even before CUPE 1252 took a strike vote, mobilization had started. CUPE NB organized 16 regional membership meetings throughout the province. The regional action committees also kicked into gear, holding regular meetings and distributing information to members.

In the meantime, the N.B. Coalition of Unions was established. The coalition, consisting of 18 public and private sector unions and representing over 65,000 workers, adopted the “We are one” slogan. Together with CUPE’s solidarity pact, this support from the other unions made the government back down and negotiate a new collective agreement for the hospital workers.

■ Danielle Savoie

CULTURAL REVOLUTION

The Workers’ Festival – A History of Labour Day in Canada

By Craig Heron and Steve Penfold, University of Toronto Press, 2005

The story of Labour Day might not seem like the most exciting subject for a book. But the authors have turned this potentially drab historical footnote into a full-blown celebration of working people in the context of our changing urban landscape.

Heron and Penfold explore the origins of this “workers’ festival,” which long precede the Canadian government’s official recognition of the day in 1894. They also examine the reasons for its

past popularity among workers and their families and explore the differences between May Day—the international worker’s day—and Labour Day.

As the authors note, the day was about the “broad cultural developments that affected workers’ ability to forge cultural projects closely linked to their social, economic, and political goals.” But it was also “a holiday that never really belonged to workers.”

Packed with illustrations and photos, *Festival* is a surprisingly engaging read that gives us a sense of where the modern labour “demonstration” originated. It captures the spirit of a time when working people sought the public respectability and acceptance that came with a parade and other festivities.

Labour Day was originally a day for working families and a show of solidarity with the community. It’s still an important day to many workers. But in the end, the authors conclude that its momentum could not be sustained. “The great majority of workers eventually voted with their feet for less earnest celebrations that allowed them to relax in more privatized ways,” they note.

With *Festival*, Heron and Penfold have accomplished what all social historians strive for: they’ve brought a relatively unknown piece of our past vividly to life.

■ Reviewed by National President Paul Moist

Money in ... money out!

Over the past two years, CUPE has put its finances on stronger footing, but that doesn’t mean we’ve been scrimping and saving.

In 2004, our national defence fund budget was \$5.6 million and virtually all of that money went out the door. Things will be much the same by the end of this year.

As I write this, expenditures from the defence fund are equal to revenues. We have taken on privateers across the country. Jean Charest in Quebec, Gordon Campbell in British Columbia and Dalton McGuinty in Ontario have felt the heat applied by CUPE members working to make sure our services remain public and our communities strong.

Since convention 2003, we have spent over \$8 million supporting CUPE members walking picket lines or fighting the threat of strikes or lockouts.



With our operating funds, we have built new databases, improved our technology and added staff resources.

We have negotiated hundreds of collective agreements. We have built pride and equity by purchasing rather than leasing

office space. And we are planning for the future.

As we look forward to the upcoming national convention, we turn our attention to the next two years. We know there are many fights ahead. Corporations and governments across Canada are renewing their attacks on our jobs and services.

Using the same prudent management, financial planning and transparent processes for spending decisions, we will be ready with the financial clout CUPE members deserve.

Claude Gagné

Claude Gagné
National Secretary-Treasurer



Communities Day - Oct.5

celebrate
mobilize
get involved!

What are YOU doing for Communities Day?
Visit www.communities.cupe.ca for ideas.

Rebuilding
Strong
Communities