

Tabletalk – your bargaining resource – is published four times a year to provide CUPE Local bargaining committees, elected officers and servicing representatives useful information for preparing – and negotiating – bargaining demands. Tabletalk's three-hole-punch style makes it easy to keep in reference binders. Feel free to make copies or use the material to fit your members' needs.

Please email Susan Attenborough at research@cupe.ca with corrections, questions, suggestions, or contributions.

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“Securing the Future”: CUPE’s strategic bargaining objectives for 2008–09

This is the first issue of *Tabletalk* since CUPE’s National Convention in October 2007. (Please note there was no Winter issue.) Delegates to the national convention approved “Securing the Future,” a policy that sets out political and bargaining objectives for the next two years.

AS ADOPTED
BY THE CUPE 2007
NATIONAL
CONVENTION

Why set out bargaining objectives? History shows that coordinating our efforts among locals, within sectors, and within regions, can build momentum and increase pressure on employers. The policy recommends that locals continue to build strength by consolidating bargaining through coordinated bargaining and by setting up bargaining councils in all sectors.

The policy identifies the following bargaining targets:

- minimum wage of \$15 per hour for all CUPE members;
- enrolment in a pension plan for all CUPE members;
- extension of health and dental benefits coverage for all CUPE members;
- strengthening of job security provisions;
- renewal of efforts to negotiate pay equity and job evaluation;
- achievement of gains and protections for equity-seeking groups;
- organization of a national women’s bargaining conference;
- more environmentally safe and healthy workplaces.

So what can your local do to promote these objectives?

- Talk to your staff rep about what possibilities might exist to coordinate bargaining with other locals with the same employer, or in the same region or sector. Many CUPE

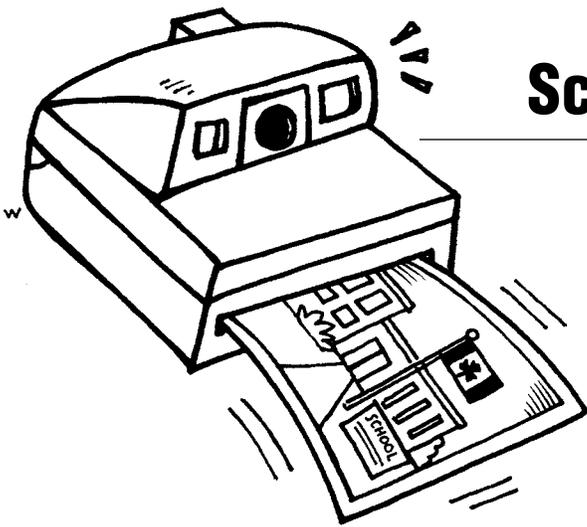
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locals have a strong and proud history of solidarity around bargaining, and there are plenty of successful examples.

- There are lots of different ways to coordinate bargaining, such as putting forward the same language and/or wage demands, strategizing around timing of bargaining/mediation, or using a lead local strategy. Find one that works for your local.
- When you are preparing for bargaining, think about how your local can help

promote the goals established by CUPE members at convention. For examples of good language, talk to your staff rep, or check out the CUPE website or the “Innovative Language” section of past issues of *Tabletalk*.

Engaging in coordination to move towards these bargaining goals will help strengthen CUPE and will improve wages and working conditions for CUPE members. ■



School board sector snapshot

- In British Columbia, CUPE represents approximately 16,000 members, more than 85 per cent of support staff in the province.
- In New Brunswick and PEI, we represent 100 per cent of support staff.
- In Quebec, about 16 per cent of support staff in the elementary and secondary school system is represented by CUPE.

CUPE represents more than 100,000 support staff members in the junior kindergarten to grade 12 (JK–12) sector nationally, in more than 100 job classifications. Our members drive the buses, clean and maintain schools, keep the computers and A/V equipment running, stock libraries, staff school offices, supervise lunchrooms, instruct adult education and language courses, and, increasingly, provide assistance to special needs students.

CUPE is the leading support staff union, representing more than two-thirds of support staff in several provinces and between 55 and 60 per cent nationally.

- Almost half of our total membership is employed in Ontario, where we represent almost 70 per cent of support staff.

In 2004, government funding of JK–12 education was 8.5 per cent of total public spending in Canada, virtually unchanged from 1990. By comparison, total public health care spending rose from 13.5 per cent to 18.9 per cent over the same period.

Most provinces have taken over control of funding for public education and are using per-pupil funding formulas to allocate funding to boards in the province, effectively stripping local school boards (or divisions or districts) of power over local education taxation. At the same time, nearly all provinces have consolidated school boards, resulting in amalgamations and representation votes and hence larger CUPE bargaining units. What has followed is a trend toward more province-wide bargaining in this sector.

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Currently, CUPE locals bargain at a provincial table (as well as at local tables for local issues) in four provinces: Newfoundland, NB, PEI, and Quebec. In several other provinces, CUPE is moving towards, or very close to, provincial bargaining structures.

- The Nova Scotia School Board Council of Unions is in the final stage of negotiating a framework for provincial bargaining. It took almost two years, but significant progress has already been made in job descriptions and wage rates.
- In Saskatchewan, the Education Workers' Steering Committee is meeting with the Saskatchewan School Boards Association following their successful campaign for province-wide bargaining. Hopefully, provincial bargaining will be in place for the next round of negotiations.

In other provinces, CUPE locals bargain with school boards, and there are varying degrees of provincial, and, in some cases, regional coordination.

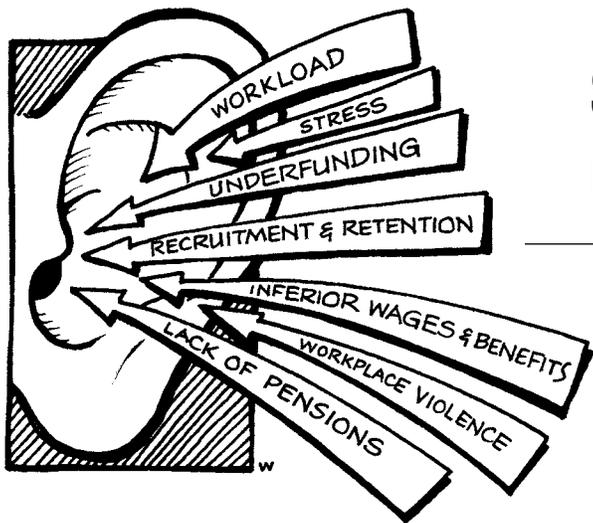
- In BC, CUPE locals are actively discussing how to stay strong and coordinated as they face 60 School Board Employers represented by the BC Public School Employers' Association (BCPSEA).
- In Ontario, school board locals have achieved common termination dates and common wage increases through coordinated bargaining. This accomplishment, combined with mobilization, province-wide coordinated bargaining strategies, and several key strikes by school board sector members over the past year, has yielded a unique opportunity to put negotiations for fair funding for school support services squarely on the table with the Ontario government. The province has agreed to facilitate a negotiations process between CUPE and school employers. This is a major step forward for the sector.

Since the 1990s, school board workers have seen increased commercialization, more contracting out, and experiments in private management.

- BC employers may be moving towards "school based management," a system that sees more discretionary funding going to local boards and that seems to be patterned after UK education reforms, which have increased opportunities for the private sector in public education.
- Public Private Partnerships (P3s) are threatening public financing of school buildings in BC and Alberta. Partnerships BC's mandate of capital projects costing \$20M or more appears to include public schools. In Alberta, more than 18 schools are set to be built using P3 financing. P3s have been tried before in this sector: A major experiment in P3 schools in Nova Scotia several years ago was criticized by the provincial auditor general and was never expanded beyond the original schools.
- Another key area of privatization is the growing presence of big corporations, such as Honeywell, that undertake large scale retrofits of mechanical and heating systems in existing schools. Automated, modular computerized systems require fewer on-site personnel, which has led to a steady decline in the number of CUPE maintenance jobs in public schools.

Together with parent groups and other unions, CUPE locals have fiercely fought attempts to close schools, lay off staff, and contract out our work. Protecting our jobs and services is key to maintaining the health of the education system. ■

(Source: "Snapshot of CUPE's JK to 12 Sector," presented to the National Executive Board (NEB), December 2006, and "Organizing and Regional Services Report to the CUPE NEB," March 2008)



Social services workers are making themselves heard!

In November 2007, nearly 150 CUPE social services workers from across the country met in Ottawa. These workers help those who fall through the cracks in our society, those left behind as the divide between rich and poor widens because of conservative economic and social policies.

CUPE members in the Social Services sector do many different jobs in child care, social assistance, residential group homes and community living, child protection, and community agencies.

Members came together to talk about the tough issues they face: chronic government underfunding, recruitment and retention, inferior wages and benefits, the lack of pensions, stress and workload, and workplace violence.

The meeting offered an opportunity for social services workers to voice their concerns about challenges they face in their jobs and to work towards developing common strategies on issues such as workloads.

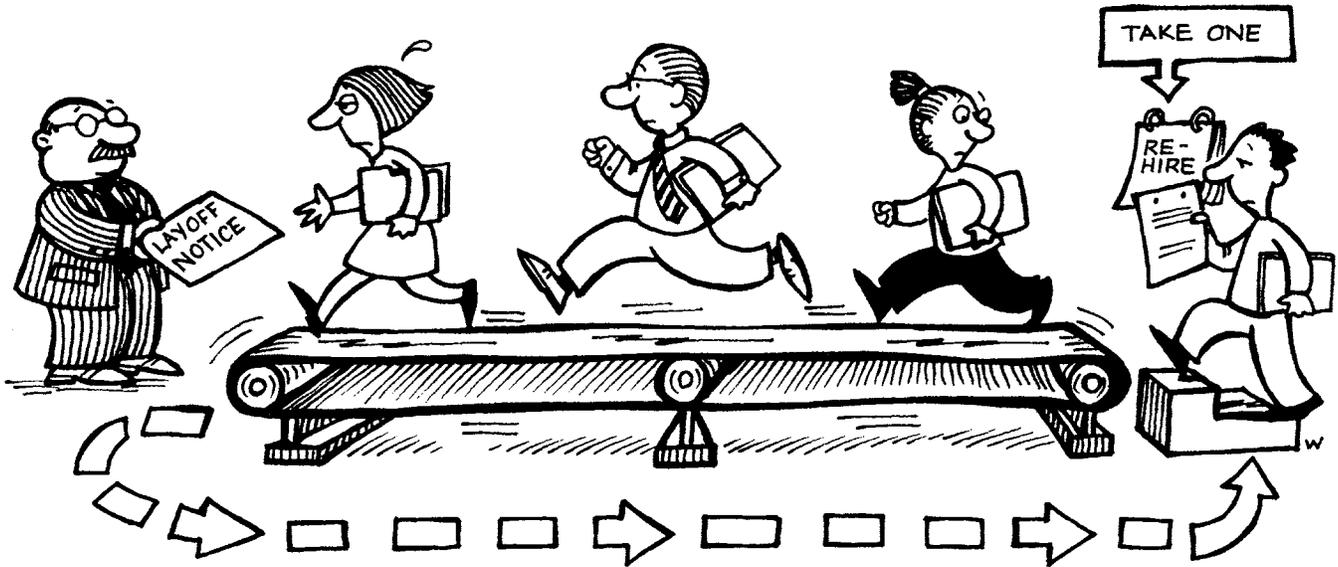
Informal studies show that many CUPE members work so much unpaid overtime they should actually be getting as much as two weeks additional time off every year. A 2000 CUPE survey suggests that the unpaid work our members do is the equivalent of 630 CUPE jobs in the Ontario Social Services sector alone.

Members listened to local presidents talk about the challenges of recruiting and keeping the talented people needed to deliver vital social services. They talked about how hard it is to deliver services when the workload is so high and when there are health and safety concerns, and how hard it is for talented workers to live and raise families on the low wages and poor benefits in the sector.

Dr. Linda Duxbury delivered a highly informative and entertaining keynote address. Duxbury is a professor at Ottawa's Carleton University and is a renowned expert on work-life balance. She talked about the changing demographics of the workforce, generational differences among older and younger workers in terms of bargaining priorities and achieving work-life balance, and the need for unions to think "outside the box" by tailoring union demands to the new realities of a younger workforce. Duxbury's talk sparked lively discussion from the floor and left participants wanting more!

CUPE's social services workers used the meeting to share experiences, choose priorities, and develop strategies for working together to advance their issues in their workplaces, locals and regions and to make themselves heard! ■

Breakthrough victory: pension coverage for Port Moody temps!



In early 2006, CUPE Local 825 president Maria Wahl was getting fed up. She had been watching for years as her employer, the City of Port Moody, maintained a significant roster of Temporary Full-Time (TFTs) workers to perform work that was permanently necessary. The temps (TFTs) of her local generally would be hired for nine or ten months at a time and then laid off, only to be re-hired again three months later. The same temps were hired, laid off, and re-hired so consistently and over so many years that it became clear that they were, in fact, permanent employees who were being deprived of key rights enjoyed by regular permanent employees.

For Maria, a CUPE-named trustee for the British Columbia Municipal Pension Plan (and an elected CUPE National Trustee), the most serious result of these service breaks was the exclusion of the long-service temps from the pension plan. One member, Jeff, had been working on this temp treadmill for eight years.

On May 29, 2006, a grievance was filed on behalf of the Port Moody temps. The grievance

argued that the continuous turnover of long-service temps was a form of discrimination. Given that, in practice, a significant number of temps were being continuously re-hired, the union argued that they should be considered permanent employees and enrolled in the pension plan.

Following a series of discussions and meetings in the early stages of processing this grievance, the employer and the union negotiated a settlement. On July 26, 2006, a Letter of Understanding (LOU) was signed providing that all temporary full-time employees who complete twelve months service within a twenty-four month period "shall be entitled to coverage under the Municipal Pension Plan." This LOU represents a major breakthrough for the pension rights of temporary employees. Its immediate effect was to extend pension coverage to the existing Port Moody temps and it clarified new pension entitlement for future hires. According to Maria, "We are the only municipality in the Metro Vancouver area that has this type of agreement for TFTs."

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For Jeff, the eight-year Port Moody temp, the victory demonstrated the strength of the union. “The best part of getting pension coverage,” he says, “was the fact that the entire membership threw their support behind the issue of temp rights. Now I understand the power of the union when we can come together on an issue.”

This important breakthrough is great news for Local 825 as well as for other CUPE members in BC and across the country. Part-timers, temps, and casual employees are often excluded from pension coverage, at substantial

cost savings to employers. Even in large multi-employer plans (such as the BC Municipal Employees Pension Plan), local employers generally have significant discretion as to which classifications and categories of employees are eligible for participation. They almost always exclude part-timers, temps, and others to cut their payroll costs. Pension coverage for part-timers and the precariously employed is a growing priority for CUPE, and this victory in Port Moody offers a terrific precedent! ■

(With thanks to Kevin Skerrett)



Year-to-year inflation rates offer the most reliable indicator of inflation. Month-to-month inflation rates can be affected by volatile factors like food and gasoline so they are not reliable indicators of inflation throughout the year. Using year-to-year inflation rates when bargaining wages will better protect workers against the effects of inflation on their earnings.

Changes in the cost of living, which inflation is used widely to track, will be different for each household, depending on what they buy. Lower- and middle-income families will usually face a larger increase in the cost of living when prices for items such as food or gasoline increase

Consumer Price Index by Province, February 2007 to February 2008

Newfoundland and Labrador	2.1
Prince Edward Island	2.4
Nova Scotia	2.6
New Brunswick	1.9
Québec	1.6
Ontario	1.5
Manitoba	1.6
Saskatchewan	3.4
Alberta	3.5
British Columbia	1.1

(Source: Statistics Canada, *The Daily*, Tuesday, March 18, 2008)

because they form a larger part of their spending.

Effective January 1, 2008, the federal Conservatives cut the GST by another percentage point. If the cut in the GST is passed on to consumers, it should reduce inflation by about 0.6 percentage points because approximately 60 per cent of the consumer price index basket is subject to the GST. But there is good reason to

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believe that many businesses and retailers did not pass on the savings from the 2006 GST cut and instead used it as an opportunity to increase their prices. Prices change for a wide variety of reasons, many of which are hard to determine with certainty. It appears that a little over half of the savings in 2006 was passed on to consumers and so inflation only fell about 0.3 percentage points below what it would have been otherwise.

Consumer prices increased by 1.8 per cent in the twelve-month period to February 2008, the slowest rate of growth in six months and a marked slowdown from the twelve-month increase of 2.2 per cent in January. Less upward pressure from gasoline prices along with falling car prices accounted for most of this deceleration.

Pump prices were still the main factor in the increase in consumer prices in February. The 17.1 per cent increase in February was largely because prices were lower than usual last February.

The cost of maintaining a home was up 4.8 per cent in February 2008 compared with the same month of the previous year. Builders reported higher labour costs, as well as increases in the cost of certain materials, such as concrete, roofing, exterior siding, and heating equipment.

While housing costs went up, vehicle prices went down in the fastest decline since February 1956. Car manufacturers are slowing production, laying off workers in Ontario, and selling off existing stock. In anticipation of crowded dealerships, some manufacturers began to offer discounts on current models – something that usually doesn't happen until the late summer/fall.

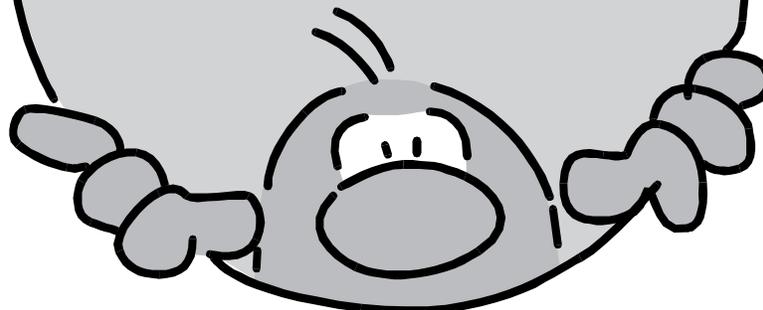
Surprisingly, the cost of fresh vegetables actually went down almost 20 per cent (16.9 per cent), but this was mainly because prices in February 2007 were highly inflated because of frosts in California. The rise in the Canadian dollar also helped lower the cost of imported vegetables. ■

FACTOID

**Hourly wages increased by only
0.7 per cent, from 1991 to 2007.**

**Corporate profits increased by 530 per cent,
from 1991 to 2007.**

(Source: CUPE, Economic Climate, March 2008)



Current and Upcoming “Key” Negotiations – March 28, 2008 covering 500 or more employees

Federal Jurisdiction

Employer	Union	Employees	Status	Expiry Month
Public Sector				
Government of Canada	Various unions	140,550	arbitration/conciliation/ bargaining	Mar 06-Jan 08
City of Ottawa - OC Transpo	ATU	2,000	bargaining	Mar 08
Private Sector				
Bell Canada (Ont. and Que.)	CEP	6,260	bargaining	Nov 07

Provincial and Territorial Jurisdictions

Employer	Union	Employees	Status	Expiry Month
Public Sector				
Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations	Various unions	32,680	bargaining	Mar 08
Health Boards of Alberta	AUPE/HSAA	22,650	bargaining	Mar 08
Government of Newfoundland and Labrador	CUPE/NAPE	16,150	bargaining	Mar 08
Regional Health Authorities of Manitoba	Nurses	11,000	tentative agreement	Sep 07
Toronto Transit Commission	ATU	8,400	bargaining	Mar 08
City of Montréal	Various unions	7,670	bargaining	Dec 06
Toronto Police Services Board	Toronto Police Association	7,310	bargaining	Dec 07
Government of New Brunswick	Teachers	7,280	bargaining	Feb 08
Government of New Brunswick	CUPE	5,760	bargaining	Jun 07
Government of Newfoundland and Labrador	Nurses	4,800	bargaining	Jun 08
City of Québec	Various unions	4,530	bargaining	Dec 06
Government of New Brunswick	Nurses	4,390	bargaining	Dec 07
Hydro One	CUPE	3,860	tentative agreement	Mar 08
Windsor Casino Limited	CAW Canada	3,500	bargaining	Apr 08
Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (Ont.)	CUPE	3,300	tentative agreement	Mar 08
Société de transport de Montréal	CUPE/CSN	2,680	bargaining	Jan 07
Government of Prince Edward Island	PEIUPSE	2,440	conciliation	Mar 07
City of Winnipeg	Firefighters	880	tentative agreement	Dec 07
Health Authorities of Prince Edward Island	CUPE	800	tentative agreement	Mar 07
Private Sector				
Brewers Retail Inc. (Ont.)	UFCW	6,000	bargaining	Dec 07
Security Industry Employers Bargaining Association (Ont.)	Steelworkers	3,500	bargaining	Jun 07
Pharma Plus Drugmarts Ltd. (Ont.)	UFCW	1,500	conciliation	Jan 08

Upcoming Key Negotiations

Employer	Union	Employees	Expiry Month
Regional Health Authorities of Manitoba	CUPE	11,000	Mar 08
University of Toronto	CUPE	3,400	Apr 08
Prince Edward Island Department of Health	Nurses	790	Mar 08

Source: Strategic Policy, Analysis, and Workplace Information Directorate Labour Program—HRSDC