

CUPE 6079 wins Earth Day contest

Congratulations to members of CUPE 6079 of the Hospital Employees' Union, CUPE's health care division in British Columbia, for being selected the overall winner of the 2015 Earth Day contest. The top three runners-up are CUPE 301, 556 and 4953. The entries were evaluated by members of the National Environment Committee. CUPE's Earth Day contest highlights the progressive environmental steps that our members take where they work.

CUPE 6079 members work at the 100 Mile Health Centre in the British Columbia interior. Members there have been active on environmental issues for many years. They helped set up the health centre's first "Green Team" – a workplace environment committee. The committee decided to tackle waste and recycling issues, as there was no municipal or workplace recycling in their community. Some community members collected recyclables to be trucked to a neighbouring community to be processed. The Green Team used this model and started to collect paper, tins, glass and plastics in makeshift bins. CUPE members volunteered to sort the materials according to type.

The grassroots program eventually grew. With a Health Foundation grant, the Local helped establish a formal recycling program with proper blue bins and recycling stations in the health centre. Other departments came on board. Maintenance workers started recycling light bulbs and tubes, while pharmacy workers began to recycle medicine bottles, plastics and Styrofoam. All the while, the Green Team ran campaigns in the health centre to promote waste diversion and to raise workers' environmental consciousness.

Among the runners-up, CUPE 301, Montreal municipal outside workers, installed two charging stations for electrical vehicles, joining the Quebec provincial government's "Plugged in at Work" program. CUPE 556, Comox municipal workers, is recognized for their community outreach work with Vancouver Island Waterwatch. CUPE 4953, from the Arthabaska-de-l'Érable Health and social services centre in Victoriaville,



implemented extensive workplace environmental practices, such as creating a carpooling program and a paper and electricity conservation program.

Congratulations to all CUPE members for their efforts to build more sustainable workplaces and communities every day of the year.

New Climate Change Tool Launched

CUPE National, with the help of the National Environment Committee, has developed a new climate change discussion tool for activists and Locals. Part educational workshop, part discussion session, the new tool is called "Starting to Talk: CUPE Climate Change Conversations". It is based on a visual PowerPoint presentation that covers topics such as how to talk about climate change, the basics of climate science, solutions and actions that union members can take.

“Starting to Talk” can be used by any CUPE member as a conversation starter for any group from two to 50 or more people who want to discuss how union and environmental issues merge. The presentation is full of new data and sharp and effective visual images that get people talking about this urgent environmental issue.

“Starting to Talk” was presented by a CUPE activist at the Prince Edward Island division convention in the Spring of 2015. It will also be presented at CUPE National Convention in Vancouver in November, 2015. If you’re interested in talking about climatechange at your Local, contact enviro@cupe.ca for more information.

CUPE Marches for the Climate

CUPE leaders and members joined with thousands of others marching in the streets of Toronto in July 2015, dubbed the March for Jobs, Justice and the Climate, to demand action on climate change. Charles Fleury, national secretary-treasurer of CUPE, and Fred Hahn, president of CUPE Ontario joined David Suzuki, Naomi Klein and other prominent activists calling for a new economy that works for people and the planet. Climate change will be among CUPE’s priority issues in the coming years, as the public sector can and will play a central role transforming our society to ensure a sustainable future.

CUPE National Convention Green Steps



Convention will once again showcase a series of green steps aimed at reducing the event’s environmental impact. In 2013, CUPE adopted a national environmental policy that, among other things, calls on CUPE to lower its greenhouse gas emissions to cut our organizational carbon footprint.

A green stewards program will again be in place at convention. This initiative provides delegates with green actions they can take while at Convention, such as foregoing taxis and walking around Vancouver. Stewards also supply information on the convention centre’s recycling and composting programs. Emissions from all delegate travel and all energy and material used during convention will be tracked toward offsetting these emissions to make the event carbon neutral. CUPE National offset 2013 convention with payments to four environmental partner organizations. Print and CUPE Village materials will be restricted to cut the energy in making and transporting these items. Only municipal tap water will be available on the convention floor.

National Environment Committee

Are you passionate about labour and environmental issues? Are you active in your Local? The CUPE National Environment Committee will be re-formed after 2015 convention. Members are free to submit their names to be considered for a seat on a national committee. Look for details coming soon on cupe.ca.

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE! cupe.ca/environment
EnviroAction is CUPE national’s environmental newsletter.
For more information: enviro@cupe.ca