
NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S REPORT November – December 2015

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

In this, my first report as National President, let me again say what an honour it was to be elected as National President of CUPE, not just Canada's biggest, but also Canada's best union!

I became a CUPE member in 1984, never imagining that I would one day be elected as CUPE's 6th National President. I am aware that I come into this new position standing on the shoulders of giants (Brother Stan Little, Sister Grace Hartman, Brother Jeff Rose, Sister Judy Darcy and Brother Paul Moist). Their hard work, along with the work and activism of members, local leaders and staff, have built CUPE. I look forward to continuing this work.

While it has been only 6 weeks since I took office, they have been busy weeks so there are a number of items for me to report here. I am also able to report on CUPE's federal election work, even though the election obviously preceded our National Convention and my election.

1. Federal Elections

The results of the October 19th federal election are mixed: the good news is that the Harper era is over, but the bad news is that the federal NDP has lost a lot of ground to the Liberals and is back in 3rd place. More worryingly, a Liberal majority government was elected, which does not leave us with room to push them into taking truly progressive positions.

CUPE put a lot of effort into this federal election campaign. We produced a report card that showed where the parties stood on key issues – clearly demonstrating that the NDP's policies would be best for CUPE – and therefore urging members to vote for the NDP. Almost 300,000 copies of this leaflet were distributed by our locals, with the assistance of our 35 member book-offs.

We also held telephone town hall calls, sent out GOTV phone calls and maintained a robust social media campaign. Through our Election Hub on cupe.ca, facebook and twitter, we reached hundreds of thousands of members (and members of the public) with targeted messages around issues such as child care, airline safety, violence against women and indigenous rights.

We had our Fairness coordinators working with locals to get non-partisan information about the same 4 key issues to members and locals who were not willing to use the partisan materials as well.

In addition to the members, staff and NEB members who were organizing our members, we had 8 CUPE staff also released directly to the NDP to work as full time staff on campaigns. Another 16 CUPE members were released to the CLC to work on the CLC's own election outreach campaign.

Hundreds of CUPE members volunteered on target NDP campaigns on a regular basis. Thousands of CUPE members came out to canvass, made phone calls, volunteered on election day and donated to NDP campaigns. NDP Leader Tom Mulcair acknowledged this when he spoke to our National Convention on November 6th.

While the result may not be what we wanted, our outreach campaign to members was successful. Taken in perspective, it is not a stretch to say that CUPE members and staff were engaged in this federal election in an unprecedented manner. Our next task on the federal election file must be to ensure that CUPE members who got engaged remain engaged on the issues. Being able to organize members to put pressure on their Member of Parliament and on Trudeau's Cabinet is the only way for us to exercise any influence on this new government.

I also want to take a moment to congratulate the 14 CUPE members, retirees and staff who ran for the NDP. Two of them were re-elected to Canada's 42nd Parliament:

- Alexandre Boulerice – Rosemount-La Petit Patrie, Quebec (staff)
- Ruth Ellen Brousseau – Berthier-Maskinonge, Quebec (former member)

And I want to recognize the 4 CUPE associated Members of Parliament who will not be returning to Ottawa and wish them all the best. They did us proud in the last Parliament!

- Rathika Sitsabaiesan – Scarborough North, Ontario (former member)
- Matthew Kellway – Beaches East York, Ontario (former member)
- François Pilon – Laval, Quebec (former member)
- Robert Chisholm – Dartmouth-Cole Harbour, Nova Scotia (retired staff)

2. CUPE National Convention – November 2 to 6, 2015 (Vancouver, B.C.)

The federal election was followed almost immediately by CUPE's 27th biennial national convention in Vancouver. I was honoured to be elected National President, and members re-elected our National Secretary-Treasurer and elected our new National Executive Board, debated and decided on the priorities for CUPE's next two years and we heard from some great speakers.

The sector meetings that were held on Sunday, November 1st were a success: I was able to attend some and met workers from the childcare, education, emergency services, energy, health care, library, municipal, post-secondary, provincial government and crown corporation and social services sectors.

This convention, we had a full schedule of regional and equality caucuses, as well as lunchtime sessions in the CUPE Village and evening forums on a range of topics from pensions to resisting new forms of privatization.

We paid tribute to many activists, including members from locals who had been out on strike over the past two years and our outgoing national president, Paul Moist. You can see the video tribute to Brother Paul here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UYbM_jZCVyI Paul's daughter, Kelly Moist, spoke on behalf of her family and thanked CUPE for "taking such great care of our dad," but noted that "now is our time to take him back."

This convention, as we have done at previous conventions, CUPE celebrated outstanding activists in literacy, health and safety, equality and disability rights with awards recognizing their work. Kudos to Brother Danny Cavanagh, newly elected President of the Nova Scotia Federation of Labour, the winner of CUPE's Literacy award; to Sister Pearl Blommaert, the first woman to win our Health and Safety award and to Sisters Katie McGovern, winner of the Grace Hartman award and Elizabeth Paris, winner of the inaugural Ed Blackman award as well as to Sister Ann Ramsay, winner of our National Disability Rights Activism award.

Coming from British Columbia, where the conflict between those who are concerned about climate change and those who want to exploit our natural resources at whatever cost is very close to the surface, I was very pleased to speak at our convention rally where CUPE took "The Leap"! Together with environmental groups, leaders from the Aboriginal community and civil society activists, we called on Canada to act decisively to transition from a fossil fuel-based economy to a pollution-free economy.

The change that delegates made to the split between our National Defence Fund and our National Strike Fund, so that 1% more of our revenue goes to funding organizing, national strategic initiatives and campaigns while also ensuring that our strike fund remains strong is critical. It will ensure that we have the resources to fight for public services. Under the Trudeau government, the attacks on public sector workers will likely be more stealthy than the full frontal assault from the Harper government. So we need to be able to respond quickly and strategically to the tactics of the new government.

Our Strategic Directions 2015-2017 document will serve us well for this. Focusing on building workers' power to improve our workplaces and communities by organizing better and by engaging in political action is very timely. If we are part of strong local organizing initiatives, it will be much more difficult for the Trudeau government (and our employers) to set up public service users against public service workers.

So our Strategic Directions document is written to make connections between the climate crisis and the attacks working people face in Canada and around the world. It lays out our union's strategy to build an even stronger progressive movement that can fight for working people and the planet. The paper integrates a vision for the next two years and our existing strategic plan into a living blueprint for deepening connections with our members and in our communities.

Convention debate around access to the National Strike Fund was also critical. I look forward to the National Strike Fund Task Force that will review issues such as: the strike pay waiting period, the strike pay benefits, accessibility to the strike fund for members who are covered by essential services legislation and other critical issues. The Task Force will seek input from all chartered organizations and report to the National Executive Board (NEB) by September 2016 so that the NEB can report to all 2017 Division Conventions and the 2017 National Convention.

Given the global debate around refugees, it was particularly important for us all to hear Sister Rosa Pavanelli, from Public Services International, speak so movingly about the role public sector unions have to play in resisting xenophobia and welcoming refugees and migrants to our countries. I was also very interested to hear Lee Saunders, President of our sister US public sector union AFSCME, who reminded us that public services are under attack around the world. Our fights against the privatization of public services have much in common with AFSCME’s fights against privatization – there is more about that below.

As I step into this new role as National President, I am also inspired by the passionate speeches from Canadians with a range of expertise to offer: author, activist and environmentalist Naomi Klein, Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Justice Murray Sinclair, CLC President Hassan Yussuff, award winning journalist Mohamed Fahmy who was jailed on trumped up charges in Egypt and the Leader of the Federal NDP, Tom Mulcair. With friends and allies like these great people, CUPE’s convention demonstrated that we are on the right track. I look forward to following up with all of them to ensure that we keep working together to build a better Canada.

3. Collective Bargaining / Strikes / Lockouts

One CUPE disputes involving job action remained outstanding in the last reporting period.

CUPE 2316 – Children’s Aid Society of Toronto (Ontario)

Fifteen emergency after hours workers walked off the job on July 27th to back their first contract demands. After nearly two and one-half years of attempting to reach a first contract members are frustrated with the employer’s inability to conclude an agreement with the Union. The members are seeking parity with their counterparts at the Catholic Children’s Aid Society in Toronto. The employer asked for and was granted First Contract Arbitration by the Ontario Labour Relations Board. As a result picket lines came down on October 31st.

PROVINCE	LOCAL	EMPLOYER	# OF MEMBERS	STRIKE BEGAN	DURATION (days)
Ontario	2316	Children’s Aid Society of Toronto	15	July 27, 2015	96 days

- **Ontario School Board Coordinating Committee (OSBCC)**

Facing the threat of another legislated settlement CUPE's largest bargaining table reached a tentative agreement with the Crown and the Council of Trustee Associations (CTA) on November 2nd. The OSBCC table is CUPE's largest table covering 55,000 school board workers in Ontario. The agreement reached covers central matters. CUPE locals are still required to negotiate local issues. Members have ratified the Central Memorandum that provides modest wage increases and enhanced job security.

This round of bargaining points to problems in the legislation that OSBCC will be sure to follow through with government.

- **Quebec Common Front Bargaining**

Common Front public sector negotiations on behalf of over 400,000 workers (including thousands of CUPE members) in Quebec continues with the Couillard government. The government of Quebec has offered minimal wage increases (3%) over five years further eroding the standard of living of all public sector workers in Quebec. These low wage offers and other concessions will provoke strike action as already evidenced by a series of rotating strikes.

4. Political Action

On day 4 in this role, I attended the Broadbent Institute gala in Toronto where I had the privilege of meeting with Alberta Premier Rachel Notley and Ontario NDP Leader Andrea Horwath over dinner. A number of CUPE leaders from the Toronto area were present for Premier Notley's speech, including from the CUPE Ontario Executive Board and Presidents of some CUPE locals, as well as key senior staff from the Ontario Region and the National Office.

I have also written to the new Prime Minister, congratulating him on his election victory and some of his first moves, which including removing the mandatory P3 screen for new infrastructure projects. I have introduced CUPE, and myself, to him and have requested a meeting with him as well as with some of his ministers.

I have written to the Minister of Labour to request a meeting to introduce CUPE to her and to go over the need for the fast repeal of bills C-377 and C-525.

The Minister of Finance has been approached; CUPE has an interest in talking to him about CPP expansion.

I have written to the Minister of Infrastructure seeking a meeting to discuss the Liberals' plan to stimulate the economy through infrastructure projects. While CUPE is fully in favour of this approach, it is critical that such projects do not further privatize our national assets.

I have written to the International Trade Minister, requesting a meeting to discuss their ratification protocols for CETA and asking to discuss TPP and TISA before they get finalized.

The Transport Minister has been approached for a meeting with regard to the exemptions to the 1:40 regulation being issued by Transport Canada for certain airlines.

And finally, I have also written to the Minister of Health, to ask for a broad discussion around future funding for public health care and the enforcement of the Canada Health Act.

5. Regional Services Division Updates

- **Hospital Employees Union (HEU)**

The Vancouver Coastal and Providence Health Care Authorities have changed service providers from Aramark to Compass. The 900 affected HEU members want to remain with their union however a 30 member USW bargaining unit seeks to gain these members. This problem would not exist if British Columbia's Labour Code contained successor provisions.

HEU has spent many days at the BC Labour Board and votes have been conducted with ballot boxes sealed. HEU has also been involved in Umpire Hearings under the protocols set out in the CLC Constitution. The CLC dispute has been resolved.

The birth of HEU some 76 years ago happened at Vancouver General which is involved in this dispute.

- **British Columbia**

CUPE Locals 1004 and 1936 representing workers at the PHS Community Services Society launched a unique collaborative exhibition called "*frontline*". Featuring the artwork of members with a focus on the work that they do in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES), the exhibit demonstrates the caring and creativity of this special group of workers. The exhibit offers a unique window into the integrated services that CUPE members offer for an under-served and hard to house population.

Local 3886 representing approximately 60 members at Royal Roads University – grounds, trades, maintenance and custodial workers, reached a tentative agreement in late November. The deal follows the provincial mandate. At the time of writing the deal had not yet been ratified.

Approximately 48,000 of CUPE members who work in sectors directly funded by the B.C. provincial government will see a modest wage increase beginning next year as a result of the provincial economy outperforming forecasts. The increases however do little to offset the true cost of living in BC where for instance K-12 workers have seen wage increases of 13.2% between 2002 and 2015 while at the same time inflation has increased 20.1%.

- **Alberta**

Local 3341 at the Edmonton Womens' Shelter finally achieved a pension plan for its members after a nine year struggle. The members will now participate in the Multi-Sector Pension Plan (MSPP). The MSPP is an innovative pension created nearly 15 years ago to address the lack of retirement benefits in largely female-dominated workplaces. Local 3341 becomes the first women's shelter in Alberta to enroll.

The Alberta government has sought submissions on potential Essential Services Legislation. CUPE Alberta has presented the Minister with a brief that implores the government to adopt an extremely narrow view of essential services so that only handful of members could be declared essential. The position taken by CUPE Alberta is in line with the Supreme Court decision in the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour case.

- **Saskatchewan**

In Saskatchewan, we continue to deal with the administration of Local 21. There are also ongoing disputes between members going on in two other locals. On the political side, Premier Brad Wall continues to front for the most extreme right wing causes, questioning the Federal government's move to accelerate the entry of refugees, for instance, while also pushing for the privatization of public services across the province.

Saskatchewan is set to go to the polls provincially on April 4th, 2016. There is a real danger that if this Wall government were to be re-elected, we would see attempts to privatize more of the publicly delivered services in Saskatchewan's five regional health authorities. The loss of the laundry services that we saw in 2015 is a grim reminder that this kind of privatization has been successful in the province. Staff in the region are therefore working pre-emptively to create pride in public ownership. The "Own It!" project, in which the people of Saskatchewan are being educated about the benefits of public ownership, is one example of the work we are doing, in conjunction with the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour, to inoculate against privatization in hospitals, schools, long term care and other public services.

- **Manitoba**

CUPE represents 9,000 members in health care and most recently came through a difficult and contentious round of bargaining. One result was an extensive review of the current Provincial Health Care Council in 2015 and the implementation of recommended changes is part of an overall strategy to rebuild CUPE's role within health care in Manitoba. The successful implementation of a provincial bargaining structure for the long-term care workers in Manitoba might well impact over 6,000 CUPE members.

On November 9, 2015, CUPE Manitoba's President, Mike Davidson announced that he will retire as the President of Local 500. Brother Mike's departure will mean big changes are coming for Local 500 too, and while they are facing a challenging civic government.

Achieving a defined benefit pension plan for school division support workers is a high priority in the Region. It will require greater member education and engagement and ultimately the commitment of locals to bargain this issue to impasse. Should any local take this step forward they will require intensive support from CUPE.

- **Ontario**

I was pleased to attend and speak at a rally in North Bay that focused on hospital cuts in Ontario and specifically North Bay. With an aging population the North Bay area has seen its P3 hospital and the services it provides cut to the bone. Over the last ten years 228 beds have been removed from the North Bay Hospital system and since the P3 hospital opened

354 jobs have been cut. The rally was broadcast live at Queen's Park and the Premier has heard the message – reverse the cuts and provide full funding.

City of Toronto employees represented by Local 79 and Local 416 are now fully engaged in collective bargaining with an employer who despite public announcements seek to continue the Rob Ford years when it comes to labour relations. Library workers and community services workers in Toronto will soon follow in bargaining.

School board workers in Ontario at the time of writing were in the process of ratification meetings and votes with respect to the central agreement they reached with the Crown and Trustee Associations on November 2nd. Bargaining at the local level continues.

The Ontario Federation has a new President. Brother Chris Buckley from UNIFOR was acclaimed the position. I want to take this opportunity to thank Brother Sid Ryan for his years of activism and wish him well in his future endeavours.

CUPE Ontario through its Social Services Workers Coordinating Committee continues to hold the Ontario government accountable for their failed Social Assistance Management System (SAMS). The system has failed so badly that it has caused great difficulty for recipients and prevented front line workers from providing the high level of service they gave pre-SAMS.

- **Quebec**

A one day strike was held on December 9 to put pressure on the government of Quebec and attempt to reach a satisfactory agreement at the negotiating table. Let us remember that a counter-offer was proposed to the Treasury Board in the last weeks of November, but the government straight out rejected it. At the time of writing this report, several sectoral agreements were reached between the Quebec government and the employees of the Common Front. The strike days that were scheduled for December 1, 2 and 3 were postponed to make room for negotiation.

After imposing Bill 15 mandating restructuring of all pension plans in the municipal sector, the Liberal government proposed Bill 75, the Restructuring Act of defined benefit pension

plans in the university sector. The approach seems more progressive than that imposed on the municipal sector.

We have signed a service agreement with union representatives of the 240 workers Electric Power (North) Rio Tinto. In addition, two new groups have joined CUPE. The City of Saint-Georges, 46 employees recreation services and culture and 146 municipal workers in the city of Rimouski.

The Quebec government introduced a fiscal pact for 2016-2019 years. This will have a direct impact on freedom of negotiation between the municipal sector employees and their employers if laws are adopted tied with the pact.

- **Maritimes**

Health care workers continue to be directly attacked by the provincial government. The Liberal government has targeted the health authorities by reducing services to balance budgets. The government also has a plan to privatize the management of certain services. Local 1252 has taken action to obtain a financial commitment from the government. Also, it denounced the increased costs of privatization of clinics and non-clinics.

Last September, Local 996, who are employees of the Town of Oromocto ratified their new collective agreement.

- **Atlantic**

Following the merger of four health unions in Nova Scotia, the unions are working to plan a negotiation process of the first agreement on essential services in the healthcare sector.

Brother Danny Cavanagh was elected as President of the Federation of Labour of Nova Scotia. We wish him great success.

We welcome Brother Mike McNeil as our new Nova Scotia Regional Vice-President. We wish success in his new role.

On November 30, the Liberal Party of Dwight Ball in Newfoundland and Labrador won the 48th provincial election with 31 seats. The Conservatives and their leader Paul Davis were evicted from power after 12 years.

- **Air Canada**

Following negotiations between the union and their employer, Air Canada flight attendants approved by a small majority, the ten-year agreement.

The agreement includes among others a lump sum for the first year and increases of 2% for all subsequent years.

6. Organizing Report

During the period of September 1, 2015 to November 30, 2015 CUPE organized 558 new members in 14 bargaining units. The largest unit organized was a Quebec unit of municipal workers at the Ville de Rimouski covering 146 workers. We welcome all of our new members into the CUPE family.

Across the country we organized 88 members in long term care facilities, 40 members in communications, 332 members in municipalities, 86 members in social services and 12 members in the post-secondary sector.

We are currently involved in 57 active campaigns that if successful would bring 5,094 new members into CUPE. At Labour Boards across the country we have 7 projects representing 3,345 new members waiting for certification votes to be conducted. There are 8 restructuring projects on-going that will result in representation votes affecting 2,123 CUPE members.

In keeping with Strategic Directions adopted by National Convention in Vancouver the National Executive Board adopted an organizing plan for 2016. A focus for early 2016 will be the mapping of organizing opportunities across the country.

The mapping will provide a full regional picture of organizing potential, capacity, priorities, resources needed and chances of success. The results will then become the foundation for a comprehensive strategic regional organizing plan that sets out priorities, resources available, tactics and concrete achievable targets. It will provide for both short and long term planning.

The objective is to develop concrete organizing plans that build on the regional/sector work and leverage the bargaining and/or campaign work with existing memberships, promotes membership engagement and expand CUPE's membership. Focusing first on increasing protection for workers who are precariously employed. We will develop an organizing strategy for precarious workers, to build strong and sustainable bargaining units.

7. International work

Public Services International Leadership Strategic Planning Meeting on Anti-Privatization December 2-3, 2015, Washington, DC

Protecting the Public Interest from Predatory Privatization and Outsourcing

At the beginning of December, I met with other global union leaders in Washington, DC to coordinate strategies on anti-privatization, organized by Rosa Pavanelli of Public Service International (PSI) and Lee Saunders, President of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME). Also attending from Canada were CUPE's economist,

brother Toby Sanger, and Larry Brown, Secretary Treasurer of the National Union of Public and General Employees. Public sector union leaders from North America, South America, Europe, Africa, Asia and Pacific countries discussed diverse and common challenges we face against the

forces of privatization and shared successful strategies and tools used to fight back. The group also met with officials from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and from the United States Departments of Treasury, Labor and State to specifically discuss concerns about the role of International Financial Institutions (IFIs) in promoting privatization, supporting public services and defending workers rights.

The meeting was exceptional for PSI in that it involved a full and frank discussion of these challenges among labour union leaders with no pre-conceived outcomes. While many options for potential collective actions were proposed, union leaders strongly emphasized that we need to focus on just a few achievable and targeted priorities. To this end, leaders agreed that public sector unions, through PSI, would 1) establish, within six months, a global on-line collective network to share key resources from affiliates and allies in fighting privatization, 2) strengthen the capacity of PSI and affiliates to campaign against privatization, and 3) "follow the money" by investigating and providing information about the activities of a number of major global corporations promoting and benefiting from privatization, such as Compass, Serco, etc. CUPE expects to participate fully in these activities, collaborating through our own anti-privatization networks of staff and activists at national office and across the country.

Messages of international solidarity

We wrote to the Swiss trade union of Public Service employees to congratulate them on joining our Blue Communities project.

We wrote to the Turkish trade union federation KESK to offer our solidarity after an attack on a peace rally that they organized.

We wrote to COURAGE in the Phillipines to wish them well on the 1st congress of their workers' network.

8. In Memoriam/Personal

Messages of condolences

I offer my sincere condolences to the families of the following CUPE members, staff and retirees who have lost a loved one in this reporting period.

- Brother J.K. (Keith) Norton Retiree - Manitoba Regional Office
- Sister Kelly Jolliffe Member – CUPE Local 1310
- Victims of mass shooting at Island Regional Centre, San Bernardino, California. Ten of them were members of SEIU, Local 721

Retirements

My sincere thanks to each of the following CUPE staff for their many years of dedicated service to our union.

- Paul Moist, National President

In closing I want to thank all of the members, activists and staff who have written in the last 6 weeks with congratulations and messages of support.

I promise to work to the best of my capabilities to ensure our members receive the best representation possible, that we expand our membership and that all Canadians – unionized or not – have standard of living that eradicates poverty.

I wish all of you a happy, healthy and restful holiday season.

In solidarity,

Handwritten signature of Mark Hancock in black ink, consisting of stylized initials 'MH' followed by a more elaborate signature.

MARK HANCOCK
National President

:jv/ceu
January 11, 2016 – 5:47 pm