



# ENERGY



This profile is intended to provide CUPE members with basic information about the sector they work in from a national perspective. Find all our sector profiles and more information online at [cupe.ca](http://cupe.ca)

CUPE represents 33,700 energy sector workers in electricity generation (hydro-electric, nuclear, wind and fossil fuel utilities and small scale production), distribution and transmission.

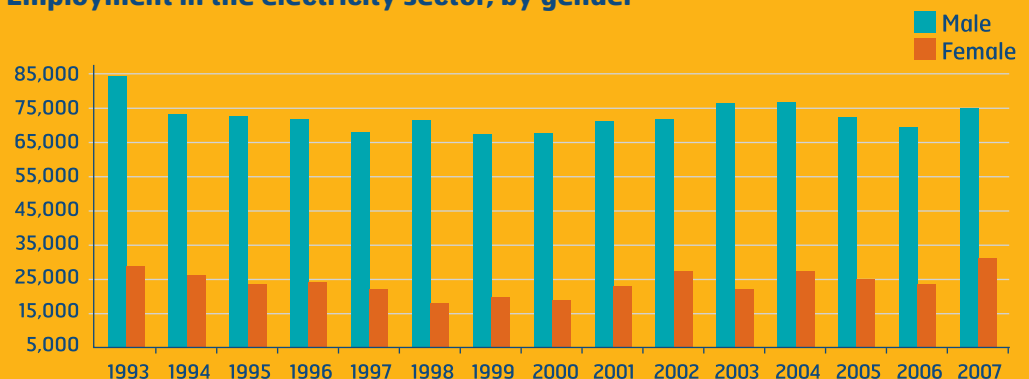
CUPE has been active in the defence of public ownership of electrical utilities. In Canada, only about 25 per cent of electrical generation is from private utilities.

CUPE represents members in both public and private sector workplaces. Our members are inside, outside and professional workers in Alberta, Ontario, Manitoba, and Quebec. We represent some workers at the federal level, employed as trades and maintenance workers, customer service representatives, accountants, administration assistants, billing and records agents, communications staff, drafters,

programmer analysts, technologists, power-line workers, technicians, clerks, skilled trades workers, atomic energy workers, and call centre workers.

In the public sector, CUPE represents energy workers at all three levels of government. At the municipal level CUPE represents workers at local distribution companies (EPCOR in Edmonton, ENMAX in Calgary, and a dozen local distribution companies (LDCs) across Ontario, such as Toronto Hydro and Greater Sudbury Hydro). Provincially, CUPE has workers at both provincial crown utilities (including Manitoba Hydro, Hydro-Québec, and Ontario Power Generation) and the Ontario provincial safety authority (Ontario Electrical Safety Authority). Finally, at the federal level CUPE represents workers in

Employment in the electricity sector, by gender



**2 PRIVATIZATION**  
Green energy jobs should be public.

**2 JUST TRANSITION**  
No plan to protect workers and their communities as industry transforms.

**4 PENSIONS**  
Members face ongoing attacks on decent pensions.

**4 INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION**  
Working with allies to keep energy public around the world.

production and research as well as those at regulatory Crown corporations (Atomic Energy of Canada Limited).

In the private sector, CUPE has members in Hydro One, TransAlta, Bruce Power, Enwave and Northwind Solutions.

The latest demographic information for the energy sector comes from a 2008 study showing women make up 25.4 per cent of employees across the sector and 6.1 per cent of trades staff, engineers and managers or supervisors. These numbers compare poorly to women's overall participation as 46.9 per cent of the total Canadian workforce. Racialized workers make up eight per cent of all electricity sector workers, compared to 15 per cent of the total Canadian workforce. They are a rapidly growing group in the energy sector. Aboriginal workers represent three per cent of energy industry workers, on par with the national workforce average.

Green energy jobs should be public, but the push to increase renewable energy generation has been directed mostly towards the private sector.

Just Transition plans are needed to protect workers and their communities as the industry transforms.

### Other unions

CUPE represents about a third of workers in the electricity sector. In addition to CUPE, a number of other unions represent workers in the electricity sector. Some of the larger unions include the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), International Associa-

tion of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAMAW), the Canadian Office and Professional Employees Union (COPE), and the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada (PIPSC).

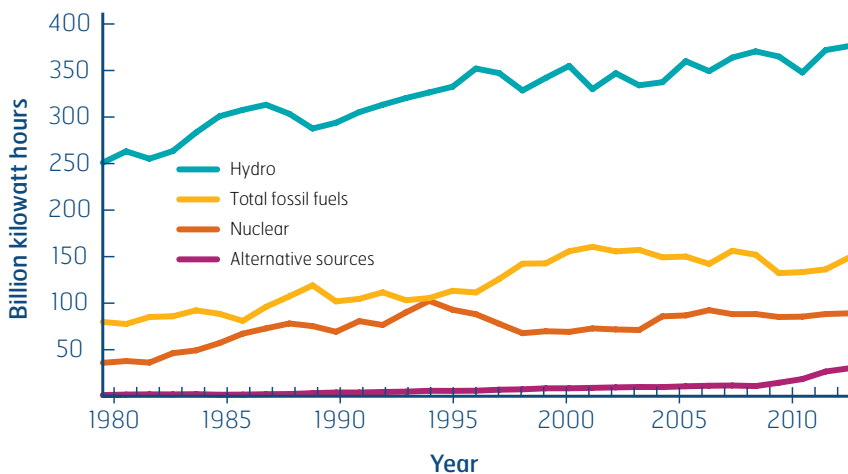
### ISSUES

#### Privatization

Across Canada, the push to increase renewable energy generation has been directed mostly towards the private sector. Provinces have promoted private and cooperative solar, wind and tidal generation projects. This approach undermines publicly-owned and centrally managed electricity generation. Green energy jobs should be public.

The energy sector in Manitoba is under increased threat of privatization from the new Progressive Conservative government, but the short-term threat is the further corporatization of the utility and increases to the trend of contracting out.

Total electricity net generation in Canada



In Alberta, EPCOR has divested entirely from its power generation business, selling it to the private sector. The utility has nonetheless retained control of distribution and transmission, as well as sector technologies such as signals and metering. ENMAX, which is owned by the City of Calgary, is investing in the expansion of public solar and wind generation projects.

In Quebec, CUPE locals are campaigning to maintain public ownership of power, with an emphasis on bringing new wind generation under the provincial public utility, Hydro-Québec. The loss of many jobs in the atomic energy sector following the 2012 closure of the Gentilly-2 nuclear plant (decommissioning continues), illustrated the Quebec government's lack of adequate planning for a fair and equitable transition for displaced workers. Just Transition plans are needed to protect workers and their communities as the industry transforms.

A global trend in the privatization of public assets has emerged called "asset recycling" that seeks to monetize and marketize public assets for private gain. Asset recycling can take the form of sale and lease-back agreements, concession arrangements, franchises or the private management of public infrastructure. An example of this is Ontario's privatization of its transmission company Hydro One. Money from the sale was directed to an asset trust to fund infrastructure projects. This model will likely be replicated in other areas across the country.

This new threat to public energy comes in addition to privatization's continuing creep in the energy sector. Incentives for the private ownership of decentralized

renewable generation, the private development of new direct-current transmission lines for export, and the selling-off of local distribution companies are all techniques employed to extend the reach of privatization.

In the UK, public support for renationalization of privatized utilities, including electricity utilities, has surpassed two-thirds. Calls for renationalization of electrical and other utilities are growing across Europe and northern Africa, along with calls for increased regulation and a transition to green energy generation. These calls have been heeded in Germany, Spain and France where a process of "remunicipalization" is underway that involves bringing privatized utilities back under public ownership. Internationally, the privatization of public utilities continues even as people become wary of the failures and broken promises of privatized monopoly utilities.

### BARGAINING

While the federal government regulates the environmental impacts of electricity generation – such as watersheds for hydro-electric production, atomic energy and inter-provincial transmission – all other aspects of the energy sector are provincial responsibilities. Electrical generation, distribution and transmission fall under provincial jurisdiction, organized into sub-provincial corporations in Ontario and Alberta. Structures for bargaining mirror these arrangements.

Ontario, for example, has many bargaining units across the electricity market. Hydro One agreements are regularly used as a base for comparison by provincial and other employers at local distribution companies. Of concern in Ontario is the continued increase of temporary and contract workers at Hydro One and Ontario Power Generation. This is a deliberate targeting of workers' wages and benefits to contain costs.

Convincing governments to take a medium and long-term view of retention and recruitment of electricity workers has been a struggle, and will likely remain an issue.

A process of "remunicipalization" is underway in Germany, Spain and France that involves bringing privatized utilities back under public ownership.

Our one local in Manitoba engages in informal communication with Unifor and IBEW locals to facilitate bargaining. CUPE engages in centralized bargaining in Quebec through a voluntary union coalition. In Alberta, CUPE has one utility local and one municipal local covering members in the municipal utility.

Convincing governments to take a medium and long-term view of retention and recruitment of electricity workers has been a struggle and will likely remain an issue for some time. CUPE members in the electricity sector expect to be subject to continued pressure to give up their defined benefit pension plans and switch to target benefit or defined contribution plans. Contracting-out and the increase of temporary hires remain issues at bargaining tables across the sector.

### PENSIONS

In Ontario, the province has been pushing to have pension plans move to a 50 per cent employee contribution model for CUPE 1000 at both Hydro One and OPG. Municipal utility workers are covered by Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System (OMERS), which has 50 per cent employer/employee contributions. Alberta locals have reported that demands for concessions on pensions are an issue at bargaining tables.

### CAMPAIGNS

Major local union campaigns include health and safety, a plan for funding fair and sustainable transition to a low carbon economy (following the UN process for a Just Transition) and pushing governments to plan for succession in the industry through training and recruitment.

CUPE works with allies to keep energy public all over the world. Our international electricity campaigns include working to

support public ownership of the energy sector, pushing for action to address climate change and expanding international coordination of energy sector policy. CUPE works with the newly established energy sector committee of Public Services International as well as other global organizations, such as IndustriALL, Right to Energy – SOS Future, and Trade Unions for Energy Democracy.

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- Tools to help you and your local
- Success stories from across the country
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