

NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S REPORT

March 2012 – June 2012

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

The second quarter of 2012 has proven to be an incredibly busy one for our union on a number of fronts.

Hundreds of activists came together this spring as nine of our ten provincial divisions met in convention.

Austerity was the order of the day in budgets at both the federal and provincial levels, making for layoffs in some instances and a much tougher public sector bargaining climate in all jurisdictions.

Further afield, public protest against austerity has seen the Socialist Party regain power in France and the people of Greece will enter their second national elections in a two-month period.

Students in Québec have been waging an epic three-month long strike over the issue of tuition hikes, a dispute that remains unresolved and includes a legislative attack on civil liberties in the presence of Bill 78.

As detailed within this report, the Harper government, one year into their majority mandate, are radically altering many features of Canada's social safety net including Old Age Security (OAS) to Employment Insurance (EI) and our country's immigration rules.

Finally, as detailed in previous reports, we have about one-half of our almost 4,000 collective agreements open for renewal in an extremely difficult bargaining environment. We are starting to see more job action and many strike votes as members fight to defend past gains and to make improvements.

As always, I salute all of our activists and staff who are working hard day in and day out on behalf of the over 618,000 members we are privileged to represent.

1. Regional/Service Division Updates

British Columbia

Just over 500 delegates met at the annual CUPE British Columbia convention held in Victoria April 25-28, 2012.

Delegates heard a spirited address from NDP Leader Adrian Dix, leading the polls in British Columbia and coming off of two crucial by-election victories in Chilliwack-Hope and Port Moody-Coquitlam.

Delegates reaffirmed their commitment to the “Ten Percent Shift” campaign. As well, a very moving April 28 Day of Mourning Ceremony was held at Victoria City Hall.

Alberta

The annual CUPE Alberta convention was held in Red Deer between March 22-24, 2012.

About 200 delegates debated a range of resolutions including a major policy paper titled “CUPE – Connecting in Alberta” which focused on defending public services, reaching CUPE members, and strengthening our labour movement and our image.

On April 23, the Alberta election was held and despite virtually all polls that suggested otherwise, the Progressive Conservatives retained power which they have held since 1970. The NDP increased its share of the vote and doubled their seat count to four, attaining official party status.

My sincere thanks and congratulations to the following CUPE activists who ran for the NDP in the election:

- Collette Singh (Local 8) – Calgary-McCall;
- Derek Seelinger (Local 474) – Red Deer North;
- Mike Scott (Local 30) – Strathcona-Sherwood Park;
- Don Munroe (Local 37) – Calgary-Fort;
- Trudy Grebenstein (Local 3550) – Barrhead, Morinville-Westlock.

Saskatchewan

The annual CUPE Saskatchewan convention was held in Saskatoon between February 29 and March 2, 2012.

Delegates debated a key policy paper titled “Old Challenges – New Focus; Middle and Working Class Losing Ground and Unions Under Attack”. Debate focused on economic inequality, defending against privatization, and union image.

Delegates also heard a detailed legal update on the ongoing charter challenge on essential services legislation. The Wall government has appealed the Court of Queen's Bench decision which determined Saskatchewan's essential services legislation violates Section 2 (d) of Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedom.

The latest challenge to labour in Saskatchewan is the May 2, 2012 release by the Wall government of "A Consultation Paper on the Renewal of Labour Legislation in Saskatchewan", which poses questions for reform for virtually all aspects of provincial labour legislation.

Manitoba

About 200 delegates met in Dauphin, Manitoba between May 3-5, 2012 for the annual CUPE Manitoba convention.

NDP Premier, Greg Selinger, addressed delegates affirming support for public services and pensions, including the expansion of CPP. He also voiced opposition to moving OAS entitlements from 65 to 67 years.

Delegates debated and adopted a policy paper titled "Holding Firm and Pushing Back: Being Bold in a Time of Assault", which focussed on fair taxation, pay equity, pensions, and fighting privatization in all of its forms.

Congratulations to Sister Kelly Moist (CUPE Local 1063), elected as CUPE Manitoba president.

Ontario

About 1,000 delegates gathered for the annual CUPE Ontario convention in Windsor, Ontario.

Delegates debated an action plan titled "Fighting Together – Fighting to Win", which focused on resisting austerity and fighting back against any and all concessions being demanded at any bargaining table.

The convention also saluted and pledged support for CUPE Local 966 (Ontario Works) and all locals who had been on picket lines over the past year.

The Ontario budget, on the heels of banker Don Drummond's report, imposes significant restraint on public services as well as driving privatization. Government plans for provincial pension plans are a key challenge which represent a priority file for our union.

Quebec

CUPE Québec is in a non-convention year, but our union remains busy on a number of fronts.

Pensions remain front and center in Québec with much discussion about “unsustainable” public sector pensions. Building on the work of our huge CUPE Québec pension conference held in February, our union is responding to all pension challenges.

CUPE Local 1638, representing outside workers in Québec City, successfully challenged the layoff of 162 blue collar workers, the Québec Labour Board ruled the layoffs were a lockout and ordered the reinstatement of the workers. The Québec City mayor continues to openly campaign regarding needed labour law reforms and pensions.

CUPE Québec, alongside the Québec Federation of Labour, has been supporting Québec students in their struggle with the Charest government. Rumours continue that there may be a provincial election this year in Québec.

Nova Scotia

Delegates gathered in Yarmouth for the 49th CUPE Nova Scotia convention. Among others, they heard from NDP Premier Darrell Dexter who thanked members for their work as public employees and their leadership in Nova Scotia.

Delegates debated a strategic directions policy paper titled “A Blueprint for the Future”, which focused on membership communication, reaching out to communities, and strengthening labour’s image.

Collective bargaining challenges and the focus on devastating cuts to school boards were the subject of much debate. As the report goes to print, I note a tentative agreement has been reached with our provincial health care negotiations.

Newfoundland and Labrador

About 100 delegates and staff met in Gander for the annual CUPE Newfoundland and Labrador convention held between April 30 and May 2, 2012.

NDP Leader Lorraine Michael addressed delegates and thanked CUPE for the tremendous support received in last fall’s election. She pledged the commitment of our new and larger caucus to stand up for public services.

Delegates debated a range of resolutions dealing with CETA, pensions, and workplace health and safety. In observing a moment of silence in remembrance of all members/staff who passed away in the past year, a special observance was made for CUPE Local 4939 member, Stephanie Chaisson, tragically murdered by her ex-spouse in her workplace in Corner Brook in March.

New Brunswick

Almost 300 CUPE New Brunswick delegates met in the 49th annual CUPE New Brunswick convention held in Fredericton between April 12-14, 2012.

Special guest speaker, Brother Barry O'Neill (CUPE British Columbia president) did a presentation on the "Ten Percent Shift" in support of local communities. Delegates also debated a strategic priorities policy paper which focussed on the economy, pensions, bargaining, and anti-privatization priorities.

A demonstration was held at Fredericton airport in support of striking PSAC members. Delegates also paid tribute to Brother Rick MacMillan (a former NEB member) who stepped down after almost 20 years as division secretary-treasurer.

Congratulations to the following CUPE members elected to councils in the New Brunswick municipal elections held in May:

Atholville – Betty Cleveland Firth (Local 2354) and Maurice Power (Local 1190);

Beresford – Bruno Poirier (Local 1418);

Charlo – Denis McIntyre (Local 1085);

Dalhousie – Jacqueline Leclair (Local 1418);

Memramcook – Donald Leblanc (Local 2070; mayor), and Robert Cormier (Local 1190);

Miramichi – Gerry Cormier (Local 1418; mayor), and Billy Fleiger (Local 1190);

Sackville – Robert Berry (retired member of Local 2338; mayor), Bill Evans (Local 3433), and Mike Tower (Local 963);

Saint Leolin – Mathieu Chayer (Local 4848; mayor);

St. Martins – Jason W. Garnett (Local 1128).

Prince Edward Island

Just over 100 delegates and guests gathered in Charlottetown for the annual convention of CUPE Prince Edward Island held from May 10-11, 2012.

Delegates heard from Prince Edward Island Premier, Robert Ghiz, who detailed the negative effects of Harper government restraint in terms of health care funding and equalization payments, plus his opposition to moving OAS entitlement to age 67.

Delegates debated a range of resolutions including support for striking Québec students and the proposed provincial Harmonized Sales Tax (HST). The convention also approved moving to a full-time book-off for the provincial division president.

Airline Service Division

CUPE flight attendants at Air Canada have, in recent months, offered their support to Air Canada pilots and maintenance staff, both denied their free collective bargaining rights by the Harper government. As well, our union joined a chorus of opposition to announced bonuses paid to senior Air Canada executives.

CUPE achieved a settlement in an over decade long dispute with former directors of Canada 3000 airlines which will see 3,900 former employees of the airline, which went bankrupt in 2001, receive a \$330 settlement.

Approximately 150 flight attendants with Canadian North Airlines have ratified a first collective agreement. Canadian North is a 100 per cent Aboriginal owned airline operation out of Yellowhead, with bases in Edmonton and Calgary.

Hospital Employees' Union (HEU)

HEU members are in full campaign mode fending off a raid by the British Columbia Nurses Union after the British Columbia Labour Board ordered a vote of HEU LPNs. Our national union is supporting HEU members in this important vote.

2. Federal Scene/Canadian Labour Congress (CLC)

Federal Budget

The first Harper majority federal budget is a sweeping document, centered around austerity and a radical revamping of certain key Pan-Canadian programs including the Old Age Security (OAS) program and Employment Insurance (EI).

Budget 2012 adds to Canada's unemployment rolls with some 20,000 direct layoffs plus up to 50,000 additional layoffs due to restraint measures.

The other over-arching feature of the budget is its omnibus nature including some 430 pages of text, of which 170 pages relate to significant changes to federal environmental law and regulations.

The NDP opposition have attempted without success to split the budget bill to ensure public hearings are held on critical issues such as OAS and EI. Out of the dozens of changes in this draconian document some key provisions include:

- Moving OAS entitlement from 65 to 67 years of age, a change that will be fully implemented by 2029. Debate to date has proven there is no justifiable fiscal reason for this change; rather it appears to be an ideological thrust related to maintaining labour force participation rates beyond 65 years of age.
- Canada's Employment Insurance (EI) system is set to receive its most radical overhaul ever. In the weeks since the budget was introduced, government has clarified the scope of these changes.

The EI Board of Referees will be eliminated by early 2013; this body, which includes labour nominated board members, deals with over 28,000 worker appeals each year. It will be replaced by some three dozen government-appointed commissioners.

EI benefits will be reduced for all claimants who qualify; remember, only about 40% of the unemployed even qualify for EI today, and things are about to get much worse.

CUPE Education Assistants (EAs) working in public school systems and seasonal municipal workers are, by the nature of their work, frequent claimants (defined by the federal government as having three or more claims and 60 weeks of benefits in a five year period). These workers will receive fewer benefits and be forced to accept work unrelated to their careers as government re-defines "suitable work". Check cupe.ca for regular updates.

- The budget charts a course to continue to increase the number of Temporary Foreign Workers (TFWs) entering Canada and will, for the first time, permit employers to pay TFWs up to 15 per cent below the average paid for that type of work locally.
- The budget de-funds and eliminates dozens of agencies including the National Roundtable on the Environment and Economy (NREE).

As well, the National Aboriginal Health Organization (NAHO) will have to close as they lost their \$5 million in operating funding.

Punitive measures such as eliminating health care coverage for refugee asylum seekers and the ending of prisoners' earnings in work programs are also noteworthy provisions of this very cynical and divisive federal budget.

- A new \$8 million commitment enables the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) to investigate groups with charitable tax status to ensure they are not engaging in too much political activity. One of the first casualties of this new form of federal harassment was the highly respected Canadian NGO, Physicians for Global Survival (PGS), their crime, apparently too much advocacy to end the world of nuclear weapons.

Our union continues to work with the CLC on the entire range of federal issues we face, in addition to the above issues, we are focused on:

- Bill C-377 – An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act

This private members bill, which seeks to force onerous financial reporting requirements on all unions, continues to make its way through the parliamentary process.

We plan to speak against this bill at expected fall 2012 parliamentary hearings. I note copycat private members bills in both Ontario and British Columbia and a government discussion paper in Saskatchewan.

- Retirement Security for all Campaign

I plan to attend July's premiers meeting in Nova Scotia to continue to lobby for a badly needed expansion of our CPP/QPP pension plans.

- The CLC's call for a global focus on HIV/AIDS at the G-8 summit is part of labour's global push to secure badly needed financial resources for the Global Fund to fight AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria.

In closing this section of my report, the bottom line when it comes to the Harper government is to recognize both the scope of the challenge and our need to expose their assault on social programs and the opportunity this presents us in 2015 to elect Canada's first ever federal NDP government.

On this note, I was privileged to join a number of leaders and staff within our union at the NDP leadership convention held in late March in Toronto. Thomas Mulcair's victory has been welcomed by all New Democrats and he is off to a good start in terms of his efforts to expose the Harper agenda. He was a guest at our June NEB meeting where a good two way exchange was held.

3. Collective Bargaining/Strikes

CUPE activists and staff across the country continue to be busy at the bargaining table. As of March 6, 2012, we have 1,670 open collective agreements. This represents about 45% of our agreements. During the period of January 1 to March 31, 141 collective agreements were settled.

From now till the end of the year, an additional 495 collective agreements will open.

Progress is slow at the table and CUPE members, particularly in Ontario, have had to take job action to protect collective agreement provisions that they had to struggle to achieve in the past.

PROVINCE	LOCAL	EMPLOYER	# OF MEMBERS	STRIKE BEGAN	DURATION
Ontario	1287	Lincoln County Humane Society	14	February 24	89 days
Ontario	4948	Toronto Public Library Board	1,500	March 19	11 days
Ontario	4207	Brock University	37	March 26	10 days
Ontario	3393	St. Christopher House	200	May 29	9 days
Ontario	966	Peel Region Ontario Works	359	May 3	on-going
Ontario	4989	Renfrew County Ontario Works	22	May 10	on-going
Ontario	966	Region of Peel Public Works	280	June 4	on-going
Ontario	966	Transhelp Unit	92	June 10	on-going

After 89 days on the picket line, members of CUPE Local 1287 at the Lincoln County Humane Society can hold their heads high as they return to work with a collective agreement that provides for nominal wage increases and none of the concessions originally sought by the employer. The employer had sought a two-tier wage and benefit system that would have substantially reduced wages for new hires and provided no benefits.

Members of CUPE Local 4948, Toronto Public Library Board employees, took strike action to protect library services and their jobs. After 11 days on the picket lines, and with much public support, CUPE Local 4948 successfully achieved a collective agreement that ensures most of the members will be protected from privatization, branch closures, and cuts to hours of service.

At Brock University, 37 ESL instructors staged a 10 day strike in late March. Members of CUPE Local 4207 were forced to take this action after the university rejected a Memorandum of Agreement that they had agreed to in good faith. The second deal reached after 10 days on a picket line was far superior to the original deal and provides for good job security provisions in the first collective agreement.

Almost 200 members of CUPE Local 3393, St. Christopher House in Toronto, were forced onto the streets when the employer provoked a strike by offering a five year collective agreement with no wage increases and again significant benefit concessions. The employees of this social services agency, which provides services to vulnerable people, are amongst some of the lowest paid social service workers in Toronto as a result of government underfunding.

Employees of Peel Region Ontario Works (social services), members of CUPE Local 966, are on the picket lines. This unit of predominantly female workers is fighting against benefit concessions and to gain a decent wage increase. Comparative municipal employers in the area have signed collective agreements with wage increases in the 2% range and no concessions. Members have rejected a memorandum brought back after a few days on strike.

Members of CUPE Local 4989, Renfrew County Ontario Works, are also on strike to retain the benefit package in their collective agreement. The 22 members of this local union have faced a very difficult employer who refuses to move off of their opening position on all substantive matters. Wages will not be an issue in this bargaining. The benefit concessions are significant and include removing a short term sick leave/long term disability plan to be replaced by an accumulated sick leave plan.

Just like their sister unit in CUPE Local 966 at Region of Peel Ontario Works, the 280 members in the Region of Peel Public Works have been forced on to a picket line to fight concessions asked by the employer. Where comparative municipalities in the area have already settled collective agreements with no concessions and decent wage increases, the Region of Peel continues to demand concessions of its employees. The Peel regional council is made up of politicians from these same comparative municipalities who have settled collective agreements without incident.

The issues with the CUPE Local 966 Transhelp Unit are similar to those of the other two CUPE Local 966 units – equal treatment with non-bargaining unit staff and management and unionized staff in neighbouring municipalities, along with retention of benefits.

4. Organizing Report

During the period beginning March 1, 2012 and ending May 31, 2012, CUPE membership grew by 1,615 new members in 29 bargaining units under new certifications across the country. In this same period CUPE had 12 applications at various labour boards across the country that could potentially result in 2,527 new members.

In every region across the country there continues to be active projects at various steps in the organizing process. There are 73 active campaigns that, if successful, will result in excess of 9,117 new members. The number of representation campaigns due to government restructuring and mergers numbers seven during the period and has the potential to impact 1,343 members.

Atlantic Region

The Nova Scotia Labour Board issued their ruling at Highcrest Place with respect to the bargaining unit configuration. Unfortunately they ruled against the inclusion of casual employees. Despite voting taking place over a year ago, we are still asking the board to count the vote now.

We now have two active campaigns in the region – one campaign targeting potential new members from the municipal sector and another campaign targeting bus drivers.

Maritimes Region

One application currently sits at the New Brunswick Labour Board for employees at Thomas Hall long term care facility in Fredericton. In addition, the region has six active campaigns in the health care sector that has the potential for 600 new unionized employees to enjoy the benefits of becoming a CUPE member.

Québec Region

CUPE recently organized 86 new members in four units. Welcome to our newest Québec members in two bargaining units at the Nunavik Health and Social Services Board, National Public Health Institute of Quebec unit, and the Joint Sector Based Association for Occupational Health and Safety Provincial Administration Sector unit. Staff and activists continue to pursue organizing opportunities in the municipal and energy sectors.

Ontario Region

During the period there was 11 successful certification attempts representing an increase of 1,020 new members. Welcome to CUPE's newest members from Ontario at Africans in Partnership Against Aids, Sunwing Airlines, Brockville General Hospital, Nipissing Transition House, St. Stephen's Residence, Kenora Rainy River CAS, Durham District School Board Continuing Education, City of Hawkesbury, Rainy River District School Board Education Assistants, Town of Englehart, and Supportive Housing Peel.

There are currently three applications in front of the Ontario Labour Relations Board with the potential for almost 1,061 new members. Staff are also working on 37 active projects with an undetermined number of members that would be in excess of 4,600 new members.

Manitoba Region

The region has two active campaigns at the card signing stage and one at the labour board. The first campaign is in the education sector and the second campaign is in the social services sector. The project at the labour board is for a transition house. If successful, the three campaigns will result in 117 new members.

Saskatchewan Region

CUPE welcomes 20 office employees from Catholic Family Services into membership. The region has four active campaigns in the school board sector that has the potential to increase membership by over 200 new members.

Staff and activists are in the planning stages of creating a framework to successfully defend CUPE positions in the next phase of provincial health care restructuring. The first wave of this restructuring could see the movement of up to 1,800 health care workers of which at least 800 will be CUPE members.

Alberta Region

Welcome to 110 new members in Alberta from six new units. Employees from Marshall House, Rotary House, Strathcona Women's Shelter, Maplethorpe Contracting Limited at the Municipality of Red Deer, Region 3 Family Care Society, and The Gardens Long Term Care Facility have all voted to be represented by CUPE. Organizing in the Alberta region continues on a number of fronts including the social services, long term care, and transportation sectors.

British Columbia Region

One new certification, one voluntary recognition, and one tag in to an existing unit have resulted in 120 new CUPE members in British Columbia. CUPE welcomes Early Childhood Educators in the City of Surrey, employees of the Regional District of Central Kootenay, and employees at the Nanaimo Economic Development Department.

A number of organizing opportunities present themselves in British Columbia as the region is active on 13 projects with the potential for over 700 new members.

Hospital Employees' Union (HEU)

Organizing staff and activists in HEU, with the assistance of CUPE National, continue to be busy defending members from the raid by the British Columbia Nurses Union who have systematically attacked HEU LPNs on a facility by facility basis. The BCLRB recently ruled that the British Columbia Nurses Union has met the threshold to force a representation vote. The mail-in voting is currently underway. The vote will affect 6,700 LPNs in British Columbia.

Unrelated to the raid, HEU overwhelmingly won a runoff vote with BCNU for LPNs at the new P3 Hospital in Fort St. John. Welcome to the 194 members who voted by a margin of 80% to be represented by HEU.

While working to preserve LPNs, HEU has organized 159 new members into four units. Welcome to CUPE to employees at Columbia Garden Village, Crosstown Clinic, Three Links, and Kiwanis Care Centre.

5. CUPE Conferences/Meetings

- **National Health and Safety Conference**

CUPE's 11th National Health and Safety Conference will be held in Ottawa between October 12 and 14, 2012. Please check cupe.ca for more information; as well, local assistance is available for eligible locals through our National Convention/Conference Assistance Fund.

- **National Bargaining Conference – February 4 to 8, 2013**

In accordance with our 2011 National Strategic Directions policy paper adopted at our national convention, CUPE's first ever National Bargaining Conference will be held in Ottawa. I urge all locals to attend this important gathering.

- The **CUPE Western Municipal Workers Conference** was held in Edmonton from May 24-26, 2012.

- **Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) Annual Conference – June 1-4, 2012**

A delegation of CUPE leaders, members, and staff were in Saskatoon for the FCM annual conference. Every year, CUPE takes part in the conference, renewing connections and building new alliances with municipal leaders on issues of shared concerns. CUPE's participation at the FCM ensures workers' expertise and ideas help set the municipal agenda on infrastructure, privatization, trade, and other important topics – such as the impact of proposed changes to Employment Insurance on municipalities. Read CUPE's FCM factsheets and Communities booklet at cupe.ca/communities.

- **Emergency Medical Service (EMS)** locals met in Moncton, New Brunswick on June 6 and 7, 2012. I was pleased to be able to bring greetings to this important sector meeting.
- **CUPE Energy Workers** will hold their annual sector meeting on June 26 and 27, 2012 in Toronto.
- **CUPE's 2nd HIV/AIDS Strategic Meeting** will be held in October 2012. This meeting arises out of the national convention's adopted Strategic Directions policy document.
- **Canadian Blood Services** workers, members of three separate unions including ours, are currently planning another sector meeting to discuss issues of common concern.

6. Pensions

In addition to the wide range of issues our union faces, pensions remain a very current issue at all levels of our union, locally, regionally, and nationally.

At a local level, we continue to support all efforts to address significant challenges being experienced in the City of Saint John and the City of Regina plans. In Quebec, the mayors of Montréal and Québec City (and others) continue to talk openly about what they term their unsustainable pensions.

At the regional level and on a very positive note, after over six years of hard work, our union has, along with three sister unions, signed the joint trust agreement for the Nova Scotia Association of Health Organizations (NSAHO) pension plan.

CUPE has led this initiative beginning in 2006 negotiations. Kudos to National Representative, Brother Wayne Thomas, and CUPE National Research Officer, Brother Kevin Skerrett, for their leadership on this major breakthrough for health care workers in Nova Scotia.

In Ontario, former banker Don Drummond's report and the Ontario budget itself, which adopted these Drummond recommendations, have laid the groundwork for a potential shift in the province's commitment to DB pensions.

The issue of "capping" provincial contributions, forcing 50/50 contribution schemes and balancing funding shortfalls by way of "plan design adjustments", all represent major policy changes which are currently the subject of stakeholder consultations. CUPE National is providing direct assistance to the Ontario region for this important initiative.

Most provincial budgets mentioned pensions this spring, including:

- Ontario and Manitoba reaffirmed their support of CPP expansion as opposed to the federal government's proposed PRPP plan.
- The Newfoundland and Labrador budget earmarked one-third of any surplus revenue for investment in their provincial pension plans.
- The New Brunswick budget referenced the ongoing timetable for the review of pensions which is now being chaired by the premier. As this report goes to print, an agreement has been reached regarding provincial plans and securing them for the long term.
- Saskatchewan announced a consultation on a new funding regime for public sector pension plans in January 2012.
- The PEI budget outlined recent plan shortfalls and special payment obligations by the province, causing them to announce plans for consultations with all stakeholders to put all pension plans "... on a sound and sustainable footing".

The bottom line, at least for me, is that pensions will remain a front-burner issue for our union, one we must give the priority required to ensure we do our utmost to best represent members' interests.

Beyond our workplace plans, as mentioned earlier in this report, as Canada's largest union, we must remain vigilant in demanding a badly needed expansion of the CPP/QPP.

The federal government is resisting this move, opting for the so-called Pooled Registered Pension Plan (PRPP), a glorified RRSP, one in which employers are not required to contribute anything.

Ironically, I noticed in a recent article that the government of Australia's state DC plan will require mandatory employer contribution rates to rise from 9.5% of payroll to 12% of payroll by 2019. This is more than double the required employer CPP contribution rate of 4.95%.

As well, in Australia, the maximum contribution earnings level is \$175,000/year compared to the \$50,100/year YMPE in Canada.

I urge all locals to remain vigilant in defense of our public pension plans. We also must continue to support any and all private sector unions, such as the Teamsters at CP Rail, who face pension concessions from their employer.

7. Global Justice

I am pleased to welcome Sister Kelti Cameron (former National Municipal Research Officer) as our new global justice staff officer. Our global justice work continues to be a very busy part of our national union's work, including the following activities in this reporting period:

- We wrote the president of Columbia on behalf of our sister union, SINTRAEMCALI, over concerns of ongoing violence and the unjust dismissal of 51 workers of EMCALI (City of Cali water workers) whom the ILO has concluded were unjustly fired.
- Under the banner of our global union, Public Services International (PSI), CUPE provided on-the-ground support for the State of Wisconsin recall campaign of Governor Scott Walker.

In addition, we co-sponsored a Toronto screening of a new documentary, "We Are Wisconsin", dealing with labour's ongoing struggles in that state.

- Our national union sponsored a pan-Canadian tour of Filipino teacher activist Francisca (France) Castro, a member of the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT) – Philippines.

Sister France attended the CUPE division conventions in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and British Columbia as part of our global justice fund project co-sponsored by CUPE Local 4600 at Carleton University in Ottawa.

- We are offering financial support to the Feminist Alliance for International Action (FAFIA) who, along with the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC), were granted standing to a hearing of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) in Washington, D.C. over the disappearance and murder of Aboriginal women and girls in British Columbia.

8. Personal/In Memoriam

In Memoriam

We mourn the passing of Sister Stephanie Chaisson of CUPE Local 4939, Corner Brook, Newfoundland and Labrador, a victim of domestic violence who succumbed to her injuries on March 26, 2012.

We also mourn the passing of Brother Shabir Velji of CUPE Local 4095, Calgary, Alberta, who passed away suddenly on June 4, 2012.

I have also offered my condolences on behalf of our union to the families of Sister Jennifer Williams, retiree from the Hamilton Area Office, who passed away on March 10; Brother James Lynd, retiree from the Ontario Regional Office, who passed away on April 12; Brother Andrew (Nap) Milroy, retiree from the Lethbridge Area Office, who passed away on April 14; and Sister Josephine Ingle, retiree from the Ontario Regional Office who passed away on June 5.

Retirements

I offer my sincere thanks, congratulations and best wishes to the following CUPE staff who have announced their plans to retire.

Sister Julia Ardiel – Windsor Area Office – June 1, 2012
Brother Michel Bergeron – Trois-Rivières Area Office – June 1, 2012
Brother Serge Champagne – Québec Regional Office – June 1, 2012
Sister Diane Fortier-Raymond – Rouyn-Noranda Area Office – June 1, 2012
Sister Andréa Boudreau – Bathurst Area Office – August 1, 2012

From our National Executive Board (NEB), I wish to acknowledge both the service and the dedicated efforts of Sister Nathalie Stringer (RVP – Québec) and Brother Mike Davidson (RVP – Manitoba) both of whom tendered their resignations since my last report. I wish them both every success in all future endeavors.

I also welcome Sister Ginette Paul (CUPE Local 2000 – Québec Hydro) (RVP – Québec) and Sister Kelly Moist (CUPE Local 1063 – Workers Compensation Board Manitoba) (RVP – Manitoba). Welcome aboard sisters and best wishes.

9. Conclusion

As mentioned, this spring nine of our 10 provincial divisions met in convention. It was a privilege for Brother Charles and I to travel the country and meet our tremendously dedicated rank and file activists.

At each convention we listened to spirited debate and members' clear commitment to stand up for public services and to defend our free collective bargaining rights.

We also talked economics from a workers perspective at a series of breakfast meetings.

These were tremendous gatherings, arising out of our Strategic Directions policy paper adopted in Vancouver last fall. We plan to build upon this work, "Changing the Channel on the Economy", to ensure as workers that we do not cede this ground to business groups. Look for more information on the economy this coming fall.

On a personal note, I want to offer my sincere thanks to the many members and staff who offered their condolences and messages of solidarity on the passing of my father on May 16 and my mother on June 10. Your thoughtfulness is sincerely appreciated; many thanks.

In closing, I again want to thank all CUPE activists and staff for your ongoing efforts on behalf of the 618,000 members we are privileged to represent. I hope that each of you are able to grab some time for a well deserved break with families throughout the summer season.

In solidarity,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paul Moist".

PAUL MOIST
National President

:jvp/ceu