

NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S REPORT MARCH 2020 – JUNE 2020

Sisters, Brothers and Friends:

It is pretty surreal to try and put into words just how much has changed since my last report to you in March – and just how much work our union has done to address those changes in the last three months.

While our National Executive Board was last meeting, in March, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic. The total number of cases in Canada had just reached 200, and it seemed that overnight, everything changed. Looking back, things moved a little more slowly than that. It took a few weeks before services were shut down, borders were closed, and “physical distancing” became the norm.

The impacts on our members were immediate, though. CUPE members work on the frontline of public services, and this has put them front and centre in this pandemic. Regardless of where our members work, the ways in which they work has changed in these last three months.

Our members in health care, whether they work in acute care, in long-term care, or in clinics, are working long hours in incredibly stressful conditions, face-to-face with the coronavirus. Our members in emergency services, including paramedics, are doing the same.

Our members in public transportation make sure other essential workers can travel safely between work and home.

Our members working in the airlines sector worked to bring people home, from across the country and around the world, only to see the bottom fall out of their industry and be left facing an uncertain future.

Our members in social services continue to support our most vulnerable populations, in residential settings and in the community. Our members in childcare are supporting parents who continue to work in health care and other essential services.

Our members in education, both K-12 and post-secondary, have adjusted their work to support students who are now learning at home, instead of in classrooms.

MARK HANCOCK
National President/Président national

CHARLES FLEURY
National Secretary-Treasurer/Secrétaire-trésorier national

DENIS BOLDUC, PAUL FAORO, FRED HAHN, JUDY HENLEY, SHERRY HILLIER
General Vice-Presidents/Vice-présidences générales

Our municipal workers are keeping our communities safe and clean, and library workers continue to provide information services.

Our members in the energy sector ensure we are all able to continue working, no matter where we may be working from. And our members in the communications sector are making sure we continue to receive the news of the day.

More than ten percent of CUPE members have been affected in another way – they have been laid off, furloughed, or have lost their jobs entirely. Many more CUPE members who would be returning to summer jobs in our communities won't be recalled this summer. Our members working in the airline sector have been especially hard hit, as have municipal, library, education and childcare workers.

I am so proud of our activists, our leaders, and our staff who have worked tirelessly to support our 700,000 members in the face of the ever-changing landscape we are in.

Together, we have supported our members to know and understand their rights to a safe workplace and have fought to ensure they had access to the necessary personal protective equipment.

We have negotiated redeployment agreements that ensure our communities are safe, while keeping our members working. We have forced employers and governments to recognize the inherent value in the work our members do and the importance of the public services we provide. We have negotiated layoff provisions that protect our members' rights and benefits. We have helped our members understand and access government benefits. And we have ensured our members feel more connected and supported by their union than ever, through digital communications and online meetings.

Federal Government

The federal government reacted quickly to put in place programs to support workers who were impacted by COVID-19. And while there have been many gaps in the supports provided, I will give them credit for being willing to listen and responsive to our concerns in the early days of the pandemic.

CUPE has pushed at every turn to ensure that workers did not fall through the cracks of the patchwork of benefit programs and funding announcements. Our advocacy led to expansion of the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) and a streamlined application system. Our advocacy also led to broader access to the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS).

Unfortunately, there are still cracks in the system. We continue to push for support for those workers who do not qualify for the CERB, and for continued benefits for those who cannot return to work when the 16 weeks of CERB run out. We are still calling for the CEWS to be expanded to cover public employers, like municipalities, libraries, public childcare providers, and post-secondary institutions. We have worked with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to push federal and provincial governments to provide emergency operating funds to local governments. And we continue to push the federal government to support workers in the airline industry.

Long-term Care

The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected those living in long-term care homes across the country. The statistics are horrifying. Four out of five COVID-19-related deaths in Canada have either been residents or staff of a long-term care home. Our country has the highest proportion of deaths in long-term care settings in the world. The impacts on residents, workers, family members, and loved ones are devastating.

COVID-19 did not create the crisis unfolding in long-term care – it's laying bare the problems that have persisted across the sector for years. Decades of underfunding, understaffing, poor working conditions, high levels of violence, and a focus on profits over quality care have eroded Canada's system of long-term care to the breaking point, leaving us tragically unprepared to protect the lives of our most vulnerable.

The pandemic has shown we need to recreate our system of long-term care to transform facilities into places that provide the quality of care we want for our loved ones, and for ourselves as we age.

CUPE is calling on the federal government to show leadership and take action to fix the problems in long-term care now. This starts by bringing long-term care fully into the public health care system, regulating it under the *Canada Health Act*, and providing dedicated and adequate funding for its delivery. That funding needs to be tied to national standards of care, including staffing levels. We are also calling on government to recognize the value of the work in the sector, by increasing wages and benefits and ensuring full-time work for those who want it. And finally, we need to eliminate the for-profit ownership of homes and the contracting out of facility services.

This is a big ask, and it's not going to be easy to achieve. But after years of calling out the crisis in long-term care, we have finally caught the attention of the nation. To take full advantage of this, we have launched a campaign at <https://fixlongtermcare.ca/> – please share it with your friends and family. Together we can finally fix long-term care in this country.

Canadian Labour Congress (CLC)

I need to acknowledge the work of the CLC in coordinating labour's response to the federal government over the last few months. They pulled unions together to talk about sector-specific problems and solutions, and coordinated communications with the federal government, ensuring our collective voices were heard by the powers that be.

The CLC convention scheduled for May 2020 has been postponed. CUPE remains committed to electing new leadership for the CLC and achieving changes both to the constitution and direction of the Congress, at the earliest opportunity. We will of course need your help to do that. As soon as we know when and how that opportunity will present itself, we will let you know.

Human Rights

In May, disturbing reports and images of racism, white supremacy, and violence from across the United States and Canada caught the public's attention. None more so than the video footage of George Floyd, an unarmed black man, killed by Minneapolis police.

CUPE offers our solidarity to the Black community and our racialized members and staff. We acknowledge and respect your rage, fear, pain, and the trauma these images and real-life experiences invoke. We share your grief and outrage. And we join you in condemning the hateful acts of those who promote violence and racism.

We know that marginalized workers are already at greater risk of experiencing workplace violence and harassment, and research shows that violence and harassment spike during times of crisis. This is evident in increasing attacks and violence against our Asian communities, since the COVID-19 crisis began. Our Indigenous communities have also been affected.

We will not be silent in the face of police brutality, white supremacy, and all forms of racist violence in the workplace and in our society. CUPE will remain vigilant in our efforts to ensure diversity and inclusiveness and to fight racism and hate in all its forms.

The Way Forward

We have so much more work to do together.

As we emerge from the first wave of this public health crisis, we are going to face governments who want to make our members pay the price. There will be calls for more austerity, public services will come under attack, and there will be a very real threat of privatization.

CUPE will be leading the charge for a new way of working in this country. And we will be working with the labour movement, with our allies on the ground, and with our friends in the NDP to make sure we rebuild a better Canada for working people.

As NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh said earlier this spring:

In the last few months, our world has changed dramatically.

Many people are wondering when things will return to normal. All of us are looking forward to getting back to a time where we can visit our family and friends, go back to work, and do things like going out to a restaurant or the grocery store without worrying about the risk. But what this crisis has taught us is that we need to do better than “normal.”

Before this pandemic, it was normal for workers to be forced to go into work sick because they didn’t have paid sick leave.

It was normal for families to struggle to get by to pay the bills – living paycheque to paycheque – in fear of what might happen if they were to lose their jobs.

It was normal for essential workers – people who help feed our families or care for the most vulnerable – to not get paid enough to live.

It was normal to have the public health care system starved of funding – leaving us unprepared to face this crisis and unable to care for our seniors safely and with dignity.

We can’t ever go back to “normal.”

Collective Bargaining/Strikes/Lockouts

PROVINCE	LOCAL	EMPLOYER	# OF MEMBERS	STRIKE BEGAN	DURATION (days)
New Brunswick	4193	Commission des déchets solides Népisiguit-Chaleur	21	Lockout – February 13, 2020	125

Strikes and Lockouts

Solid Waste Employees working for the Commission des déchets solides Népisiguit-Chaleur CUPE Local 4193, were locked out by their employer on February 13, 2020.

The employer is asking for concessions on sick leave and union leave. The employer is not willing to respond to proposals until COVID-19 subsides to have a face-to-face negotiation meeting and has refused to suspend the lock-out for that period of time, while still employing replacement workers.

Other Bargaining

The white and blue-collar workers in the Municipality of Nominique unanimously voted in favour of the tentative agreement reached by the parties. The eight-year contract calls for wage increases averaging out to 2.3% per year or up to a maximum of 2.43% based on the Quebec CPI. Other gains were made, including the in-house repatriation of snow removal and abrasive application on sidewalks effective in 2020.

After months of intermittent bargaining for CUPE 873-02 ended up in interest arbitration last fall, BC's emergency dispatchers have a new four-year collective agreement with E-Comm. The deal improves staffing and working conditions while building a solid foundation to help 9-1-1 operators become fully recognized members of BC's first responder community.

The 2,100 library workers at Toronto Public Library, represented by CUPE 4948, have voted overwhelmingly to ratify a new five-year collective agreement that maintains job security and makes some important human rights gains. In addition to securing their existing job security provisions, the union also bargained ground-breaking language on paid leaves for trans-affirming care, as well as domestic violence and sexual assault leave, and achieved success in securing dedicated resources for health and safety.

The University of British Columbia and CUPE 2950, the union representing clerical, library, and theatre workers at the institution, have ratified a new collective agreement following the conclusion of bargaining in early March. Among the key elements addressed in the new agreement was a provision for up to five days of paid domestic violence leave for members or their dependents. The agreement also addresses historically low wages of several classifications of workers at the Chan Centre for the Performing Arts.

Regional Services Division Updates

Maritimes

The Maritimes region is in an enviable position when compared to the rest of the country, with few cases and deaths in the first wave of COVID-19. No mass layoffs have occurred and workers who have been sent home have been paid, thanks to diligent and proactive work from CUPE with provincial authorities. CUPE has set the pattern for all other public sector unions to negotiate mobility agreements to ensure minimal layoffs of workers and maximum pay and benefit continuance.

With federally funded wage top-ups being rolled out, CUPE NB & CUPE PEI both raised the importance of improving wages for all, and that these wage increases be permanent. Many workers who were earning less than \$18 per hour have finally received some recognition with this wage top-up, but fear this will evaporate once the funding from the federal government ends.

While the federal government is taking the right economic approach and is investing in the economy to protect jobs, the Conservative governments of New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island are both repeating the old anti-deficit and austerity line. The NB Bargaining Forward campaign – pushing for wages beyond inflation – will be more relevant than ever. For the moment, a necessary pause has occurred, and provincial strike votes have been postponed, but wage discussions will be front and center as legislatures reopen in both provinces.

New Brunswick

Although nursing home workers were excluded from the wage top-up program, the New Brunswick Council of Nursing Home Unions bargaining team reached a tentative agreement with the province at the end of May. These members have been without a contract since 2016. The tentative agreement will be presented to the membership before the end of June.

After pressure from CUPE, an anti-scab bill will be proposed by the New Brunswick Green Party to address the issues faced by CUPE 4193 members who have been locked-out by their employer, the Chaleur Regional Service Commission, since February 12, 2020. The employer obtained an injunction limiting, amongst other things, the picketing activity of the locked-out employees. CUPE has appealed that injunction. The employer has also filed a lawsuit against the local which is being defended.

Prince Edward Island

In PEI, members of CUPE 501 employed by the City of Charlottetown Wastewater Treatment Plant reached an agreement with the employer and secured 2% per year in wage adjustments for the four years of the agreement. The local was successful in removing a two-tier schedule from the contract, so that all employees have the same hours of work moving forward.

Atlantic

Nova Scotia

On April 18 and 19, Nova Scotia faced an unprecedented tragedy when a mass murderer killed 22 people and left a trail of burned out cars and homes. CUPE mourned with the families, friends, and loved ones of those taken by this senseless act of violence. I extend my gratitude to first responders for their professionalism in the face of this terrifying violence. For the families and friends of the victims and their communities, this tragedy was made even more unbearable by the health crisis and physical distancing we're all struggling with. CUPE members across Canada had Nova Scotians in their hearts.

Nova Scotia schools closed mid-March for "March break" and it has since been announced that schools will remain closed until the fall. Negotiations resulted in all CUPE members being placed on paid administrative leave for the remainder of the school year. Our school board sector also negotiated an emergency protocol that would see school board members volunteer to redeploy to other sectors including long-term care.

The Nova Scotia government announced on May 7, 2020 that there would be a premium of \$2,000 for frontline health care workers. Unfortunately, it excluded facilities funded by the Department of Community Services (DCS), such as group homes and adult residential centres. CUPE immediately lobbied government and employers, and the government reversed its decision and included the DCS funded facilities. CUPE's work was instrumental in ensuring that government recognized all frontline workers.

Newfoundland and Labrador

As the pandemic hit, Newfoundland and Labrador struggled with shortages in personal protective equipment (PPE) in all sectors. The acute PPE shortage brought health care unions in Newfoundland and Labrador together to demand meaningful discussions with government on decisions affecting the health and safety of essential workers. CUPE has had daily discussions with government to ensure the precautionary principle is being followed at all essential workplaces, health care and otherwise. Sector calls have allowed CUPE members to share experiences with respect to this issue, and CUPE NL worked with TaskForce NL, who work to produce PPE in Newfoundland and Labrador, helping to keep our frontline workers safe.

The pandemic has led to the creation of a CUPE Social Services Sector group in Newfoundland Labrador (NL). This group is comprised of locals representing a number of transition houses, shelters and group homes, housing, and the John Howard Society of NL. There have not been any layoffs in the sector as a result of the pandemic and most locals are providing positive updates regarding the availability of PPE and the introduction or updating of standard operating procedures in their workplaces.

In school boards, all employees are on salary continuation and many are working remotely.

The only sector presently bargaining with government is the health care sector. At that table, the government's opening proposals included eliminating any retroactivity for wages beyond the April 1, 2020 effective date. This was rejected and CUPE will continue to fight for a fair collective agreement and a strong pension plan.

Quebec

Several sectors in Quebec have avoided the disastrous consequences of the pandemic on employment. At Hydro Quebec, transit corporations, school commissions, colleges, universities, state-owned corporations, and in the maritime transportation sector, there have been very few layoffs.

In the municipal sector, our locals have been working hard to convince municipalities to maintain services and shun layoffs. Notwithstanding this, municipalities are anticipating shortfalls, and several have started to take an austerity approach to deal with the situation. This has resulted in the layoff of some 8,000 CUPE members, and in significant reductions in the services provided to citizens. Along with the QFL, CUPE has undertaken a number of initiatives vis-à-vis the different levels of government to get them to provide assistance to our municipalities, particularly by investing in public transportation.

Negotiations in the public sector are continuing, notwithstanding the pandemic. While our members working in the health and social services sectors are on the front lines, the Legault government has multiplied its anti-union attacks and its wild public declarations about our negotiations, while still describing our members as "guardian angels". Their continual talking out of both sides of their mouth clashes with the current situation.

In the communications sector, the CERB has helped maintain jobs in the TVA Group, that is paying a supplement to employees in the amount of this subsidy. The foregoing has enabled lower paid employees to receive a remuneration that is very close to their regular salaries.

Finally, the occupational health and safety department has rolled out a campaign in the health care sector to encourage all workers who have been declared COVID-19 positive to submit a claim to the Minimum Standards, Equity, and Occupational Health and Safety Commission. CUPE is encouraging all employees to make such a claim, even though their employer is paying them during their absence. First of all, because the law so stipulates and secondly, because we don't yet know the long-term consequences of the virus.

Ontario

Like the rest of the country, Ontario has had to find new ways to conduct business during this pandemic. While rescheduling conferences and educational has been challenging, some major conventions had to be cancelled altogether until 2021, as finding available space was impossible.

On March 21, the Ontario government issued an emergency order giving hospitals the power to reassign personnel, change shifts, cancel leaves and vacations, have contractors brought in to supplement the workforce and have volunteers and non-bargaining unit workers do bargaining unit work. On March 23 a similar order was issued for long-term care. The orders last for 14 days and can be renewed for a further 14 days and then would have to be passed into law to remain in effect. The Ontario Division started a fightback campaign to raise awareness over this issue and try to prevent any legislation that would prolong this watering down of our collective agreements. During this campaign, the government passed similar orders that affected municipalities.

CUPE Ontario was proactive in addressing this with our members. Telephone town halls were used to get the message out and inform workers of the issue, and to gather information and concerns our members had from the front lines. Letters were sent to the government advocating for, among other things, sick leave benefits for part time members, proper PPE availability, and dismay over the lack of consultation prior to the emergency orders being handed down.

The Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System (OMERS) was again under attack as, for the third time in four years, OMERS is trying to remove guaranteed indexing. Unions, including CUPE, pressured the board to delay voting on changes to the plan until after the COVID-19 crisis. More than 5,000 emails were sent, and the campaign seems to be successful in getting unions and employers on side with the concept of buying back pensionable service during the COVID-19 crisis, as well as opening the plan to part time employees.

Unprecedented times also lead to an unprecedented joint venture, as CUPE Ontario and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) joined forces in a first-ever joint letter to the Premier and the Minister of Municipal Affairs, seeking urgent financial help for struggling municipal governments, which have been hit hard by the pandemic and have yet to receive financial support despite having to continue to provide services.

CUPE's Ontario Council of Hospital Unions (OCHU) has been a leader in the fight for availability and proper use of PPE. They have engaged members in the workplace with a campaign that included a "sticker day", followed by a "poster day", and on April 17 a moment of silence was observed for a member that succumbed to the coronavirus. These measures raise awareness for the need for proper PPE for frontline health care workers.

Our Ontario School Board Council of Unions (OSBCU) was equally busy defending the rights of education workers. They were successful in negotiating redeployment parameters that made redeployments voluntary and gave workers who chose to be redeployed access to emergency childcare funds as well as the “top-up” when working in designated facilities.

Manitoba

Health care workers in Manitoba have faced many of the same struggles as those across the country. After significant public pressure from CUPE, the government agreed to provide 14-days paid administrative leave for health care workers who are sent home due to possible contact with COVID-19 in the workplace, retroactive to March 1. This will ensure workers do not have to rely on their existing sick leave provisions for these absences from work. Single-site rules meant reduced hours and earnings of our member in long-term care. And while the provincial government negotiated an initial redeployment agreement for other health care workers, they shunned future attempts at agreements and instead imposed orders under the *Emergency Measures Act* and Public Health Orders.

Knowing that they will be entering a difficult round of bargaining, our health care members are strategizing how to achieve the best possible outcomes. An online bargaining survey was launched in mid-May and proved a popular engagement tool, with more than 5,000 responses in the first week.

Manitoba Hydro employees are facing an unprecedented layoff of 700 employees throughout the corporation – after unions rejected a proposal to roll back wages. These layoffs are not due to a shortage of work, as there is more work than the current compliment of employees can handle. Rather, it is a political decision by the Pallister government, so they can achieve \$11 million in savings and pour those savings into their general coffers.

In a related move, in mid-April the provincial government moved to reduce workforce costs in the “non-essential” provincial public sector, asking employees to agree to unpaid leave. Again, a wholly political move driven only by fiscal conservatism.

Saskatchewan

Education workers in Saskatchewan took on different roles in the wake of the pandemic, with many supporting students at a distance, including delivering packages containing course material to them at home. In partnership with the Saskatoon Tribal Council, CUPE 8443 members are preparing and delivering 1,000 meals each day to low income families in the area.

Our members in health care faced the same challenges as workers across the country. CUPE 5430 has been busy fighting for adequate safety training and PPE supply, addressing the impact of single-site cohorting on casual workers, and calling for paid leave for those who are prevented from working due to COVID-19 exposure.

Municipal and library workers faced significant layoffs this spring, although these were mitigated in some places through redeployment and reimagining of program delivery. The work of the union continues, with negotiated agreements reached by CUPE 456 (City of Melville), CUPE 2582 (City of Martensville), CUPE 5340 (Town of Grenfell) and CUPE 7667 (EPCOR). Joint job evaluation work is ongoing with CUPE 2669 and Saskatoon Public Library.

Alberta

While many governments in Canada are trying to increase their spending in order to provide support for communities, the Alberta government remains committed to budget cuts. In the midst of the pandemic, the Kenney government cut 15 of 36 grants provided to school districts, and slashed pre-Kindergarten funding for special needs children. The cutbacks have led to numerous layoffs or hiring freezes across the province and have left our education sector locals reeling, with over 5,500 CUPE members and thousands of other K-12 employees from other unions being laid off. We anticipate that September will bring more layoffs, many of which will be permanent.

Of course, governing is about choices, and shortly after the education funding cuts were announced, the same government invested \$7 billion in the Keystone Pipeline project.

Premier Kenney has been quick with announcements and photo opportunities, but unfortunately a lot slower to develop rules and programs to keep the population safe. Days after the Premier announced Alberta would 'share' protective masks with other provinces, our health care workers complained that the remaining masks were of poorer quality than the masks sent elsewhere. Distribution of PPE remains uneven throughout the front lines of our health care and other critical industries. This was obvious in COVID-19 outbreaks at meatpacking facilities where at one site half of the workers became infected and two died.

British Columbia

There may be no greater contrast in pandemic approaches than in the neighbouring provinces of Alberta and BC.

In BC, Premier Horgan has largely eschewed photo ops, and has ensured the province's Chief Public Health Officer and the Minister of Health are front and center in the response to COVID-19.

The provincial government has ensured that all provincially-funded employee groups remained paid until the end of April, and thereafter is encouraging all employers to find productive work in order to keep as many employees as possible on payroll. They have provided a tax-free one-time payment of \$1000 for those whose work was affected by COVID-19, enacted legislation amending the *Employment Standards Act* to provide for up to three unpaid sick leave days and extended the temporary layoff period to 16 weeks to match the federal Canada Emergency Response Benefit period. They were the first government in Canada to strike an Economic Recovery Task Force, with labour representation, to develop plans for rebuilding the economy.

In the meantime, we continue our work to represent our members. CUPE 15 and the BCGEU reached a settlement agreement on a matter related to community home support workers in the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority. The terms of settlement include a commitment to improved notification and consultation, and protection of the CUPE 15 certification.

Our members in the college sector have been engaged in expedited collective bargaining in order to secure an agreement under the existing provincial mandate. This has required some creativity as all sides adjust to negotiating in the time of public health orders that restrict in-person meetings. Several university locals reached agreements in March, adjusting mid-stream to complete negotiations electronically while simultaneously addressing emerging pandemic-related issues.

With municipalities facing serious financial shortfalls, the possibility of the future privatization of public services needs to be monitored and challenged. One example is the Pacific National Exhibition (PNE) in Vancouver. As a civic agency it does not qualify for the Canadian Emergency Wage Subsidy, and with a public health order that the PNE cannot open this summer it is facing a \$52 million budget shortfall. Already there are rumours of private interests wanting to take over the operations. At peak times, the PNE employs more than 4000 CUPE 1004 members, most of them young workers.

Hospital Employees' Union (HEU)

Early in the COVID-19 pandemic, HEU succeeded in pushing the provincial government to level-up wages of long-term care workers across BC. In a sector with an ongoing shortage of qualified workers, these temporary increases mean that residents in facilities with lower wages do not suffer under the single site work order.

Under provisions secured in collective bargaining last year, HEU has negotiated the contracting in of housekeeping and waste management services at North Island Hospital sites in Comox and Campbell River, effective October 1. A labour adjustment plan will ensure that staff are seamlessly transferred from their current employer (Compass Canada) to the health authority, where they will be covered by the existing HEU collective agreement.

Care aides at Lynn Valley Care Centre, the site of BC's first long-term care COVID-19 outbreak, are taking steps to join the Hospital Employees' Union. At the end of May, HEU filed an application at the Labour Relations Board after a majority of the care aides working at the North Vancouver care home signed union cards. The 120 care aides will now participate in a union representation vote that will wrap up later in June.

The care aides at the Lynn Valley Care Centre are employed by Pro Vita Care Management – a subcontracting company established after the previous BC Liberal government opened up long-term care homes to contracting out in 2002. HEU represented care aides at the site before their work was contracted out more than 15 years ago, and care aides have been without union representation since the care home replaced its previous subcontractor with Pro Vita in 2012.

Airlines

Our members in the airline industry were among the first workers hit by the impacts of the global pandemic. In March, flight attendants were tasked with getting Canadians safely back from abroad, but their employers and federal authorities were not putting in place the most basic preventive measures against the spread of the virus in airports and airplanes, and were not providing our members with the proper PPE.

CUPE supported our airline locals and flight attendants in making sure their rights were protected, through the exercise of the right to refuse and by intervening with the Ministers of Labour and Transportation, and the Public Health Agency of Canada. Finally, on March 20, a decision was issued to the effect that requiring flight attendants to come into close proximity with passengers during the COVID-19 outbreak, in order to provide regular service with no possibility of social distancing, presented a serious threat to their health.

By the end of March, airlines had announced massive layoffs. CUPE called for expanded support for airline workers. With the CLC and other unions representing workers in the industry, CUPE demanded that any federal relief for the airlines focus on maintaining and returning employees to payroll, protecting collective bargaining rights, and come with legal guarantees that financial support from the government will go first to support workers' wages, salaries, and benefits. The Trudeau government partially met our demands and we continue to fight to improve the support to our members in these extremely challenging times.

Organizing Report

For the period March 1, 2019 to May 31, 2020, CUPE welcomed 281 new members in 11 newly certified bargaining units. We organized 90 members in the university sector, 43 in education, 94 members in municipalities, 39 provincial employees, 7 members in social services, and 8 in the HEU.

There are currently 40 new campaigns underway that, if successful, would increase our membership by 17,762 and 10 files at Labour Boards that would bring in 663 new members.

Despite the challenges brought on by COVID-19, we remain busy with new organizing initiatives across the country.

In New Brunswick, we continue efforts to organize approximately 120 employees at twenty Cannabis NB worksites across the province. We are connecting with these workers to continue card signing so we can proceed to a vote.

In Quebec, we welcomed 90 employees in the professional and support group at Marianopolis College into CUPE 5448, 35 white-collar workers at the Office municipal d'habitation de Longueuil into CUPE 4887, and 39 workers at two outlets of Société québécoise du cannabis (SQDC) into CUPE 5454.

Our Kingston Homecare pilot project in Ontario has shifted online. Homecare workers have experienced additional hardships during the pandemic and we have seen an increase in interest from homecare workers. The anonymity provided by online meetings is appealing to many homecare workers. We now have three organizing drives stemming from this pilot project.

Inside organizers in our five Toronto hospital drives have been distributing flyers throughout the sites focussed on workplace health and safety rights and precautions. These have been well received by the workers, who are receiving limited information from the employer. We are holding online meetings with member organizers and inside organizers to keep the momentum going.

In Saskatchewan, two applications to update the certification order for CUPE 4797 and the Northwest School Division were filed, leading to a successful vote on March 23, 2020 via conference call and the addition of 43 new members.

The first phase of the Persons with Developmental Disabilities Agencies drive in Alberta, which has the potential to bring in an estimated 12,000 new members, launched with the New Age Agency through an online electronic card signing with PayPal for the required initiation fee. We have seen favourable, encouraging results in the early days of this drive.

In Memoriam/Personal

Messages of Condolences

I offer my sincere condolences to the families of the following CUPE members, active staff and retirees who have passed away in this reporting period.

Members

- Wade Kidd Member of CUPE 4642
Manitoba
- Ronaldo David Member of CUPE 145
Ontario
- Warlito Valdez Member of CUPE 1936
British Columbia
- Steve Stone Member of CUPE 150
Ontario
- Victoria Salvan Member of CUPE 2881
Quebec
- Jean-Guthro Joseph Member of CUPE 2199
Ontario
- Roger Desautels Member of CUPE 416
Ontario
- Mike Osborne Member of CUPE 2745
New Brunswick
- Steve Howard Member of CUPE 626
British Columbia
- Mariyan Beile Member of CUPE 2199
Ontario
- Pei-Yun (Joyce) Liu Member of CUPE 4816
British Columbia
- Debra Nichol Member of CUPE 2329
Newfoundland

Retired Staff

- Normand Fraser
- Eugene Kostyra
- Harold Martell

Assistant Director
Quebec Regional Office

Regional Director
Manitoba Regional Office

National Representative
Nova Scotia

Friends of CUPE

- Megan Whitfield

CUPW President – Toronto Local

In solidarity,

Handwritten signature of Mark Hancock in black ink.

MARK HANCOCK
National President

:tp/ceu