



2010 is the Year of the Steward and CUPE locals across the country are finding creative ways to acknowledge the important work of stewards. From fleece jackets embroidered with the word "Steward" in Sault Ste. Marie, to new steward T-shirts in B.C., local stewards are being celebrated. CUPE's Union Development Department is updating the steward's handbook and developing a new steward learning series.

CUPE National's quarterly publication

cupe.ca

Spring 2010

Counterpoint

Grassroots kick-off for Year of the Steward

By PAT DALEY

Local union stewards are hungry to share information and break down the isolation many experience. More than 100 stewards showed up at an impromptu caucus meeting during last October's national convention. As part of the Strategic Directions policy adopted by all convention delegates, CUPE has declared 2010 the "Year of the Steward."

"It was an unbelievable event," said CUPE 79 chief steward David Kidd, who organized the meeting. "I got up to the mic once to announce it. I didn't send out any written notice, there was no posting. I thought I was in the wrong room because there were already a hundred people there when I walked in."

They met. They talked. And they decided to create a network through an email list serve to keep the conversation going. While members touched on some of the problems they face as stewards – a sense of isolation and lack of resources – most of the discussion focused on common issues in the workplace. Those include:

- delaying tactics from employers to restrict grievances;
- workload and stress;
- cutbacks and layoffs;
- increasing accusations of fraud and conflict; and,
- surveillance of workers and renewed monitoring of time in and out.

"There was a question on



David Kidd, chief steward of CUPE 79, called the impromptu caucus meeting at the 2009 convention that drew over 100 stewards and led to the creation of the stewards network.

whether disciplines are increasing because we're not quantifying this," Kidd said. "We're not doing analysis of whether the average suspension is increasing. Are the average numbers of suspensions and disciplines increasing? Is there a higher scrutiny of public service employees? It's our experience that it seems to be the case."

"Gathering and analyzing grievance information would not only assist stewards but could

also provide a focus for member mobilization," he added.

"We're very good at handling grievances. It's our life, our bread and butter, we know what to do but the question is: are we able to mobilize around this so that our membership is more engaged?" Kidd said. "We have members scared now about fighting back. When you organize group grievances and get more people involved there's a sense of collective response

and standing up for yourself. Our ability to organize around fighting grievances will make a difference for our members."

The Year of the Steward, 2010, is the right time to develop this discussion and raise issues from the front line. Anyone interested in joining in can sign up for the list serve at cupe.ca/stewards-list, and learn more about the Year of the Steward at cupe.ca.

Counterpoint

CUPE National's quarterly publication

ISSN print 1920-2857
ISSN online 1920-2865

Counterpoint is published by the Canadian Union of Public Employees. Address all letters to the editor to:
CUPE Communications,
1375 St. Laurent Blvd.,
Ottawa, ON, K1G 0Z7
Phone: 613-237-1590
Fax: 613-237-5508

Publications Mail Agreement
Number 40005741

Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to:
CUPE Communications,
1375 St. Laurent Blvd.,
Ottawa, ON, K1G 0Z7

Visit CUPE's website at cupe.ca
or contact us at cupemail@cupe.ca

Managing Editor: Catherine Louli
Communications Director: Stephen Howard
Translation: Louise O'Neill
Graphic Design: Marnie Thorp

Editorial Assistants: Hélène Bélanger, Marjorie Savoie, Manon Lajoie

Contributors: Dan Gawthrop, Janet Szliske, Roseanne Moran, Lou Arab, Beth Smillie, Dennis Lewycky, Pat Daley, James Chai, Robert Lamoureux, Kevin Wilson, Wendy Forbes, Robert Bellerose, Alexandre Boulerice, Danielle Savoie, John McCracken, Allison Gifford, Sébastien Goulet, Karin Jordan.



Union printed on 50% recycled, 30% post-consumer waste, elemental chlorine-free paper, certified by the Forest Stewardship Council.

Canadian Union of Public Employees

National Executive Board

National President – Paul Moist
National Secretary-Treasurer – Claude Généreux

General Vice-Presidents

Daniel Légère
Lucie Levasseur
Fred Hahn
Tom Graham
Barry O'Neill

Regional Vice-Presidents

Wayne Lucas – Newfoundland & Labrador
Danny Cavanagh – Nova Scotia
Sandy Harding – New Brunswick
Milo Murray – Prince Edward Island
Charles Fleury – Quebec
Nathalie Stringer – Quebec
Candace Rennick – Ontario
Michael Hurley – Ontario
Henri Giroux – Northern Ontario
Mike Davidson – Manitoba
Judy Henley – Saskatchewan
Dennis Mol – Alberta
Mark Hancock – British Columbia
Ken Robinson – British Columbia

Diversity Vice-Presidents

Brian Barron
Yolanda McClean

Defending collective bargaining and protecting public services



CUPE National President Paul Moist addressing delegates at the Blue Summit water meeting.

BY ALLISON GIFFORD

The landscape for workers has changed over the past two years. Working people have endured one of the worst global recessions since the 1930s. And while Canada has entered a recovery phase, there is consensus among the country's top economists that a rebound will be long and slow.

The recession has left workers vulnerable to higher unemployment, lower wages, pension losses and service cutbacks. The strategic goals set out at CUPE's 2009 convention reflect these new challenges for workers.

"The impact of the recession is far from over," says CUPE National President Paul Moist. "We anticipate a tougher bargaining climate as governments try to balance budgets. We also know Canadians rely on the comprehensive public services CUPE members provide, and that we need to defend those services at all costs."

CUPE's strategic goals over the next two years emphasize the importance of defending collective bargaining and protecting public services.

The two issues, says Moist, are linked. "When we stand up to defend our jobs and our collective agreements, we're really standing up for the public services that Canadians need – especially during a recession."

Part of the plan is to keep the union strong from the local level up. The strategic document contains a pledge by all CUPE members to back one another up during bargaining. It also introduces the "Year of the Steward," a commitment made by the union to recognize and support the critical role shop stewards play in building a strong union and healthy workplaces. "The bedrock of our union has always been and always will be strong and committed activists at the workplace level," says Moist. "There is a tremendous change going on in our union through retirement. This is a great way to share knowledge with the next generation of activists and let them know how much the union values its shop stewards."

As the economy recovers, CUPE also wants to ensure that workers and communities don't foot the bill for balanced budgets. "CUPE will continue

to oppose privatization in all of its forms – from large-scale public-private partnerships (P3s) to contracting out," says Moist. "We have made great progress over the years around P3s. In fact, some governments are now retreating from using them at all."

Delegates also saw a new focus on pensions, with a pledge from CUPE to join the Canadian Labour Congress campaign to secure adequate pensions for all Canadians. CUPE will also fight for pensions for the 30 per cent of members who are still without coverage. "Retirement in dignity is something that CUPE strives for, not only for our own membership, but for everyone – especially the 11 million Canadians without a workplace plan," says Moist.

"Our national convention set a strong course of action to guide our locals and membership for the next two years," says Moist. "I'm extremely excited at how all regions of Canada and our membership are embracing these directions."

cupe.ca/strategic-directions

Survey shows dire need for LTC spaces

By LOU ARAB

A survey of 561 CUPE members employed by long-term care and residential care facilities in Alberta shows little improvement in the conditions of the province's seniors' facilities.

CUPE Alberta reported that over 80 per cent of responses from employees of assisted living facilities noted residents need more health care than their facility provides.

Results of the survey include:

- 73 per cent of respondents report staffing levels are not high enough to keep up with resident needs;
- 89 per cent of respondents in long-term care, and 67 per cent of respondents in resident care report little or no time for one-on-one care;
- 53 per cent of respondents report that equipment is out of date or in bad repair;
- 82 per cent of respondents report that residents require more support than can be provided in a lodge/residential setting;
- 71 per cent of respondents report residents on wait lists for long-term care.

Full report: cupealberta.ca/alberta-ltc-report.pdf

Another budget is possible

The federal budget was tabled in the House of Commons in early March and the Harper conservatives chose not to make public investments to create new jobs and set up a sustainable future for the next generation of Canadians. Investing in public services creates jobs and improves living standards for all Canadians. In a time of deficit, public spending boosts employment while creating something of lasting value for future generations.

A few days before the federal budget was tabled in the House of Commons, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives tabled the Alternative Federal Budget. The Alternative Federal Budget laid out a plan that would meet the needs of working Canadians – creating jobs and enhancing public services to lay the foundations for a stronger economy and a more equal society. The plan would bring unemployment back to pre-recession levels by the end of 2011 and demonstrates there is a better way to reach fiscal balance through smart investments and smart taxation. For more on the budget visit cupe.ca/budget-2010.

CUPE gives to Haiti relief fund



Lung Liu lungliu.com

Children recover from injuries at the Port-au-Prince General Hospital following the January 12, 2010 earthquake. The Red Cross estimates that more than 3 million people were affected by the quake.

CUPE donated \$100,000 to Oxfam-Québec to assist in earthquake relief efforts in Haiti. "Our thoughts are with the people of Haiti, and with those who have lost or are searching for loved ones," said CUPE National President Paul Moist.

In addition to the donation from CUPE National, locals from across the country have mobilized to raise funds for Haiti.

"We are extremely proud of the sense of solidarity our locals and individual members have shown toward the people of Haiti," said CUPE National Secretary-Treasurer Claude Généreux.

"Given the magnitude of this tragedy, donations must continue to ensure reconstruction and an adequate quality of life for the people of Haiti," said Généreux.

There are many ways to give to Haiti. CUPE is encouraging its 600,000 members to continue individual donations to the following organizations: The Humanitarian Coalition which is a coalition of Oxfam Canada, Oxfam-Québec, Care Canada and Save the Children, or the Red Cross.

cupe.ca/haiti

Air transport: 2010, a pivotal year

Flight attendants belonging to our Airline Division are mobilizing. In 2010, they will all begin renewing their collective agreements (except for those working for Calm Air [Manitoba], whose agreements remain in force until April 30, 2013).

Stay tuned – these guardian angels of air travellers could ask for your solidarity during their negotiations. cupe.ca/airlines

Local #	Company	Termination of collective agreement
4091; 4092; 4094; 4095	Air Canada	March 31, 2011
4041; 4047; 4078	Air Transat	October 31, 2010
4044	CanJet	June 30, 2010
4088; 4089	Cathay Pacific	December 31, 2010
4021; 4040	First Air	December 31, 2010

Work bytes



Supporters of Vancouver's Insite, North America's first and only legal supervised injection site, take to the streets to greet Prime Minister Stephen Harper, who was scheduled to visit the Chinese Cultural Centre, February 11, 2010. The Conservative government failed in its effort to overturn the B.C. Supreme Court ruling that Insite is legal and is now taking the case to the Supreme Court of Canada. Harper cancelled his appearance rather than face his opponents.

Negotiate – don't legislate!

The B.C. government has passed Bill 21, an unprecedented legislative assault that imposed a contract on CUPE 873 members – ambulance paramedics.

CUPE BC responded with a provincewide campaign focusing on Bill 21's bargaining implications for the 200,000 B.C. public sector workers whose contracts expire in 2010. CUPE BC hosted rallies in about 40 communities that called for a fair contract for paramedics while denouncing Bill 21 with the message – Negotiate, Don't Legislate!

In the shadow of a multi-year wage freeze and post-Olympic debt, community social services and community health groups moved into bargaining mode. CUPE members in community health voted to reject a tentative agreement that contained no general wage increase, no new money for benefits and no major improvements in employee rights.

Others in K-12, colleges and universities continued intense bargaining preparation – developing proposals, bargaining structures and continuing awareness building campaigns.

On the privatization front, municipal locals were building support for the services they

provide in communities to fight privatization in the face of funding pressure on local governments. In Greater Victoria, CUPE's fight for public sewage treatment moved into high gear, with the public engaging in the privatization issue.

cupe.ca/britishcolumbia

Postcards deliver message to Ed Stelmach

A postcard campaign calling on the Stelmach government to keep its promise to build long-term care spaces netted 2,600 responses in three weeks.

"Before the last election, Mr. Stelmach promised to build 600 new long-term care spaces," said CUPE Alberta President Dennis Mol. "He's delivered none."

A CUPE-sponsored town hall meeting in Calgary on the subject drew over 100 concerned citizens.

cupe.ca/alberta

Health employers make a mockery of conciliation

Just days into conciliation talks, Saskatchewan's health employers proceeded to a final offer for CUPE and two other unions representing 25,000 health care providers. This move broke off talks.

The three health care provider unions have been

without new collective agreements for nearly two years. Negotiations have dragged on for more than 16 months.

"The Saskatchewan government and the health employers came to the talks just to make an appearance," said Gordon Campbell, president of the CUPE Health Care Council, which represents 12,600 health care providers. "They had no interest in dealing with staff shortages and other pressing issues facing our health care providers."

The employers' final offer contained the same concessions CUPE members rejected in June, when they voted 88 per cent in support of job action.

cupe.ca/saskatchewan

Moving forward in Manitoba

The social services and child care campaign, RESPECT, is gaining speed with a number of events taking place in Manitoba.

The Winnipeg Civic Employees Benefit Program recommended pension contribution increases for employers and employees, rather than benefit cuts, to address pension funding shortfalls. CUPE members approved the increases, as did city council, which commenced in January.

CUPE Manitoba members have organized a Private Personal Home Care Council that will help them coordinate bargaining efforts.

cupe.ca/manitoba

Municipal elections opportunity for positive direction in Ontario

After months of labour unrest, CUPE is seizing the moment with the upcoming Ontario municipal elections to talk about the public benefit of public services.

CUPE and the Ontario Municipal Employees Coordinating Committee will be fanning out across the province to enlist local participation and spark campaigns for public services to help elect municipal councillors and mayors who support public services.

Currently the municipal political discourse includes: closing daycares in Windsor and Toronto as well as selling off public assets like Toronto Hydro, and in many Ontario municipalities, public services are under threat of privatization or contracting out.

Locals across the province will need to join the campaign to make sure that on October 25 we elect politicians who understand the value and role of strong public services in our society.

cupe.ca/ontario



Parents, workers and kids in Windsor send a message to provincial and federal politicians. The rally, organized by the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care and CUPE Ontario, put pressure on Ontario Finance Minister Dwight Duncan in advance of his March budget.

Quebec Aboriginal issues committee

CUPE Quebec now has a council on Aboriginal issues, the Conseil québécois des autochtones ("Quebec Aboriginal Council"), which was formed following a resolution adopted at the 2009 CUPE Quebec convention.

The first meeting of the committee took place in Montreal on January 28, 2010. For the moment, only three sectors are represented (energy, social affairs and municipalities). However, it is hoped that eventually all CUPE sectors will participate.

The mandate of the committee is, among other things, to promote and defend the rights of Aboriginal workers in our union. It will also examine issues linked to racism and employment equity.

The committee seeks to increase participation of Aboriginal members in our movement.

cupe.ca/quebec

Nursing home workers reach a deal

Members of the New Brunswick Council of Nursing Home Unions (NBCNHU) have ratified a new four-year collective agreement.

The collective agreement gave nursing home workers wage parity with the hospital workers and provides protection for Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) in the face of staffing reviews and service needs. Some classifications will receive an increase of more than 30 per cent; the average wage increase over the life of this contract is 22 per cent. This agreement also improves weekend shift

premiums, holiday pay and will allow the union to work on wellness and the Employee Assistance Program. The agreement also provides for benefits for retirees.

cupe.ca/newbrunswick

Labour Relations Board rules in favour of CUPE

The Newfoundland and Labrador Labour Relations Board has ruled that 135 substitute librarians who work in community libraries throughout the province are now members of CUPE 2329.

In its recent decision, the Board said it wasn't necessary to conduct a representation vote of the employees affected by the application and ruled to include the substitute librarians as members of the bargaining unit.

CUPE 2329 represents over 180 librarians who work in approximately 96 locations throughout the province. They are part of provincial bargaining.

cupe.ca/newfoundland

N.S. hospital and school board workers ratify new contracts

More than 7,000 CUPE hospital and school board workers in Nova Scotia have given thumbs up to their new contracts.

CUPE Acute Care Coordinator Wayne Thomas says the hospital locals across rural Nova Scotia have voted 98 per cent in favour of acceptance of their three-year deal. One of the highlights of the deal includes a 2.9 per cent economic adjustment (wage parity) for all employees effective and retroactive to April 1, 2009.

Meanwhile ratification votes for school board locals ranged from 88 per cent to 96 per cent. Wilfridine Crowdis, chair of the Nova Scotia School Board Council

of Unions, says, "We achieved our goal which was to receive the same increases that teachers and other workers in our sector received. As we said in our public campaign, this was all about fairness – nothing more, nothing less."

cupe.ca/novascotia

Defending our wages

CUPE members on Prince Edward Island are getting ammunition to fight a possible wage freeze. Last December, the P.E.I. government announced a wage freeze for MLAs and senior bureaucrats and hinted that the freeze would be extended to all public sector workers.

A bargaining conference in March will kick off a provincewide campaign on the importance of free collective bargaining. The campaign will coincide with the commencement of collective bargaining for the health provincial groups as well as the Island Emergency Medical Services (EMS), municipal,

education and university locals.
cupe.ca/pei

Tentative agreement reached for 48,000 hospital and long-term care workers

A tentative agreement covering more than 48,000 hospital and long-term care workers has been reached between the multi-union Facilities Bargaining Association and B.C.'s health employers.

The two-year agreement protects wages and extended health benefits, expands options for workers affected by restructuring and privatization, and provides for compensation increases for targeted job categories.

The agreement was reached against the backdrop of a government freeze on public sector compensation and just weeks before the tabling of a post-Olympic budget that is expected to result in a new round of health authority budget cuts.

heu.org



Concerned Albertans sent over 2,600 postcards to Ed Stelmach's Conservative government demanding more long-term care spaces in the province, an election promise Stelmach has failed to keep.

What's at stake... is bigger than all of us

An interview with **Claude Généreux**, national secretary-treasurer of CUPE



Billboard of hope in Copenhagen during international climate change meeting.

By **SÉBASTIEN GOULET**

SG: Combating climate change is a matter of increasing urgency. Why is the objective of limiting global warming to two degrees so important?

CG: There is a broad international scientific consensus stating that the ongoing climate change is caused by human activity and the way we live. It stems from research conducted by 800 scientists whose data has been reviewed by 2,500 of their peers. Of course, there are certain individuals voicing doubts, just as, 25 or 30 years ago, there were those who questioned the idea that acid rain was harming the environment. However, since the beginning of the industrial revolution the atmospheric level of CO₂, which was stable for thousands of years and is the principal greenhouse gas, has risen from 270 to 390 parts per million. It's an exponential increase. Moreover, it is changing our climate so much that we are on the verge of losing control over it. If we warm the atmosphere more than two degrees Celsius, we could be facing a series of cataclysms that would be impossible to contain.

SG: A milestone in the effort to ward off this kind of climate chaos was the Copenhagen Conference of December 2009. Claude, you were there, heading up the CUPE delegation;

what's your assessment of this conference?

CG: CUPE was present along with its counterparts from the Public Services International and the International Trade Union Confederation. We were among the 400 accredited union delegates from around the world. A number of government delegations were amazed when they saw the degree to which unions were stakeholders in the debate.

However, the conference was not very successful. We really wanted to obtain a binding treaty, one with ambitious targets. We failed to obtain this type of treaty, though there was a political agreement. On February 1st, 2010, the countries were supposed to disclose their targets for greenhouse gas reductions. In this way, Jim Prentice, the Federal Minister of the Environment, informed us that Canada was going to align its targets – so far, unimpressive – with those of the United States. To complicate matters, President Barack Obama is battling the U.S. Congress, as is evident in the difficulties he is having with health care reform in his country. So, will the United States adopt serious policy measures? We do not know.

Furthermore, should Harper get a majority government, who knows what he will do? In early

February, Jim Prentice shockingly attacked Jean Charest, premier of Quebec, accusing him of going too far on the environment. This was because Charest had decided to adopt vehicle emission standards similar to those in Europe and American states such as California and New York. Prentice had described these standards as "folly." This goes to show that for the Harper government anything goes when it comes to doing as little as possible.

What's at stake is bigger than all of us. We must heed the warnings so that in seven generations there will still be young people enjoying our beautiful planet. The 19th century belonged to steam and coal, while the 20th century belonged to petroleum; the 21st century, however, must belong to new energy sources: solar, wind, tidal, etc. We can halt climate change. Indeed, it's our responsibility, as citizens and workers, to ensure a future for our communities and nations.

[Ed.: A few days after this interview, on February 20, the American Federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) declared its intention to adopt the same vehicle emissions standards as California and Quebec.]

To listen to the podcast of this interview, go to cupe.ca/podcasts.

NEB highlights

CUPE's National Executive Board met on March 17-18, 2010 in Ottawa. These are the highlights of their deliberations and decisions.

Code of Conduct Adopted

At our 2007 National Convention, delegates adopted the recommendation of the National Women's Task Force Report to develop a Code of Conduct for our union. The Code, adopted at this NEB meeting, sets out standards of behavior for participants at national convention, national conferences, schools, meetings, and all other events organized by CUPE National.

Canada/European Union Trade Agreement Negotiations

Senior CUPE Research staff member Brother Blair Redlin presented information on the current negotiations between Canada and the European Union (EU). These secret negotiations include a demand by the EU for full market access to procurement at all levels of government, including municipalities, schools, universities, health, and social services.

The NEB adopted a resolution calling on the Harper government to stop negotiations until transparent and broad consultations with Canadians have occurred.

Economic Climate for Bargaining – "Wasn't That a Party??? Who Pays For It?"

Brother Toby Sanger, CUPE's Senior Economist, met with the NEB to review the current state of the economy and what our members can expect. It is clear that those who benefitted most from the boom are now trying to get the public to pay for the bust by cutting public services. Not only is that not fair, but the problem needs a fundamental solution through tax reform to prevent future boom and bust cycles. Find out what this means for your region by accessing the quarterly report at www.cupe.ca.