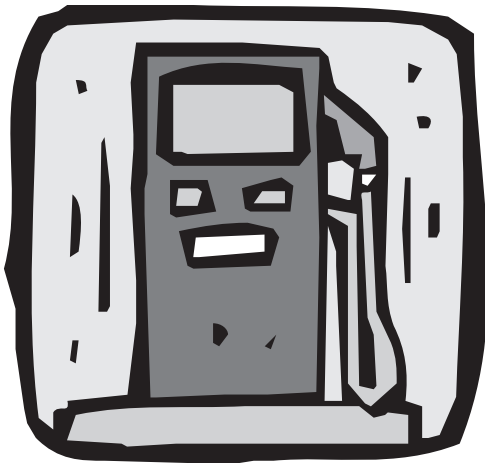


**Tabletalk –**  
*your bargaining resource –*  
is published four times a year to provide CUPE Local bargaining committees, elected officers and servicing representatives useful information for preparing – and negotiating – bargaining demands. Tabletalk's three-hole-punch style makes it easy to keep in reference binders. Feel free to make copies or use the material to fit your members' needs.

Please email Susan Attenborough at [research@cupe.ca](mailto:research@cupe.ca) with corrections, questions, suggestions, or contributions.

Disponible en français



## Gas prices getting you pumped?

No matter where you live in Canada, gas prices seem out of control! The price of crude oil almost doubled between May 2007 and May 2008, says Statistics Canada. That translates into a 15 per cent increase in the cost of gas to Canadian consumers since last year.

Many CUPE collective agreements contain provisions for a mileage allowance for employees on employer business. However, once a mileage rate is negotiated in a collective agreement, it is usually set until the next round of negotiations. Now, many locals are looking for language that provides rate increases during the life of the agreement to keep pace with gas increases.

Here are a couple of examples:

### **CUPE Local 126 and the City of Peterborough, expiry December 31, 2009**

#### Article 20.5 Mileage

*When employees are required by the Corporation to use their own vehicles in the performance of their duties, they shall be reimbursed for all distance driven for Corporation business purposes at the rate as calculated in the Corporate Mileage Policy. Employees in the position of outside Building Inspectors(s) or Plumbing Inspector(s) and Engineering and Construction Inspectors, shall be reimbursed at a rate one point two five (1.25) times the usual business rate for mileage within the City. The rate shall be increased or decreased four times per year, on January 1, April 1, July 1 and October 1 each year on the basis of the following formula:*

*Fifty (50) per cent of the price per kilometre to be escalated,*

(continued on p 2)

*based on the increase in the price of regular unleaded gasoline as charged to the Employer by supply tender, at a rate of one (1) cent per kilometre for each three and one half (3½) cents per litre increase. The other fifty (50) percent of the price per kilometre to be escalated based on the increase of the cost of living index published by Statistics Canada (Canada, all items) for the months of February, May, August, and November. Such employees will also be reimbursed for the cost of annual business insurance.*

*Claims for mileage generally will be paid monthly.*

### **CUPE Local 905 and the Regional Municipality of York, expiry March 31, 2010**

#### Article 23.4 (b) Mileage Formula

*The non-taxable cap kilometre rate established yearly by Canada Customs and Revenue Agency shall be maintained for the duration of this collective agreement.*

*It is understood that any increase in the non-taxable cap during the term of this collective agreement shall be the new fixed mileage rate.*



## **Pension trustees on the front line for CUPE pension plans**

The Strategic Directions document passed by delegates at the October 2007 National Convention set out ambitious goals for pensions, including trying to achieve some form of pension coverage for all CUPE members by 2013.

Progress towards this goal took another step forward with a meeting of over 60 CUPE member and staff pension trustees and pension committee members at the Chateau Laurier in Ottawa, May 12–14, 2008. Participants spent some 14 hours during the three-day meeting in plenaries, break-

out workshops, and facilitated discussions on some of the current issues facing trustees.

National President **Paul Moist**, a long-time pension activist, opened the meeting by welcoming participants and outlining the challenges to develop the capacity to name, train, and support pension trustees. Brother Moist reminded participants of the importance of using the influence that we have – as pension trustees, negotiators, and rank-and-file members – to block the use of our own pension funds to finance the Public Private Partnerships (P3s) that are threatening public services and jobs and ripping off taxpayers.

Participants heard from some well-known experts as well as CUPE members. **Murray Gold**, one of Canada's most experienced labour-side pension lawyers, **Eric Pineault**, a professor of sociology at the Université de Québec à Montréal, and **Diane Urquhart**, an independent retail investor advocate, spoke to issues of coverage, the economic and social underpinnings of the push for P3 investment, and Canada's weak and

(continued on p 3)

ineffective regulatory system that opens the door to financial fraud.

Workshops included: “Hedge Funds,” facilitated by **Toby Sanger**, Economist, CUPE; “Phased Retirement,” by **Deborah McMillan**, Buck Consultants; “Market Turmoil and Plan Funding Challenges,” by **Susan Philpott**, Koskie/Minsky law firm; and, “Challenging Pension Investment in P3s,” by **Eric Pineault**, UQAM.

A panel of seasoned CUPE member pension trustees talked about their experiences:

**Brother John Weatherup**, a trustee on the OMERS (school board/municipal) plan in Ontario, talked about the challenge of trying to bring a CUPE perspective to the investment policies of OMERS, which is notorious for its P3 investments.

**Brother Michel Lizée**, a long-time trustee at the Université de Québec’s pension plan, talked about the steep learning curve that trustees face and the highly technical issues that must be absorbed.

**Sister Marg Romanow** looked back on how the successful coordination of the four major health care unions in Saskatchewan helped plan members win an end to contribution holidays and the restructuring of the plan into a Joint Trust (in 2003).

Three CUPE rank-and-file members from across the country provided powerful, and, at times emotional, support for CUPE’s strategic priority on expanding pension coverage:

**Sister Priscilla Libradilla**, a member of HEU, talked about the difficulties of being a union member in the hospital sector that the provincial government targeted for massive contracting out.

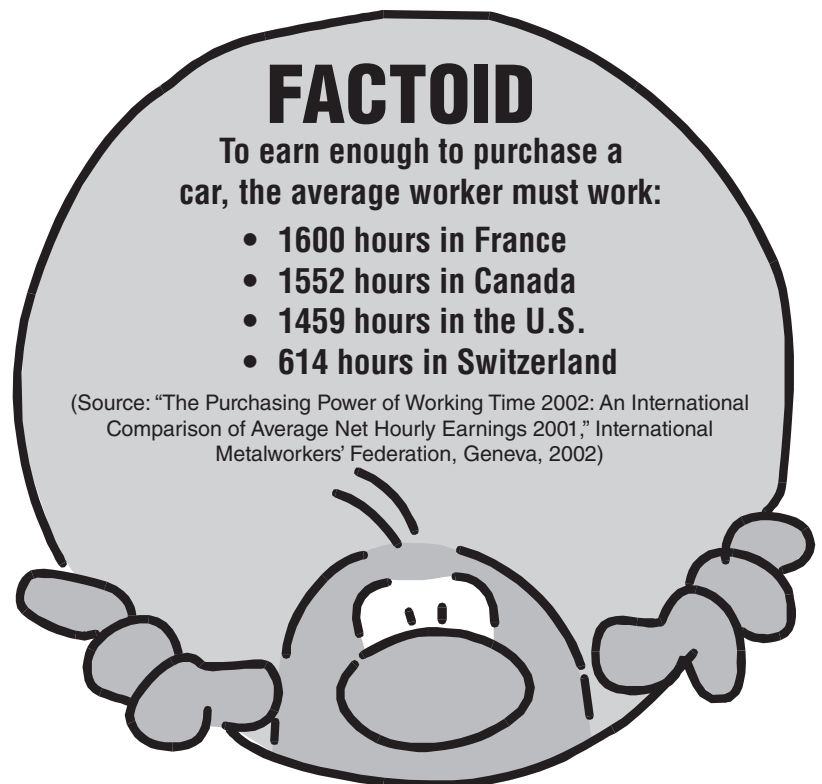
**Sister Amy Parker**, a social services worker in Almonte, Ontario, recounted the story of organizing colleagues into CUPE Local 4742 and then negotiating CUPE’s Multi-Sector Pension Plan in just their second round of bargaining.

**Sister Thérèse Philippe**, a teaching assistant with CUPE Local 2745 in Dalhousie, New Brunswick, discussed how the issue of pension coverage for her bargaining unit divides full-timers and part-timers, who are excluded from participating in the defined benefit pension plan for full-timers.

National Officers Brothers Paul Moist and Claude Généreux facilitated the final session that identified some common themes:

- more pension education for all members and staff, including trustees;
- the need to continue to defend and improve the public pension system;
- sharing the work CUPE develops on P3s to help educate trustees and investors.

Participants agreed that engaging members and staff in these meetings helps build CUPE’s capacity and progress towards the goals of maintaining and improving pensions for CUPE members. ■





## Hot labour market fires up wages for Edmonton public school workers

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The hot labour market in Alberta is making it harder for school boards to fill custodial, maintenance and support staff jobs, so the employer was ready to talk at the bargaining table about retaining workers in this sector.

CUPE represents Edmonton Public School Board workers in three locals: custodial (Local 474), maintenance (Local 784), and support staff (Local 3550) representing over 3,000 workers.

On March 1, the three locals and Edmonton Public School administration agreed on a new wage and benefits package designed to attract and retain workers.

Here are some highlights:

- contracting out protection until 2016;
- all custodial, maintenance and support staff wages to be increased by \$1 per hour as of March 1, 2008;
- annual cost-of-living increases to hourly wages based on the Average Weekly Wage Earnings Index (AWWEI) in Alberta on September 1 2008, September 1, 2009, and September 1, 2010.

The three collective agreements expire August 31, 2011. For the next three years, annual salary increases will be based on a formula based on wage increases in both the public and private sector weighted against the cost of inflation. It's the same formula the government uses to index the minimum wage and MLA salaries in the province. The increase in the AWWEI in Alberta last year was 5 per cent, the highest in Canada.

Negotiating is by definition, a series of trade-offs. Longer-term collective agreements can:

- offer protection for longer periods;
- save the local some costs associated with bargaining;
- provide stable wages during an uncertain economic period;
- help employers predict costs (and have stable costs) over a longer period; and,
- allow locals to focus on other activities like membership building, campaigns, and organizing.

However, there are downsides too. Longer-term agreements can:

- limit the local's ability to negotiate protection against employer attempts to reduce the workforce by attrition – or layoff in the case of an economic downturn – during the life of the agreement;
- lead to member apathy since bargaining seems to stimulate membership interest;
- tie wages to a formula that may or may not keep up with inflation; and,
- result in lost momentum in the local and slow down the ability to make continuous progress on wages and working conditions every couple of years.

Longer-term agreements work best when there is strong, job-security language in the collective agreement. Economic downturns, funding crises, and changes in elected officials and policies, can all happen suddenly and all can affect job security. The bottom line is that the length of an agreement is a judgement call. As part of the overall bargaining strategy, the term of the agreement involves consideration of membership needs, economic projections, and coordinated bargaining strategies, such as achieving common expiry dates. ■



## Innovative language

Here's an example of progressive language that recognizes that disciplinary measures should be sensitive to women who face violence and abuse at home that can affect performance at work.

### **CAW Local 2458 and the Windsor Regional Hospital, expiry March 31, 2009**

Letter of Understanding #1 re: Violence against Women

*The parties hereby recognize and share the concern that women uniquely face situations of violence or abuse in their personal lives that may affect their attendance or performance at work. The parties agree that when there is adequate verification from a recognized professional (i.e., doctor, lawyer, professional counsellor), a woman*

*who is in an abusive or violent personal or domestic situation will not be subjected to discipline without giving full consideration to the facts in the case of each individual and the circumstances surrounding the incident otherwise supportive of discipline. This statement of intent is subject to a standard of good faith on the part of the employer, the union and the affected employees and will not be utilized by the Union or the employer to subvert the application or [sic] otherwise appropriate disciplinary measures. Such information will be treated in a confidential manner by the employer and the union unless required by law to report. ■*



## New settlement for Newfoundland and Labrador workers rocks!

In Newfoundland and Labrador, CUPE bargains with the provincial government on behalf of 4,200 workers in health care, school boards, libraries, housing, and Government House. This well-established coordination creates leverage with the provincial government – the results speak for themselves!

Highlights of the four-year agreement include:

- significant wage increases of 8 per cent in year one and 4 per cent in each of the

next three years. (Premier Williams said the overall 21.6 per cent increase reflects the sacrifices that CUPE members made in the last round of bargaining to help the province get its fiscal house in order.)

- increases to standby premiums (\$3.10 per shift);
- a job evaluation plan to be implemented by 2010;
- improvements in clothing allowance for housing and school board employees;
- Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for all school board employees.

This was a tough round of negotiations that began in November 2007. With determination and diligence, the negotiating team was able to achieve a settlement in May that was ratified by 95 per cent of the membership. ■



# Chalk up a victory for Ontario school board workers

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Ontario school board locals have a proud history of coordinated bargaining. Over time, the 73 CUPE school board locals have negotiated common end dates in many of the 103 collective agreements in the sector. In fall 2007, an opportunity arose to take coordination to the next level: A series of discussions between the CUPE leadership and representatives of the Ontario Ministry of Education led to an agreement to try to negotiate a province-wide, school-board bargaining framework. After five months of hard bargaining, a tentative agreement was reached.

On June 9, more than 300 CUPE school board workers met to discuss the proposed settlement. When it came to a vote, **every** local endorsed the tentative settlement and committed to bring it back for member ratification during the normal ratification process for local issues bargaining.

Solidarity works! Here are some highlights of the settlement:

**Benefits:** Status quo benefit levels will be maintained until 2012, and

- the Ministry has allotted \$50 million to help boards with existing costs;
- \$33 million will be made available to fund new benefit options in the third year of the collective agreement;
- a joint benefits committee funded by the Ministry will be set up at the provincial level to explore ways of sustaining benefit levels in the face of rising costs.

**Hours for education assistants (EAs):** Some boards were trying to save money by cutting back EA hours. All EA hours will be increased to seven hours per day in the third year of the contract. In addition, the settlement provides for minimum numbers of working days per year as follows: 188 days in 2008/09; 189 days in 2009/10; 190 days in 2010/11; and, 194 days in 2011/12.

**Staffing issues:** The settlement provides funding to protect against job loss due to declining enrolment for custodial, secretarial and para-professional occupations. Over the course of the four years of the contract period, enrolment in Ontario schools is expected to decline by over 72,000 pupils. CUPE employment numbers will increase over that same period as a result of this settlement.

**Funding formula:** The existing funding formula consistently underfunds custodial budgets resulting in deterioration of school facilities. The settlement provides for an external study of school operational costs to be funded by the Ministry to inform the funding review in 2010. In addition, the Ministry has committed to funding an annual project, which, in 2009, will review custodial/maintenance /skilled trades workload.

**Wages:** Across the board increases of 3.0 per cent effective September 1, 2008; 3.0 per cent effective September 1, 2009; 3.0 per cent effective September 1, 2010; and, 3.0 per cent effective September 1, 2011. The increases will be applied to all allowances considered to be pensionable earnings.

Congratulations to Ontario School Board members and staff for their strength and solidarity and for moving forward CUPE's Strategic Directions bargaining goals! ■



## Consumer Price Index by Province, June 2007 to June 2008

Newfoundland and Labrador	3.1
Prince Edward Island	4.7
Nova Scotia	4.2
New Brunswick	2.1
Québec	3.1
Ontario	2.8
Manitoba	2.4
Saskatchewan	3.4
Alberta	4.4
British Columbia	3.0

(Source: Statistics Canada, *The Daily*, Wednesday, July 23, 2008)

As expected, energy prices continue to be the main driver of CPI increases. In early June, retail prices for gasoline were up by over 23 per cent, by almost 50 per cent for diesel, and by more than 60 per cent for furnace oil.

New house prices continue to drive inflation, not surprising since petroleum products are a big part of material costs, such as shingles, transportation of wood, etc. Housing prices have increased 6 per cent since this time last year, but they are increasing at a slower rate than in the past two years. The resale housing market also seems to be slowing: Costs have increased an average of 10 per cent a year for the past four years. However, the industry expects costs to rise 5 per cent this year and 3 per cent next year, so these costs will be less of a factor in CPI increases than they have been in the past.

Food prices in Canada are expected to rise about 3.5 per cent next year, pushing up

inflation; experts predict the average Canadian household will pay \$260 more for food next year. Those on fixed incomes and low-to-middle incomes will feel the pinch the most as food takes a bigger bite out of the household budget.

Earlier in the year, major economic forecasters were predicting inflation would average 1.5 per cent this year as a result of the GST cut and slowdown in house price increases. But soaring fuel and food prices that continue to soar will outpace these early estimates. The major banks are now projecting CPI increases to average 1.9 per cent this year and 2.3 per cent in 2009.

(Source: "Economic Climate," June 2008, available at [cupe.ca](http://cupe.ca))

# Current and Upcoming “Key” Negotiations – July 29, 2008 covering 500 or more employees

## Federal Jurisdiction

Employer	Union	Employees	Status	Expiry Month
<b>Public Sector</b>				
Government of Canada	Various unions	135,830	arbitration/mediation/ bargaining	Mar 06-Jan 08
Canadian Food Inspection Agency	PIPSC/PSAC	4,340	bargaining/arbitration	Jun/Dec07
City of Ottawa – OC Transpo	ATU	2,000	conciliation	Mar 08
<b>Private Sector</b>				
Saskatchewan Wheat Pool operating as Viterra	Grain Services Union	700	mediation/work stoppage	Jan 08

## Provincial and Territorial Jurisdictions

Employer	Union	Employees	Status	Expiry Month
<b>Public Sector</b>				
Ontario Catholic District School Boards	OECTA	35,280	bargaining/tentative agreement	Aug 08
Ontario Boards of Education	CUPE	32,340	bargaining	Aug/Dec 08
Health Boards of Alberta	AUPE/HSAA	22,650	bargaining/mediation/ tentative agreement	Mar 08
City of Montréal	Various unions	15,350	bargaining/arbitration	Dec 06
Government of Newfoundland and Labrador	NAPE	14,185	bargaining	Mar 08
Regional Health Authorities of Manitoba	CUPE	11,000	bargaining	Mar 08
Government of Nova Scotia	Nova Scotia Teachers Union	10,500	bargaining	Jul 08
Government of New Brunswick	Teachers	7,280	bargaining	Feb 08
Government of New Brunswick	CUPE	5,760	bargaining/tentative agreement	Jun 07
Government of Newfoundland and Labrador	Nurses	4,800	conciliation	Jun 08
City of Québec	Various unions	4,530	bargaining/arbitration	Dec 06
Government of New Brunswick	Nurses	4,390	bargaining	Dec 07
York University	CUPE/York University Staff Association	3,600	bargaining	Jul/Aug 08
Red Cross – Community Health Services (Ont.)	SEIU	3,000	bargaining	Jul 08
Société de transport de Montréal	CSN	2,200	conciliation	Jan 07
<b>Private Sector</b>				
Canada Safeway (B.C.)	UFCW	10,230	bargaining	Mar 08

## Upcoming Key Negotiations

Employer	Union	Employees	Expiry Month
Ontario Boards of Education	ETFO/OSSTF	101,790	Aug 08
Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations	CUPE/SEIU/SGEU	24,800	Mar 08
University of Toronto	CUPE/Steelworkers	9,140	Apr/Jun 08
Conseils scolaires catholiques de langue française	Association des enseignantes et enseignants franco-ontariens	3,400	Aug 08

Source: “Strategic Policy, Analysis, and Workplace Information Directorate Labour Program—HRSDC,” July 29, 2008