

# Counterpoint

## **ANNE LECLAIR: TELEVISION REPORTER AND UNION ACTIVIST**

**CUPE MEMBERS SPEAK  
ON RECONCILIATION**

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beats back  
privatization of  
hospital services**



*“When I heard about the pension issue I was still on a casual contract. It was important for contract workers like me to protect the pension.”*

*Fangliang Xu, p. 8*

# Filipino trade union leader visits Manitoba and Saskatchewan

CUPE strongly believes that our power to fight back against privatization of public services, cutbacks to operating budgets and attacks on workers’ rights is strengthened through the relationships we build with workers in other workplaces struggling for common causes. This includes workers in other countries.

Robert Mendoza, President of the Alliance of Health Workers in the

Philippines, recently visited Saskatchewan and Manitoba. His visit is just the latest example of CUPE’s global justice work and alliance-building with unions and workers in countries across the world.

Mendoza toured health care facilities in both provinces and spoke at public meetings. Through these visits and presentations, he spoke about the struggles facing health care workers and trade unionists in the

Philippines – budget cuts to public hospitals, rampant privatization, “contractualization” or precarious work where many health care workers receive no benefits and have minimal job security. Currently, out-of-pocket spending accounts for 57 per cent of health expenditures in the Philippines and results in poverty and poor health for most Filipinos.

Mendoza also spoke of the many campaigns and

mobilization efforts his union and others are undertaking to fight back, including the People’s Health Agenda for free, comprehensive and progressive health services for all citizens.

The Filipinos struggle to secure quality health care is something Canadian workers can relate to, since we face the common foes of privatization and growing inequality. CUPE is committed to continuing its



global solidarity work with allies around the world.

■ **Guy Marsden**

# Three years in, where is the “real” climate change?

The Liberals’ “Real Change” slogan was heard throughout the 2015 federal election. It was effective in galvanizing public opinion and taking on a rigid and tired conservative government that had overstayed their welcome under Stephen Harper. Justin Trudeau and his Liberal team were swept to power on a promise to deliver on bold new ideas. But three years in, many of us find ourselves

asking, how much has really changed?

We saw Trudeau deceptively abandon his commitment to replace our archaic voting system with one that would give every Canadian a voice.

And then there is the climate file. Let’s take a look at the promises and what has been done.

The Liberals showed up to the United Nations environmental conference in Paris, at the outset of

their mandate, saying “Canada is back” but then refusing to set emission reduction targets. It is difficult to move a plan forward if targets are not set. The previous government did sign on to a new climate change convention in 2009, but Canada will fail to meet that modest commitment to reduce emissions by 17 per cent below 2005 levels by 2020.

Part of Trudeau’s rationale for moving forward with

certain pipeline projects, flawed as it may be, was to advance and make progress on other parts of the climate change agenda. If this is the case, then we find ourselves asking, where is the progress?

The Liberals committed to a clear deliverable: to “rapidly add electric vehicles to the federal fleet.” This plan seems to have hit a snag when not even the minister of

Natural Resources could follow through on his plan to get an electric vehicle due to a lack of charging stations in the nation’s capital.

The federal election is just around the corner. It’s time for Justin Trudeau to show us what he has really done towards tackling climate change. On this file, like so many others, the Liberals have so far failed to deliver on their promises.

■ **Charles Brenchley**

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# Anne Leclair, television reporter and union activist

*Like many journalists, Anne Leclair chose reporting as a way to make a positive impact on the world. In time, her chosen trade would lead her to the labour movement, which turned out to be a powerful tool for defending not only her co-workers, but journalism itself.*

“As a working journalist and union activist, the issues that most concern me are the importance and survival of local news in an era of web giants that eat up most of the advertising dollars that used to end up in our broadcasters’ pockets,” explains Anne Leclair.

Less money for newsrooms has meant less news gathering and fertile

ground for fake news.

“CUPE Quebec has led some thought-provoking campaigns promoting the importance of local news and I’m proud that we’ve also recently joined forces with other major players in the industry under the banner of the Coalition for Culture and Media (standing forculture.info),” Leclair says. “We are standing up against web giants like Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon, Netflix and Spotify, and demanding they be covered by the same fiscal, tax and regulatory conditions that all Canadian organizations are expected to follow.”

### From the personal to the universal:

How she got here. In 1998, Anne Leclair moved to Quebec City for a permanent reporting gig. After a couple of years, she wanted to move back to Montreal but her collective agreement didn’t recognize seniority from

one location to another, despite the fact that all reporters, notwithstanding their location, were contributing to the same Montreal-based newscast.

“I thought it was so unfair. The union quickly came to my defence and eventually negotiated a clause in our collective agreement that considered us all part of the same team and location, therefore giving reporters and all employees equal opportunity.”

She wanted to give back and became a union delegate. Soon after, she was elected secretary-archivist before joining the union’s negotiating committee.

“I was a little hesitant at first since the most militant members were normally technicians (not newsroom staff) but a good friend and colleague convinced me that the newsroom staff needed more representation and that the union needed more women. So I took the leap and never looked back. Today, I’m the president of my local union, I’m the TV-radio VP for CUPE Quebec’s provincial communications council (CPSC), and I am co-chair of CUPE’s national communications council, for which we are currently planning our upcoming sector conference in November in Ottawa.”

■ Lisa Djehardjian



IT’S TIME. IT’S 2018 AND WE NEED TO MAKE A CHANGE NOT JUST FOR MYSELF BUT FOR OUR PEOPLE AND OTHERS WHO ARE NOT INDIGENOUS



## CUPE members speak on reconciliation

A video released by CUPE BC in time for National Indigenous Peoples Day (June 21) continues the dialogue on reconciliation, with CUPE members exploring what people can do both collectively and as individuals to foster equality and make Canada a more just society for Indigenous peoples.

“Reconciliation: CUPE Members Speak” is a thought-provoking, five-minute video in which members address different aspects of reconciliation and what the concept means to them. The testimonials, accompanied by a drumming composition from the Vancouver awareness and direct action organization *Culture Saves Lives*, focus on the need to redress historical wrongs by taking concrete actions in the present.

“Each of us has a part to play in making Canada a more just society,” says CUPE BC President Paul Faoro.

“These testimonials contribute to the discussion on how to make that a reality. While the onus for reconciliation is on the non-Indigenous population that continues to benefit the most from the land we all share, all our members—including those who are First Nations and Metis—have something valuable to contribute to this discussion.”

Since November 2015, when the Federal Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) released its 94 calls to action to redress the historic wrongs of the residential school system, a national dialogue has taken place about how to make Canada more inclusive and equitable for Indigenous peoples.

In the video, CUPE members address issues ranging from access to safe drinking water to the need to enforce Jordan’s Principle, which guarantees the same access to services for Indigenous children enjoyed by non-Indigenous children.

The reconciliation video project is an initiative of CUPE BC’s Indigenous Workers Committee.

■ Dan Gawthrop

### NATIONAL PRESIDENT MARK HANCOCK

## National Task Force on Governance

One of the key decisions taken by CUPE members at our national convention last October was to create a National Task Force on Governance.

In June, the Task Force began its important work.

CUPE’s constitution hasn’t changed much since it was first approved 55 years ago in 1963.

But as our country changes and the challenges we face evolve, it’s time for us to consider if our current union structure is serving our members, and if there are ways to make it better.

And so, over the summer, the Task Force on Governance launched a consultation process which will continue into November. We are asking CUPE members and locals about important issues like how we elect our National Executive Board (NEB) and what its responsibilities should be.

It’s my hope that we can settle a lot of the “unwritten rules” around how members are elected to the NEB. Over the years, a number of common practices have developed

that are not reflected in the constitution – which creates an uneven playing field where some members understand the practices and others do not.

The Task Force will also be seeking your input on CUPE’s National Convention, the highest decision-making body in our union, and how we might improve it.

We’ll review the historic structure of our union, and ask if there are changes needed to how CUPE locals interact within our union and with the broader labour movement through affiliations.

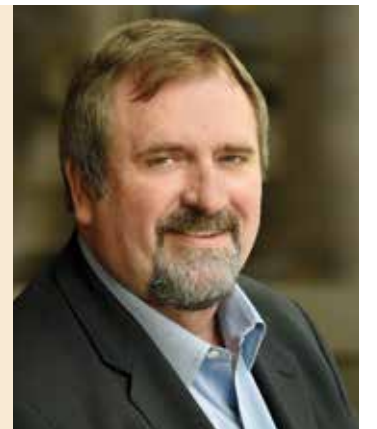
And we’ll consider the work of previous commissions and the National Women’s Task Force as we work towards a final set of recommendations for consideration by our National Executive Board. Our hope is that our work will result in constitutional amendments being brought to our next National Convention for your consideration.

The work of the Task Force will continue into next year. But to make the most of this opportunity to improve our union, we need your input now.

In the coming months, members, locals, national committees, and chartered organizations will have the opportunity to provide input through an online survey, written submissions, and in-person discussions.

I hope you and your local will make some time for this important discussion, and make your voice heard. Together, we can keep making our great union even better.

MARK HANCOCK ONLINE [twitter.com/CUPENatPres](https://twitter.com/CUPENatPres)





# Electoral reform is the key to stemming the rising right

It doesn't take a magnifying glass to see a new political pattern developing across Canada over the last few years. From Saskatchewan to Nova Scotia and many points in between, a troubling trend has been picking up steam. Right-wing governments have been taking hold and attempting to uproot how governments serve their people, and fundamentally redefine labour rights in Canada.

There are differences from region to region, and the colours of their political stripe may vary, but overall the formula used in each case is about the same.

Important public services are starved of resources, crippling their ability to serve their communities, and putting increased stress on employees.

Important services are

privatized or contracted out despite consistent evidence that publicly-delivered services are higher quality and cost less.

Attacks on workers' wages and working conditions have become routine. Using legislative options to respond to labour disputes used to be a last resort, but these days, it's seemingly number one in every right-

wing premier's play-book.

A quick look around the country shows how this trend is playing out.

In Nova Scotia, the governing Liberals under Premier Stephen McNeil have assaulted workers' rights and public services in a way that would make a lot of Tory governments blue with envy.

They forced through

Bill 148, which took away the right of public sector workers to bargain their wages and severance for years. The law will probably be struck down as unconstitutional by the courts – but the McNeil government has forged on all the same. Meanwhile, the Nova Scotia Liberals are pushing public-private partnerships in health care, and trying

to privatize things like highway maintenance even though CUPE members can do the job better at a lower cost.

“How will the province save money by paying private companies to do this work?” wonders Mike MacIsaac, treasurer of CUPE 1867, the Nova Scotia highway workers union. “The province’s highway workers can do the job more efficiently and cost-effectively. Why would you go out and rent a car when you already own one?”

The reality is, no one is forcing the McNeil government’s hand when it attacks workers and diminishes public services. It’s a case of letting ideology trump good public policy. As CUPE NS President Nan McFadgen notes, “That’s a mistake we’ll all pay for.”

People in Saskatchewan have been living a similar story for over a decade under the conservative government of Premiers Brad Wall and Scott Moe and the Saskatchewan Party.

The Sask Party enjoyed years of major economic boom but instead of investing and saving, the Wall government wasted precious revenue resources and cut taxes for the province’s highest earners.



They let the province's social deficit grow even as revenues from oil skyrocketed – and when the boom went bust in late 2014, they blamed public service workers, working people, and the disadvantaged for Saskatchewan's budget deficit.

“Last year's budget introduced sweeping cuts and proposed rollbacks, on the revenue side, the increase in sales and consumption taxes hit workers and every day people the hardest,” said CUPE Saskatchewan President Tom Graham. “I think Saskatchewan people would prefer to see sound investment in this province's future. That starts with a fairer tax system on the revenue side.”

Newly-installed Premier Scott Moe has shown there's not much daylight between him and his predecessor,

Brad Wall, with a 2018 budget that cries poor while dumping billions into expensive P3s.

The Sask Party has made a great deal of noise about slaying the provincial deficit, but in reality, the government is simply offloading responsibility onto municipi-

## Right-wing governments in Canada aren't succeeding because they are wildly popular with the public. In fact, the opposite is usually true. They're successful because they effectively manipulate our arcane electoral systems that prevent the majority of voices from being heard.

palities, non-governmental organizations, and ordinary people to make up the difference when services get cut.

It's been shown time and again that Saskatchewan could take a measured medium-term approach to eliminating its deficit that would keep jobs and services intact. But even more than the McNeil government in Nova Scotia, the Sask Party is more

between 46,000 to 159,000 public and private sector job losses could occur as a result of Ford's budgetary policy. “No matter which way you cut it, this is bad news for working people in Ontario.”

Ford has also pledged to scrap the scheduled

system that awards majority governments to parties who win a minority of votes.

It's called first-past-the-post, and it's the reason premiers like Stephen McNeil and Doug Ford enjoy 100 per cent of the power in their respective legislatures despite only earning around forty per cent of the popular vote. It's the reason why the Saskatchewan Party has enjoyed a significantly hampered opposition, where the NDP won 30 per cent of the vote but only occupies 16 per cent of the seats in the legislature.

The solution is proportional representation, a system where every vote is counted, and every voice matters. Forty per cent of the vote equals 40 per cent of the seats – simple enough!

While the right is on the rise from coast to coast in Canada, there is hope on the horizon as well, with referenda on electoral reform during upcoming elections in British Columbia and PEI.

Canadians cherish their public services, and we need to mobilize now to defend them as they fall under attack by right-wing governments from coast to coast.

But in the long run, one of the best ways we can protect public services and the rights of workers is to implement a system that actually recognizes the voices of the majority of Canadians when we go to the ballot box. That journey starts in BC and PEI, but it continues with all of us across Canada for the months and years to come.

■ **Hugh Pouliot**

interested in an ideological attack on public services than good public policy. For Brad Wall and Scott Moe, a budget deficit is just useful political cover.

And finally, we arrive in Ontario where, after the Wynne Liberals went to war with teachers and education workers, and took on the dubious distinction of spending the least of any province per capita on health care, we now have a Conservative government under Premier Doug Ford.

Ford came to power on a promise of \$7.6 billion in tax cuts, \$500 million in annual spending reductions, and a balanced budget by 2021. “There's no way around it: Doug Ford's plan to shell out billions in tax cuts – often to people who don't need them – and to balance the budget by 2021 would mean deep spending cuts and significant job losses,” says CUPE National Senior Economist Toby Sanger. He estimates

increase to Ontario's minimum wage in the coming year, and people are rightly concerned about what a Ford government will mean for labour rights across Ontario.

There's no question that the right is on the rise in Canada.

And if the 2016 presidential elections in the United States and the 2018 provincial elections in Ontario have told us anything, it's that elections matter. Across the board we need to step up our engagement in election campaigns at every level of government.

But as right-wing governments continue to rise despite a lack of popular support, the question of how we elect is becoming as significant as who we elect.

Hillary Clinton won two million more votes than Donald Trump but still lost the election. And in Canada we have a voting



# Municipalities meet in Halifax

In early June, members of CUPE's National Executive Board and staff attended the annual meeting and trade show of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, held in Halifax. It was the largest meeting the FCM has ever held, with over 2000 mayors, councillors and other municipal officials from across Canada in attendance.

As part of its presence at the meeting, CUPE hosted a panel session titled, "How Accessible Public Services Protect Human Rights." The session highlighted many of the creative ways that municipalities – and municipal workers – support human rights by providing and defending strong public services. The panel was moderated by Prabha Khosla, an urban planner and scholar, who framed the discussion as a celebration of good work and a tool kit for other municipalities.

The panelists, from three very different Canadian cities, discussed how public services are a necessary condition for many of the most vulnerable in our communities to participate in society.

Sue Montgomery, Mayor of Côte-des-Neiges-Notre-Dame-de-Grâce and Deputy Mayor of Montreal, described the importance of adequate and affordable housing for lower-income and new Canadian populations. Toronto City councillor

Kristyn Wong-Tam discussed the importance of bringing a gender-responsive lens to city budgeting, and how to break through bureaucratic inertia to get there. Catherine McKenney, an Ottawa city councillor, told the story of the pop-up overdose prevention site in Ottawa, and how an unsanctioned site was eventually licensed and funded through the hard work of advocates and workers.

The subjects raised by this panel discussion, and the numerous conversations the session generated over the course of the FCM meeting, are particularly relevant for CUPE members.

"The municipal sector is one of CUPE's largest sectors, with nearly 150,000 members, over 1100 bargaining units, and thousands of different job classifications," noted CUPE National President Mark Hancock during his opening comments. "CUPE members work in water, roads, transit, planning and administration, public health, child care and more. CUPE members have a long history of supporting human rights in their workplaces and in their communities. As front-line service workers, we know how important strong public services are in making sure everyone can live a safe, healthy and productive life."

■ Robert Ramsay



## K-12 education workers hit the big screen in B.C.

Kindergarten to Grade 12 education support workers will be featured on movie theatre screens in Cineplex theatres throughout B.C. this summer and fall, thanks to an animated spot promoting the important services they provide.

The 30-second animation features "Rachel" and some of the CUPE members she comes into contact with throughout her day at school. Featured CUPE workers include an education assistant, custodian,

clerical worker, tradesperson and bus driver, who all contribute to making great schools possible.

"It's been tough for our members who have faced cuts over sixteen years of BC Liberal government," said K-12 Presidents Council President Warren Williams. "This campaign will help build public understanding of the services our members provide and their importance to students in public education as we head into bargaining."

The campaign will include buttons, flyers and posters as well as newspaper and radio ads in locations that do not have large cinemas.

Bargaining surveys revealed that 41 per cent of respondents have seen increased violence in B.C. education workplaces, with 15 per cent reporting a "significant increase." For more on this important campaign visit

[bcschools.cupe.ca](http://bcschools.cupe.ca).

■ Janet Szliske

## What's in store for Ontario with Premier Ford in the driver's seat?

Despite 60 per cent of Ontarians voting against Doug Ford and the Conservatives, the party now holds a massive majority government with 76 seats compared to Andrea Horwath and the NDP with 40 seats, the Liberals with seven and the Green Party with its first seat in the province.

Ford ran on a campaign of cuts – corporate taxes, personal taxes, gas taxes, carbon taxes – while providing no plan on how his government will address the loss of more than \$10 billion in annual revenue. Much is up in the air as the new right-wing government takes shape. Ford has promised he will make people's lives easier. Those who have followed his career closely anticipate an agenda of mass privatization, contracting out and cuts to public services.

For CUPE members across Ontario who provide those services, life could become quite difficult. For all the people that rely on public services, life will be anything but easier.

While CUPE's leadership and staff begin to prepare for any necessary fight backs, it's important to remember that Doug Ford sees himself as a populist.

Though Ford holds a majority of seats in the legislature, he is much more susceptible to public opinion than many Premiers who have come before him. He knows that Kathleen Wynne's downfall began when she ignored the public outcry against selling off the province's hydro system. He's seen how easily the Ontario Liberals went from majority government to losing party status.

What happens in Ontario over the next four years will depend in large part on how the public responds once Doug Ford begins to implement his agenda. CUPE members cannot afford to stay silent when it comes to protecting public services. Building public support will be critical for success.

■ Sarah Jordison



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# Major victory in fight against P3 schools in Manitoba

This past spring, CUPE learned that the Pallister Progressive Conservative (PC) government was abandoning a controversial plan to build four new schools in Manitoba – three in Winnipeg and one in Brandon – using a public-private partnership (P3) model.

Under the proposed P3 model, the schools would have been built, financed, owned and maintained by private-for-profit companies. The school division would have become a long-term tenant in the school, and after several decades the division would have had the option to purchase the school outright.

P3 schools across Canada are plagued by waste, secrecy and scandal. In Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Alberta, P3 schools have been found to cost millions more than traditional models of school construction and ownership. P3 schools in Saskatchewan are currently shrouded in mystery and questionable assumptions, and will also ultimately prove more expensive.

In addition to cost concerns, the nature of private-ownership of buildings creates problems for the broader community. Schools have traditionally been used on evenings and weekends for everything from Scouts and Guides to community basketball leagues and community meetings. Private owners, whose only responsibility is delivering profit to their shareholders, do not make their property available to the community in the same way that school divisions do. P3 schools cease to be a community space.

For all of these reasons, CUPE in Manitoba undertook a campaign to “raise red flags” on P3 schools in that province. The heart of the campaign was targeted at Brandon, a city of approximately 50,000 people, one school division, and two seats in the Manitoba Legislature. Both seats are “swing seats” held currently by Progressive Conservative MLAs.

CUPE 737, representing education support staff at the Brandon School Division



(BSD), took on the campaign in full force. The local dropped off thousands of pamphlets at people's homes, hosted a public town hall with the Canadian Center for Policy Alternatives-Manitoba, and made multiple presentations to the BSD Board of Trustees using research compiled by CUPE researchers across the country. CUPE made strategic use of local advertising to get the message

out to the public.

It worked. Despite a government election commitment to seek out P3s for Manitoba's infrastructure, and a budget commitment to build four schools as P3s, the Brian Pallister government backed down. The government announced it had abandoned its plans to build P3 schools and admitted that the P3 plan would be more expensive than the traditional model

of construction/ownership.

It gets even better. With the money the provincial government saved from abandoning the P3 model, it committed to building an entire fifth school! So instead of four privately-owned schools, Manitoba ended up with five publicly-owned schools.

That's a victory to be proud of! The lesson learned? Campaigning pays off.

■ Matt McLean

## NATIONAL SECRETARY-TREASURER CHARLES FLEURY

### CUPE will fight right-wing agenda across Canada

CUPE members face many challenges across the country.

With the election of Doug Ford's Conservative right-wing government in Ontario, our members face even more challenges. Ford promises to cut six billion dollars from the provincial budget to eliminate “inefficiencies,” to scrap the 15-dollars-an-hour minimum wage and to eliminate the cap-and-trade system for carbon emissions, among other things. The new Ontario premier is also considering privatizing the sale and distribution of alcohol and cannabis.

CUPE will defend our public services and keep decent paying jobs in our communities. We oppose governments who cut public services and implement austerity measures.

We know public services are the great equalizers in our society. We push back when governments and employers want to cut jobs, reduce salaries, working conditions and take aim at retirement security. We campaign to derail privatization and contracting out. We say no when concessions and two-tier proposals are presented at the bargaining table. We stand up against precarious work, violence, harassment, discrimination and racism in the workplace. We defend our members' right to strike and their bargaining power against anti-union legislation.

Every day is full of challenges for CUPE members. But because we have managed our finances very carefully, we have the resources to take these governments and employers on. This year, our General Fund budget includes the highest number of new staff positions in many years. Our Defence Fund budget has more money for organizing, restructuring votes and campaigns. Our Strike Fund is 97 million dollars strong. This is the power of CUPE, a pan-Canadian union of 665,000 members. Our union is on a solid financial foundation.

CUPE National will continue to be with you in all your fights. Each and every CUPE member will benefit from our collective strength for years to come.

CHARLES FLEURY ONLINE  [twitter.com/CUPENatSec](https://twitter.com/CUPENatSec)



# From saving pensions to saving the whales

For Fangliang Xu, videographer at Carleton University and member of CUPE 2424, her inability to say “no” led to her getting involved with her local during a strike, and then setting off for adventure abroad.

“When I heard about the pension issue I was still on a casual contract,” Xu recounts. “But everyone in the office was concerned. I knew I would become full-time, so it was important for contract workers like me to protect the pension.”

She became a picket captain by chance, after waving enthusiastically to the local president one day at the bank. “Two hours later I had an email that said, ‘Xu, you look like you have good spirit, you should be a picket

captain.’ I never say no, so I said yes,” Xu laughs. “I went to a picket training. People from CUPE National showed us how to block traffic, set up a tent and a portable toilet. I thought, woah this is really organized.”

She may have had the picket captain spirit, but she had one problem.

“I was too shy. So no one knew I was a captain. They knew the other person was, because he was holding the bullhorn.” She decided to put her skills to use. “Instead of getting on the bullhorn I made funny videos to give picketing instructions. It fit better with my personality.” Xu’s videos were

shared through the local’s Facebook group, and soon people started to recognize her across campus.

After the strike Xu said yes to another request. A friend needed help filming a documentary in Iceland. Less than two weeks after the strike Xu was filming the efforts of researchers to limit the impact of

Iceland’s growing tourism industry on the area’s killer whales, an experience she won’t soon forget.

Now back in Ottawa (with a full-time contract) Xu continues to be involved in the local serving on the communications committee in her natural role, as a videographer.

■ Matthew Stella



Fangliang Xu in Iceland.

## Privatization of hospital services prevented in New Brunswick

This summer, the New Brunswick government officially rejected the Sodexo takeover of management of food, cleaning and patient portering services in New Brunswick hospitals.

“After petitions, rallies, meetings, citizen advocacy, our efforts to halt privatization have been successful,” said Norma Robinson, President of CUPE 1252, the New Brunswick Council of Hospital Unions.

The “Sodexo idea” was first explored in 2012, under the Alward Conservative government. When Liberals came to power in 2014, Health Minister Victor Boudreau revived the idea. He reopened talks with Sodexo, a French multinational corporation, stating he wanted to “save 7.9 million dollars” and to standardize practices throughout the 21 general hospitals of the province.

More than 280 hospital jobs would have been eliminated if the government had given the green light to Sodexo.

Immediately, when the Sodexo plan was proposed, it did not sit well with health professionals and members of the public. CUPE 1252 informed its membership, and soon a coalition opposing privatization was created, including the NB Health Coalition, *Égalité Santé en Français*, the *Société de l’Acadie du Nouveau-Brunswick* (SANB), CUPE NB and other citizens’ groups. The National Farmers Union joined the campaign and opposed the deal, knowing that privatization of food services would mean the end of a potential buy-local food strategy.

Other backers included Gilles Lanteigne, CEO of Vitalité, the francophone

Regional Health Authority. He came out multiple times in the media to reiterate his opposition to the deal, saying it was against the principles of public health care. Lanteigne presented the Minister with a public restructuring option to demonstrate how going in-house was cheaper and better than contracting out to Sodexo.

“When our members, citizens, the Vitalité Health Network, health professionals, economists and farmers came out in support of public health care, rather than private interests, the government had to listen,” said Daniel Légère, president of CUPE NB.

“I suspect they also looked closer at the deal and realized they would not even come close to saving seven million dollars with Sodexo. With the September 2018 elections coming up,



Norma Robinson, president of CUPE 1252 with New Brunswick Health Minister Benoît Bourque.

they saw the writing on the wall: Sodexo was a costly restructuring scheme, financially and politically,” added Légère.

In December 2017, a joint labour-government steering committee launched the Task Force on Food, Environmental and Portering Services. The mandate of the task force was to identify gaps and opportunities with respect to the provision of food, environment and portering service within our regional health authorities.

“The task force, which included front-line CUPE members, did its job and

concluded what we had said from day one: Privatization was not the solution. The new Health Minister, Benoît Bourque, accepted its recommendation to scrap the deal. He listened to the workers’ concerns on Sodexo,” said Norma Robinson.

“Our work is not done, however. There remains some troublesome overwork and contracting-out happening in health care, but victories like this one are significant. We can certainly celebrate this,” said Robinson.

■ Simon Ouellette