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## **NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S REPORT MARCH 2018 – JUNE 2018**

Sisters, Brothers and Friends:

Since the March meeting of our National Executive Board, I have had the opportunity to attend another seven provincial division conventions, as well as a meeting of our Quebec Municipal Sector Council, and a number of other sectoral and local meetings from coast to coast.

I am always inspired by the commitment and passion of our members as they participate in the work of our union. It was an honour to witness respectful debate on common issues across the country as our members face austerity-driven governments, fight against privatization, concessions, and precarity, and fight for fairness, equality, and diversity.

Thanks to our provincial and local leaders, to our staff, and to all of our members for the dedication they showed at each of these meetings, to CUPE, and to our common goals.

I want to acknowledge and congratulate the incoming executive members of our provincial divisions.

### **Federation of Canadian Municipalities**

Once again this year, CUPE participated in the annual Federation of Canadian Municipalities conference. In addition to participating in the trade show, where we had conversations with hundreds of local government officials from across the country, we hosted a workshop promoting the role of public services on ensuring human rights are protected in our communities, and highlighting some ground-breaking local initiatives.

As always, this was a great opportunity to highlight the importance of the work our members do in cities, towns, villages, counties and regional districts, and to discuss the concerns we have in the sector with the infrastructure funding gap, the risks associated with privatization, and public-private partnerships.

I also appreciated the opportunity to speak with so many current and retired CUPE members and staff who serve their communities as elected officials.

**MARK HANCOCK**

National President/Président national

**CHARLES FLEURY**

National Secretary-Treasurer/Secrétaire-trésorier national

**DENIS BOLDOC, FRED HAHN, JUDY HENLEY, DANIEL LÉGÈRE, MARLE ROBERTS**

General Vice-Presidents/Vice-présidences générales

## **Elections**

2018 brings with it a number of significant elections across this country.

On June 7, Ontarians elected a new provincial government. Going in to the election campaign, all polls pointed to a Progressive Conservative (PC) majority government. And that is indeed what the voters decided, electing 75 PC candidates and making former Toronto city councillor Doug Ford their premier.

A strong and inspiring campaign by Andrea Horwath and the Ontario NDP meant that, for a time, the NDP was in contention for government. They ended the race as the official opposition, with a record number of votes and nearly double the number of seats. Among the 40 NDP MPPs are two CUPE members – CUPE 1281 member Joel Harden was elected in Ottawa Centre and CUPE 3904 member Sara Singh was elected in Brampton Centre. CUPE staff member Chandra Pasma finished an incredibly close second in Ottawa West–Nepean; CUPE 146 member and former member of our National Executive Board, Henri Giroux, had a best-ever result for the NDP in Nipissing; and CUPE 1989 member Laura Kaminker had a strong showing in Mississauga Centre. I offer them all congratulations on behalf of CUPE.

The PC campaign platform was thin on details, so we do not know the full impact their government will have on our members across Ontario. But based on the very conservative transition team Doug Ford has put together, it is safe to say that public services, public sector jobs and workers' rights are all at risk.

CUPE members will be on the frontlines of any fight to protect our members' jobs, the public services our communities rely on, and the rights of all working people in Ontario.

I had the opportunity to spend time with four NDP candidates in different communities and was impressed by the energy in each campaign and the way the NDP message resonated on the doorstep. I am proud of the work that CUPE members did to support ONDP candidates across the province, and especially proud of those CUPE members and staff who stepped up as candidates in this election.

CUPE members in New Brunswick and Quebec will no doubt put just as much energy into their provincial elections later this year.

And I know CUPE members are already working to ensure they elect worker-friendly local government representatives in municipal and school board elections being held this fall in British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, and Prince Edward Island.

## **Task Force on Governance**

Acting on Resolution 36 from our 2017 National Convention, the NEB approved membership of the Task Force on Governance and a general scope of review at our March meeting. The 16 members of the Task Force met in Ottawa on June 5, where they reviewed the history of CUPE's governance structures and developed a plan for their work between now and March 2019. This plan includes consultation with CUPE members, locals, councils and divisions, which will guide the Task Force in their final deliberations. The Task Force is required to report to the NEB with recommendations by March 2019.

Look for an online survey, and other opportunities to provide input, this summer.

## **Legislative Update**

In April, Transport Minister Marc Garneau confirmed that his government is backing away from pursuing privatization of Canada's ports and airports. The federal government had commissioned two separate studies on the potential of selling off these public assets, and had been openly contemplating such a move.

Canada's largest airports are currently managed by not-for-profit corporations, airport authorities, which manage the operations for the federally-owned properties. Several airport authorities, including Calgary, Ottawa and Vancouver, were strongly opposed to the concept of privatization.

The formal commitment from the ministry is that "the government's review of privatization will not be under active consideration". So, while this is a win for now, we will continue to keep a close watch on this file.

Also in April, the House of Commons' Standing Committee on Health published a report recommending, among other things, that the *Canada Health Act* be expanded to include prescription drug coverage for all Canadians, that all levels of government work together to develop a national drug formulary to ensure equal access to medications, and that the federal government help cover the cost of a universal Pharmacare plan.

This is a significant development in our fight for a universal Pharmacare plan. But we know we cannot sit back and wait for this federal government to do the right thing. While the federal government has appointed an advisory committee to review the question and make recommendations, Finance Minister Morneau has clearly expressed his support for a less-than-universal fix.

With a federal election in the fall of 2019, we have a lot of work to do to convince all members of parliament that this next piece in Canada's public health care system is long overdue.

## Canadian Labour Congress (CLC)

Having chosen to leave the CLC in January of this year, Unifor remains outside of the house of labour. Efforts to reconcile with Canada's largest private sector union have halted because of continued raiding activities in Ontario, where Unifor has successfully taken close to 1,000 hotel workers from UNITE HERE.

It seems unlikely that we will be able to repair this relationship any time soon. Unifor's continued absence from the CLC means their members and activists have lost their right to participate in labour federations and labour councils. I know CUPE members will do their best to fill that void by increasing their participation in these vital labour bodies.

The CLC's Canadian Council, at its April meeting, approved Terms of Reference for a review of the CLC Constitution. This review will be in addition to the already established review of Article 4 of the CLC Constitution which addresses internal disputes. Following consultation with the National Executive Board, CUPE will be making submissions to both of these reviews.

I continue to believe that our labour movement is strongest when it is united, and ensuring the strength of our movement remains a top priority for me as your national president.

### Collective Bargaining/Strikes/Lockouts

There were seven disputes involving job action in this reporting period. One dispute ended during the period.

PROVINCE	LOCAL	EMPLOYER	# OF MEMBERS	STRIKE BEGAN	DURATION (days)
Quebec	5317	Viterra – Port of Montréal	51	January 30, 2018 Locked Out	On-going
Ontario	2424	Carleton University – Professional Services Staff	903	March 5, 2018	31 days
Ontario	3903	York University – Academic Staff	2,717	March 5, 2018	On-going

PROVINCE	LOCAL	EMPLOYER	# OF MEMBERS	STRIKE BEGAN	DURATION (days)
Ontario	234	City of Cornwall – Outside Workers	136	March 17, 2018	On-going
Ontario	3251	City of Cornwall – Public Library	27	March 17, 2018	On-going
Ontario	5734	Cornwall, Stormont and Glengarry – EMS	102	March 17, 2018	On-going
Ontario	3251	City of Cornwall – Inside Workers	182	March 23, 2018	On-going

### **Local 5317 – Viterra at The Port of Montréal – Quebec**

Viterra, one of the main grain marketer/handlers at the Port of Montréal, locked out 51 members on Tuesday, January 30, at 7 a.m. The members are seeking equity with other Port of Montréal workers represented by CUPE.

Negotiations have stalled over two matters – wages and scheduling. Since the lockout began, CUPE has settled two other collective agreements with Port employers that address salary inequities and work scheduling. This employer remains steadfast in their position not to address any of Local 5317 issues.

Viterra is owned by the large multi-national corporation Glencore. Glencore is a profitable company which has shown no interest in treating its employees equitably and resolving this dispute.

### **Local 3903 – York University Academic Staff – Ontario**

For the third time in the last ten years, academic workers at York University are out on picket lines. Local 3903 represents academic workers in three units – Teaching Assistant Unit; Contract Faculty Unit; and the Research and Graduate Assistant Unit. Rather than find a solution to the issues, York University negotiators have been absent in the days leading up to the strike and since the strike began. They have refused to enter into meaningful dialogue with Local 3903.

After six months of fruitless bargaining, members took to the picket lines on March 5 in support of their demands to address precarious employment in a university system that is far too reliant on short-term, precarious work that provides little to no stability or predictability.

York University asked the Ontario Labour Relations Board to conduct a supervised vote of the University's final offer. All three bargaining units resoundingly turned down their employer's final offer.

On April 13, the Ministry of Labour appointed William Kaplan to serve as an Industrial Inquiry Commissioner to "facilitate a resolution to this dispute". This effort proved futile as the University failed to use the time wisely and refused to bargain, in spite of the urgency to save the term and ensure a summer academic term for more than 50,000 students, and despite significant efforts by CUPE 3903 to bridge the divide between the parties. In the spirit of compromise and cooperation with the Commission, Local 3903 moved significantly on issues of job security for precariously employed contract instructors.

The Liberal government attempted to resort to back-to-work legislation in its dying days, but this required unanimous consent of the legislature. The attempt to pass legislation failed as the NDP refused to entertain the Liberals' ill-conceived resolve to the dispute.

### **Local 234, 3251 and 5734 – City of Cornwall – Ontario**

On May 17, three of four bargaining units at the City of Cornwall took strike action. They were followed by another unit on May 23. With approximately 450 members, these three local unions representing members in four bargaining units were forced to take strike action in the face of concessions, after months of trying to negotiate a deal with their employer.

One unit has been without a contract since 2015 and the other three since 2016.

The employer has since moved off their zero-wage increase position; however, the members and the employer still have some way to go to bridge the gap between their positions, especially in light of the fact that many classifications are paid substantially less than those in comparable municipalities.

The employer is also seeking a concession with three of the bargaining units on sick leave which would drastically reduce the current level of income protection.

## **Local 2424 – Carleton University Professional Services Staff – Ontario**

Members of Local 2424 walked off the job on March 5 in a fight against concessions. The employer, Carleton University, was proposing to remove collective agreement language that allows the local the right to negotiate around pensions. The insistence of the employer to remove the provision was a clear indication the employer intended to make unilateral changes to the defined benefit pension plan that would result in a move to a defined contribution plan.

After a four-week strike, the local reached a deal that guarantees a defined benefit pension plan for workers.

The collective agreement now contains a clear provision to protect the defined benefit component of the plan. This means it is no longer possible for the Board of Governors, or its pension committee, to eliminate the defined benefit aspect of the plan. In fact, the new contract language prevents any unilateral changes by the Board of Governors, protects against “adverse” amendments, and requires the employer give the union six months’ notice for any future pension plan amendments. The deal also adds a unique provision: a pension benefit formula in the collective agreement.

## **Regional Services Division Updates**

### **ATLANTIC REGION**

#### **Newfoundland and Labrador**

CUPE Newfoundland and Labrador’s (CUPE NL) annual convention was held in St. John’s at the beginning of May. Delegates had the chance to celebrate Wayne Lucas’ 26 years as President of CUPE Newfoundland and Labrador and wish him a well-deserved retirement. He was later honored in the House of Assembly, as a “once in-a-generation, straight up working-class hero”, when Gerry Rogers, Leader of the provincial NDP, congratulated Wayne on his retirement after 40 years as a CUPE member.

Delegates at CUPE NL’s convention elected Sherry Hillier as their new President. Sherry has worked as a licensed practical nurse in long-term care for 24 years and has been involved in her local since 1998. Sherry has served on the CUPE NL executive for ten years and is also the Regional Vice-President for Newfoundland and Labrador on the National Executive Board. I warmly congratulate Sherry on her election.

A longtime dream to create a healing space for children impacted by their experience of domestic violence is now coming to life, thanks to members and locals who came together during CUPE NL’s convention to raise funds for the creation of the SKS Child Care Centre to be built in St. John’s. SKS stands for Susan Kathryn Shiner. Susan was

an active CUPE member who spent her life working toward making the world a better place for women and children. In the last weeks of Susan's life, she called a group of friends together and asked that they work towards creating a dream of hers: a trauma-informed child care facility, attached to Iris Kirby House, so children will have the opportunity to heal.

CUPE Newfoundland Labrador participated in the review of the province's automobile insurance system undertaken by the province's Public Utilities Board. CUPE NL supports the development of a publicly-owned, full service, non-profit automobile insurance system to deliver comprehensive, no-fault insurance to all licensed drivers in the province, including private passenger drivers, independent commercial owner-operators and fleet company drivers at fair, non-discriminatory rates.

More recently, CUPE NL mobilized members in the fight for a minimum wage hike in the province. With allies and affiliates of the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour, CUPE marched in St. John's and spoke strongly for an increase of the current minimum wage from \$11.15 per hour to \$15 per hour.

## **Nova Scotia**

CUPE Nova Scotia (CUPE NS) had a great convention in Halifax at the end of May. Delegates welcomed Federal NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh after a panel discussion on why voting matters, with guest panelists Tammy Martin, MLA for Cape Breton Centre, Susan Leblanc, MLA for Dartmouth North and Lisa Blackburn, HRM Councillor. The close results of Nova Scotia's last provincial elections certainly illustrate why voting matters. The Liberals won their majority by very few votes.

Delegates heard a very touching report presented by Donna McCarthy, member of the NS Human Rights Committee, who went to Colombia this past year to observe the work being done by Colombian unions and activists. She reminded us that union leaders in Colombia do as much work as we do for our members, but with the added stress of fearing for their safety and that of their families. Activism poses great risks in Colombia and in many other countries, and our international solidarity work is much appreciated by these union leaders who feel better supported knowing we are watching.

Delegates also debated a number of resolutions with a common thread: the chronic underfunding of public services in the province. Government funding cuts have a negative impact on both our members' workload and the quality of services they provide. A number of occupations in the province's public services are so underpaid that there are chronic staff shortages and significant retention problems.

After more than 18 months of negotiations, over 40 bargaining dates, multiple pieces of Liberal anti-labour legislation and countless protests, members of the Health Care Councils of Unions have voted 92% to ratify an agreement. Members voted to break the wage pattern of Bill 148 and will receive wage increases over the six-year term of 2014 to 2020, and retroactive pay. Sick leave and retiree benefits, which were targeted for claw back by the employers, have been protected. This agreement will move negotiations on outstanding issues into mediated arbitration.

At the end of March, members of CUPE 1876 mobilized against budget cuts that affect the quality of care at their workplace, the Northside Community Guest Home. They held an information picket in North Sydney at the office of the MLA for Northside-Westmount. The workers shared their concerns about the effects that staffing shortages and government funding cuts have on residents' quality of life.

## **MARITIMES REGION**

### **New Brunswick**

Members of CUPE New Brunswick (CUPE NB) convened in Fredericton at the end of April for the annual convention, titled "Bargaining Forward in Solidarity". Delegates reiterated their commitment to "Breaking the Mandate", highlighting the importance of coordinated bargaining in order to increase workers' wages in the province.

Guest speakers included Gilles LePage, Minister of Labour, Employment and Population Growth for the Government of New Brunswick – it was the first time in more than 30 years that a labour minister spoke at a CUPE NB convention. The Minister heard from our members that not only do they provide essential public services, their wages are vital to the growth of the local economy in each community.

They didn't have to convince another guest speaker, Jennifer McKenzie, Leader of the provincial NDP, who noted exactly that in her address.

Bargaining forward in solidarity is the best way to describe ongoing negotiations for members of the New Brunswick Council of Nursing Homes Unions. Two important rallies took place last month to support the bargaining team in their fight against concessions. CUPE members targeted the office of the New Brunswick Association of Nursing Homes (NBANH), the organization negotiating for the majority of nursing home employers in New Brunswick. The employer is still demanding concessions and wants to create a two-tier employment system. Contract talks broke down on March 23, and a conciliator has been appointed.

CUPE is at the forefront of the fight against water privatization in Moncton. Twenty years ago, the City of Moncton signed a P3 deal with Veolia, a for-profit multinational corporation, to build, finance and operate a new drinking water treatment plant. This arrangement cost at least \$8.5 million more than a public project in expensive private borrowing costs alone.

The P3 contract with Veolia expires in December 2019. This gives Moncton the opportunity to take back control and daily operation of this vital public service. But instead of seizing the opportunity, the city is starting down the same expensive path of privatized operation. CUPE urged municipal councilors to carefully study the option of a publicly-operated water treatment plant and develop a fully costed, unbiased comparison of in-house and privatized operation and maintenance costs. Moncton citizens should have a right to see all options.

### **Prince Edward Island**

CUPE Prince Edward Island (CUPE PEI) had a great convention in Brudenell River at the end of May. CUPE's Human Rights Officer Kimalee Phillip presented on the effects of domestic violence in the workplace and what unions can do in these situations. Delegates debated a number of issues, including literacy, global justice, pensions, employment insurance, shift work, health and safety, and violence at work.

Members had the chance to celebrate Leonard Crawford's great activism in CUPE, as Leonard announced his upcoming retirement as Vice-President and Acting President of CUPE PEI. Delegates elected another Leonard as Vice-President: Leonard Gallant, whom I warmly congratulate on his election.

As rumours of a late spring election are still circulating, the provincial budget sure looked like a pre-election one. CUPE PEI noted the positive investments made in child care, health and education. However, the government is staying the course on funding private, rather than public, long-term care beds. And unfortunately, the funding to create housing units is not targeted for seniors, nor is it to be built as public infrastructure.

In my last report, I mentioned that Workers Compensation legislation would recognize post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as a work-related injury. The amendment was adopted in December, but was not proclaimed until CUPE PEI pressured the government into doing so. Just a few short days before the convention, the Liberals adopted a new piece of legislation which does recognize PTSD as a work-related injury, however, the diagnosis must be made by a psychiatrist or a psychologist. Access to benefits will be harder given the shortage of mental health professionals on the Island.

## Quebec

After nine years before the courts, the court challenge of the reform of Quebec's *Pay Equity Act* has finally paid off: the Supreme Court of Canada has at long last found in our favour! The amendments to the Act that deprived employees of retroactive adjustments do indeed infringe upon their right to equality and are accordingly unconstitutional.

The Court recognized that “...working women are told that they must simply live with the reality that they have not been paid fairly, even where a statutorily mandated audit has made that fact clear. In this way, the scheme, by privileging employers, reinforces one of the key drivers of pay inequity: the power imbalance between employers and female workers. By tolerating employer decision-making that results in unfair pay for women, the legislature sends a message condoning that very power imbalance, further perpetuating disadvantage.”

This momentous decision by the highest court in the land is a victory for the right to equality for our members all across the country, and I must sincerely thank our members and CUPE staff who testified before the trial judge in Quebec's Superior Court, including Sister Annick Desjardins who fleshed out and elaborated CUPE's case before the court.

Within the framework of its campaign to introduce a deposit when purchasing bottles of wine or spirits at the Société des alcools du Québec (SAQ) (*Quebec Liquor Board*), SCFP-Québec sent an empty bottle of wine to the 125 MNAs who sit on Quebec's National Assembly, in order to make them aware of the fact that the Province's recycling centres have trouble dealing adequately with the glass in such a way as to give it a second life. Quebec and Manitoba are the only provinces who do not require a deposit to be made when purchasing bottles of wine or spirits. The campaign “On signe pour la consigne” (*We're on board for the deposit*) attracted a huge number of signatures and received excellent media coverage, such that the SAQ announced that it could introduce an obligatory deposit, if the government were to proceed with such a requirement.

For the very first time, the white-collar and blue-collar workers of the Lévis Municipal Housing Office can now count upon the protection of a collective agreement. Unionized since 2016, the members of Local Union 5301 recently signed a 5-year collective agreement, expiring in 2021, which guarantees them salary increases of 2% per year.

Montreal's school crossing guards voted by a 92% margin to reject a so-called “final” offer tabled by their employer last May 1. The members of CUPE Local Union 930 thus said no to concessions regarding sick leave and floating holidays. The members will now be embarking upon a number of job actions, including a possible strike, before the end of the school year. The 620 school crossing guards are without a collective

agreement since December 31, 2015, namely, more than 28 months. Currently, Montreal's permanent and full-time school crossing guards earn about \$13,000 per year in salary. They're asking for catch-up pay that would bring them more into line with the average earnings of Quebec's other school crossing guards.

The members of CUPE 5317, employees of Viterra at the Port of Montréal, have been locked out since the end of January. Despite the fact that its most recent offer was rejected by 96% of the members, the employer remains inflexible and negotiations are going nowhere.

In May, the Union acquired a share in Viterra's parent company, the Glencore Corporation, and participated in their shareholders' meeting in Zurich in order to meet their CEO. The CEO undertook to get in touch with Viterra. CUPE representatives also met with union leaders who represent different employees from several Glencore subsidiaries around the world. Here in Canada, a demonstration was organized in front of Viterra's Head Office in Regina, where members of CUPE Saskatchewan demonstrated their solidarity with the locked out workers. Finally, demonstrations took place in mid-June at the Port of Vancouver, where Viterra also operates facilities, as well as in Bécancour and in Quebec City. These solidarity actions showed the employer the extent to which CUPE 5317 enjoys solid support across the country.

## **Ontario**

Three CUPE members were among the victims of the horrific vehicular assault near Mel Lastman Square in Toronto on April 23. CUPE 4400 member, Renuka Amarasinghe, was killed in the attack. Renuka was a single mother and a nutrition services worker who had worked for the Toronto District School Board since 2015 – most recently at Earl Haig Secondary School. Renuka was also a well-loved member of the Scarborough community.

CUPE 3904 member and Chief Steward, Amir Kiumarsi, remains in the Intensive Care Unit at Sunnybrook Hospital. Amir is a chemistry instructor at Ryerson University's G. Raymond Chang School of Continuing Education and has served as the Chief Steward for Unit 2 for the past four years. CUPE 79 member, Amaresh Tesfamariam, a registered practical nurse at Fudger House, was gravely injured and remains in critical condition at Sunnybrook Hospital.

Demonstrating their commitment to the communities they call home, members of CUPE 255 recently donated \$10,000 to various worthwhile causes across Southwestern Ontario. Local 255 donated \$5,000 to community arenas throughout Bruce County, as well as the Town of Hanover and the Municipality of Wellington North. An additional \$5,000 was donated to school breakfast programs in the same communities. Since 2012, CUPE 255 has, at the direction of its membership, donated \$60,000 to various

community initiatives throughout the region. CUPE 255 represents over 180 municipal workers employed at Bruce Telecom in Kincardine, Bruce County Highway in Walkerton, Town of Hanover, and the Townships of Wellington North and Arran-Elderslie. Truly a community union.

I had the pleasure of attending and addressing the inaugural Ontario School Board Council of Unions (OSBCU). Over 90% of our locals representing over 94% of our 55,000 members in the province have voted to affiliate to the Council. OSBCU was over ten years in the making and is CUPE's largest Council of Unions.

Congratulations to Terri Preston elected President, Laura Walton elected First Vice-President and Vicky Evans elected Secretary-Treasurer, and all other members elected to the first ever executive of OSBCU. And I would like to thank all the members who put their names forward for election. The Council has a busy agenda ahead of them as they gear up for 2019 collective bargaining.

In Kingston, Local 1974 has grown to over 1,900 members after having won a representation vote over OPSEU on May 19. The Hotel Dieu and Kingston General Hospital merged more than a year ago and are now one hospital (KHSC) with two campuses. Under public sector legislation following an integration or merger, staff who do similar work are provided with a chance to vote for the union they want to be represented by in the new workplace. Clerical staff, registered practical nurses and care aides, porters, dietary, environmental, trades and other services staff at both KHSC sites took part in a workplace representation vote in mid-May supervised by the Ontario Labour Relations Board. A solid majority of staff voted for CUPE to represent them. A warm welcome to our newest members.

After a weekend of intense bargaining in April for 75,000 Ontario hospital workers, whose three unions formed a unique alliance in provincial negotiations, a tentative contract was reached with hospital employers. The settlement came after weeks of mobilizing, rallying and visible workplace actions by hospital workers with CUPE, SEIU Healthcare and Unifor, under the banner of *"Together for Respect"*, at more than 100 hospitals across Ontario. In addition to new language on workplace violence, the tentative deal provides for a wage increase and no concessions in a four-year deal. The hospitals had tabled a long list of concessions and had refused to extend the wage increases they voluntarily agreed to with other employees, to the nursing, clerical and other hospital support staff represented by the three unions. OCHU members have now ratified the agreement.

Delegates to the 2018 convention of the Ontario Council of Hospital Unions (OCHU) re-elected the three full-time OCHU officers and the negotiating team that bargained the new contract. OCHU President and Ottawa native Michael Hurley, first elected in 1990, was re-elected. Sharon Richer, from Sudbury, was re-elected OCHU Secretary-Treasurer. Louis Rodrigues, a Kingston resident, was re-elected OCHU First Vice-President. OCHU members are committed to increased mobilization and activism to fix the chronic underfunding and ongoing attempts by the provincial government to privatize services.

## **Manitoba**

In mid-March, the Manitoba government reversed their plans to use public-private partnerships for the construction of schools. They had planned to build four new schools under a P3 model, but a cost-benefit analysis proved what CUPE has been saying all along – that private financing of public infrastructure doesn't save money. In this instance, the government found that if they use public funding, they can afford to build five schools for the price of four P3 schools.

This is a big win for CUPE members, who had been fighting the privatization plans for a year. Their campaign included presentations to school divisions, community town halls, advertising, and raising awareness with their neighbours and friends through door-to-door conversations.

CUPE 737 led this fight in the community of Brandon, and their efforts have since received international recognition and kudos from Public Services International.

It took almost a year after the legislature passed Bill 29 for the provincial government to bring it into force. On May 10, *The Health Sector Bargaining Unit Review Act* was proclaimed and a commissioner appointed to oversee the process to slash the number of health care bargaining units in the province.

Health care workers in Manitoba are already facing funding cuts, workplace restructuring and layoffs. The additional cost and uncertainty of reorganizing bargaining units and the coming representation votes will add more stress to the system and to these workers. And while we continue to offer the government alternatives to avoid votes, we are also preparing to win the right to represent health care workers across the province.

## **Saskatchewan**

The 2018-2019 Saskatchewan provincial budget was released on April 10.

The budget provides no or little relief after the massive austerity cuts last year, and funding for most sectors remains at 2016-2017 levels.

The government is increasingly relying on regressive or unfair taxation. Revenues from corporate taxes continue to fall, replaced by increased revenue from the Provincial Sales Tax, shifting the burden away from businesses and on to workers and their families.

And while the Sask Party may be celebrating reducing the deficit without increasing taxes, they are really downloading the deficit onto other levels of government, public sector organizations and individuals. Municipalities have had to address the cuts in funding, this and last year, by increasing property taxes and various fees. Universities have increased tuition, making post-secondary education less affordable. And while there was a small increase to education funding, it falls short of replacing a larger amount cut in last year's budget – even though school divisions are seeing increased enrollment.

It was a privilege in May to address the first Annual General Meeting of CUPE 5430, Health Care Workers of Saskatchewan. Newly formed in 2017, this is now CUPE's third largest local union, and with more than 13,500 members they are the true voice of health care workers in the province, and it was inspiring to hear the work they are doing to represent their members in the workplace, in their communities, and at the bargaining table.

## **Alberta**

Workers in Alberta will see big improvements in workplace health and safety as a result of new legislation. For the first time in over 40 years, the Alberta government has overhauled the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, and the changes came into effect on June 1.

The legislation enshrines basic workplace health and safety rights, including the right to know and be informed of hazards in the workplace, the right to participate, the right to refuse dangerous work, and the right to not be subject to discipline for following the law.

Among the changes, the legislation significantly expands employers' obligations to ensure a safe workplace, including ensuring their workers know their rights, and specifically prohibiting employers or supervisors from permitting or requiring work to be done in unsafe conditions.

Workplace health and safety committees are now required in all workplaces with 20 or more workers. This is a significant step forward, as many of our locals had been forced to negotiate joint workplace committees.

With a provincial election less than a year away, CUPE Alberta is stepping up their member engagement, with plans to communicate with CUPE members about what is at stake for them in the coming election.

Alberta's two former right-wing political parties recently united to form the United Conservative Party (UCP), under the leadership of former Harper conservative Jason Kenney. The party's policy convention in May proved that public services and workers' rights are at risk should the UCP form government, with resolutions calling for the expansion of private health care, repealing legislative changes to employment and labour law enacted by the Notley government, and bringing in American-style right to work legislation that would decimate the labour movement.

## **British Columbia**

CUPE British Columbia's 55<sup>th</sup> annual convention ended with delegates approving an Action Plan, reaffirming the union's commitment to strengthening its membership, defending public services and the dignity of members' work, building solidarity and capacity, and ongoing political action—including campaigning for a "Yes" vote in the upcoming referendum on proportional representation.

BC Premier John Horgan's keynote address received multiple standing ovations from more than 600 delegates and guests, and he thanked CUPE members across the province for their help in last year's provincial election.

CUPE Seeds of Change, a community action committee, continued its volunteer efforts in supporting their local community at Cranbrook's Children's Festival held on May 12. Seeds of Change consists of members from CUPE 4165 (K-12 workers in Southeast Kootenay), CUPE 2090 (City of Cranbrook municipal employees), and CUPE 2773 (support staff at College of the Rockies). The three Cranbrook-area CUPE locals formed Seeds of Change three years ago as a way to get more members to participate in community events and help build CUPE's profile. They volunteered at the Children's Festival and Canada Day events, and in the second year supported the Festival and Pride events. This year, as well as again participating in the Children's Festival – one of BC's longest running free festivals now in its 33<sup>rd</sup> year – they plan to help with the Boys and Girls Club fundraiser.

The K-12 Presidents' Council of Unions met May 1 to 3 in Burnaby. The Council meetings were focused on bargaining – reviewing our members' surveys, putting together our provincial proposals and our strategic planning session. K-12 Presidents received reports including the Secretary-Treasurer's Financial Report, Support Staff Education and Adjustment Committee (SSEAC), Skills Enhancement, Job Evaluation,

and Public Employee Benefits Trust (PEBT). The Violence in the Workplace Committee continues their work. Regional reports updated members on what is happening in the regions and where regions were at in preparation for bargaining. Following a presentation on details of a cost-share to raise the profile of education support workers, additional funds were approved.

The Council elected their New Executive Officers: President – Warren Williams (CUPE 15); Vice-President – Nicole Edmondson (CUPE 3500); Recording Secretary – Karen Wong (CUPE 3742); Secretary-Treasurer – Leslie Franklin (CUPE 703); and Membership Officer – Dean Coates (CUPE 441). The membership officer will act as Sergeant-at-Arms, a new table officer position approved by members of the Council.

The critical issue of how to address workload in CUPE's community health and health science professionals' sectors was prominent on the agenda at a recent meeting of the union's Health Care Presidents Council (HCPC). Health care presidents from Victoria, mid-Vancouver Island and Metro Vancouver met to discuss ongoing business, including a review of the Council's protocol agreement, trustee vacancies, and how to improve member access to the sector's Enhanced Disability Management Plan Advocate. They also reviewed a strategic plan for bargaining in the sector, which has begun.

Workload was foremost on the agenda, with discussion focused on next steps after a strong member response to a workload survey conducted by CUPE Research. Survey results revealing chronic understaffing, unpaid overtime, and systemic burnout across the sector led to a series of meetings with members and local union officers that began with worksite visits and culminated with a highly attended workload strategy meeting.

### **Hospital Employees' Union (HEU)**

It is a very busy time at HEU, where members are either involved in preparing for bargaining or already at the bargaining table.

Bargaining for HEU members covered by the community health collective agreement got underway mid-May with the Health Employers Association of British Columbia (HEABC) in Vancouver. The current collective agreement between the parties expires March 31, 2019. Talks are expected to last for five weeks.

Secretary-business manager Jennifer Whiteside is pleased with the smooth start to the talks that is indicative of a respectful relationship. Bargaining proposals will push for increased funding and benefits, and seek to address the critical issues of recruitment and retention, as well as precarious work schedules. Both parties recognized that building a more robust community health sector is essential for accommodating an aging population.

Community Social Services unions were invited by the provincial government to the table for early contract discussions. The CSS Bargaining Association (CSSBA) Committee finalized the unions' priorities and proposals, and initiated talks with the Community Social Services Employers Association (CSSEA) Bargaining Committee on May 16. The parties have concluded a protocol agreement and have begun exchanging proposals across the table and engaging in discussions.

The facilities sub-sector collective agreement also expires on March 31, 2019. Nearly 47,000 health care workers in 11 unions are covered by the talks. HEU is the lead union in the multi-union Facilities Bargaining Association (FBA) which will bargain with the Health Employers Association of BC. HEU represents about 85 per cent of the members covered by these talks. FBA members work in hospitals, residential care facilities, and in emergency health services.

The diverse bargaining unit of more than 270 job classifications includes care aides, ambulance paramedics, health records staff, laboratory and other diagnostic specialists, sterile supply technicians, emergency dispatch personnel, trades and maintenance workers, activity aides and rehab assistants, IT specialists, pharmacy technicians, admitting and booking clerks, administrative staff, cleaning and dietary staff, and many others.

Preparations for bargaining kicked off May 22 to 24 with a Facilities Bargaining Association bargaining conference.

## **Airlines**

In March, CUPE's Air Canada Component filed a human rights violation complaint against Air Canada for systemic discrimination and harassment of flight attendants.

The complaint alleges that Air Canada's policies on uniforms and makeup, including 'modelling' of uniforms, are clearly discriminatory towards female flight attendants on the basis of sex, sexual orientation and race. The complaint also asserts that Air Canada has tolerated discriminatory and harassing behaviour by managers on the ground.

At the end of May, WestJet pilots faced the threat of a lockout as they tried to secure a first collective agreement. There were significant concerns that their notoriously anti-union employer would hire non-union pilots for their new low-cost carrier. The Air Line Pilots Association was able to reach an agreement with WestJet that secures their right to fly all WestJet planes, including the low-cost Swoop that the employer plans to launch before the summer.

Having a union worked for the pilots – their key demands for respect at work have been met. The pilots proved that organizing is the best way for all WestJetters to move forward.

It is essential now that Cabin Crew don't get left behind when Swoop launches. The best way to advance working conditions and maintain job security for Cabin Crew is to stand together and join CUPE, Canada's flight attendant union. We are anxious to welcome them on board.

## **Organizing Report**

During the period of March 1 to May 31, 2018, our organizing efforts have brought in new members and protected existing members. We organized 265 members in health care, 8 members in social services, 35 members in transportation, 27 members in child care, 114 members employed in municipalities, and 125 members in post secondary. This totals 574 new members into the CUPE family in 14 bargaining units.

We are currently involved in 23 active campaigns that, if successful, would bring 3,414 new members into CUPE. At labour boards across the country, we have 8 projects representing 599 new members waiting for certification votes to be conducted. There is one project that will protect 13,600 existing members because of restructuring.

Our efforts to organize flight attendants at WestJet continues to grow at an amazing pace and we should be able to apply for automatic certification in the month of June. This even though the employer and Calgary Airport have attempted to stifle our organizing efforts. We have filed an unfair labour practice with the Canadian Industrial Relations Board.

We have noticed a dramatic increase in the requests from unorganized workers to organize with CUPE. This increase in part can be attributed to the years of austerity many workers have faced and more importantly the various campaigns that CUPE and the provincial divisions have been running in regions. Staff in the regions are revisiting the mapping results for 2015-2016 to ensure the mapping remains current and provides more detail with respect to organizing opportunities.

## **In Memoriam/Personal**

### **Messages of Condolences**

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

### **Members**

- Renuka Amarasinghe                      Member of Local 4400 – Ontario
- Xiaochun Luo                                Member of Local 500 – Manitoba

## Members (continued)

- Simon Cudworth                      Member of Local 1858 – British Columbia
- Stacey Laidlaw                      Member of Local 873 – British Columbia

## Retired Staff

- Ray Arsenault                      Managing Director Union Development –  
National Office
- George Wilson                      Servicing Representative – Niagara Area Office
- Denzil D’Souza                      Servicing Representative – Ontario Regional Office

## In Closing

Our work on behalf of CUPE members continues 12 months of the year. Whether it is grievances, bargaining, health and safety, or labour management amongst a multitude of issues, I know our local leaders and our staff always prioritize our obligations to our members. And while there is no end in sight to our work, I do hope that you are able to find the time to pause and enjoy summer time in the company of your friends and loved ones.

In solidarity,



MARK HANCOCK  
National President

cmg/ceu