
NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S REPORT JUNE – SEPTEMBER 2016

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

I hope you had the opportunity to spend time with family and friends over the course of the summer. I know how much time you give to our union, and I know how important it is to find time to rest and recharge with loved ones.

While you were taking that time, I hope you were also able to participate in community events celebrating Pride and Labour Day. It was a privilege to attend Pride parades in both Toronto and Vancouver, and to march in the Toronto Labour Day parade. The tradition of a parade on Labour Day is new to me (in BC we usually mark the day with community picnics), and I was impressed by the sheer size of the parade and very proud of the number of CUPE locals represented there.

CPP Expansion

In June we welcomed an announcement by federal, provincial, and territorial finance ministers that they had reached agreement to proceed with a modest expansion to the Canada Pension Plan.

It was a critical moment. Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne was on the brink of establishing a separate pension plan, a move that would have led to a patchwork of provincial plans and perhaps the eventual demise of the CPP itself.

The labour movement can, and should, take credit for putting the need for an expanded CPP on the country's agenda. I am proud of the tireless advocacy of so many CUPE members over the many years we have been pursuing these changes.

We didn't get everything we were asking for. But there is no question that the gradual increase in the CPP will help many Canadian workers retire with dignity in the future.

We took some time to recognize our success, but our work is not done. We will continue to work towards retirement security, by pushing for an increase in the Guaranteed Income Supplement, by continuing to defend and expand defined benefit pension plans, and by increasing access to workplace pension plans for our members and all Canadians.

South Africa Grandmothers Gathering

In July, I joined several trade union leaders and representatives from Grandmothers to Grandmothers chapters (Go Go Grannies) from across Canada and attended the first South African Grandmothers Gathering in South Africa. Three hundred grandmothers attended a three-day meeting with plenaries and workshops in Durban, South Africa.

It was a life-changing experience.

A generation of African grandmothers have become primary caregivers for their grandchildren, orphaned as a result of the AIDS epidemic. I heard stories of these grannies leaving their villages at four in the morning to line up for AIDS medication or to get their tiny pittance of support from the government. I heard how some grannies had been robbed, sometimes violently or even killed for their meager belongings or limited money. I heard how AIDS deaths are on the rise again, after many years of declining, and how a tuberculosis epidemic has created even more strain on these grandmothers and their families.

I heard how their grandchildren, many now teenagers or young adults, are now faced with 40% unemployment rates. And I heard how drug use is rampant, with desperate addicts turning to drugs derived from battery acid.

The stories were endless and they were heartbreaking. And yet the spirit of the grandmothers seemed unbreakable. The grannies' emotions swung wildly - one moment there was not a dry eye in the room and the next, everyone was up singing and dancing! In one of the workshops that I attended, they went from the difficult topic of grandmother abuse to two grannies having a sing-off to determine who would report first.

Three days of talking, crying, laughing, singing, and dancing culminated with the development of the South Africa Grandmothers Statement, a call to protect their rights and to protect the future of their grandchildren.

On Saturday, July 16, 1,500 grannies joined the delegation of 300, and with hundreds of other community activists, we marched to the Durban convention centre, where the South Africa Grandmothers Statement was received by UNAIDS Executive Director Michel Sidibé and by Stephen Lewis and Ilana Landsberg-Lewis. They were joined by International AIDS Conference co-chairs Chris Beyrer and Olive Shisana.

The march was, of course, a lively affair with grandmothers singing and dancing the twelve or so blocks to the convention centre. It was a fitting start to the 2016 International AIDS Conference, where 25,000 delegates from across the globe had gathered.

It was heartening to see these grandmothers, who for so long have been putting their grandchildren's needs first, standing up for their own health, well-being, and their rights. This conference was clearly empowering, and will lead to more vigorous and collective advocacy for both their own rights and the rights of those in their care.

I know these incredible women, who have faced extraordinary challenges their whole lives, will be triumphant. I encourage anyone who can assist in their efforts to please do so. You can learn more at <http://www.grandmotherscampaign.org/> or <http://www.stephenlewisfoundation.org>.

I want to thank the staff from the Stephen Lewis Foundation who, together with an organizing committee of South African Grandmothers, allowed me to witness this incredible gathering. Ilana Landsberg-Lewis and the staff were extremely helpful and accommodating, as well as compassionate and professional. I will never forget this experience and pledge my continued support for the Stephen Lewis Foundation and the Go Go Grannies.

Council of the Federation

I attended the Council of the Federation held in Whitehorse in mid-July. This was an opportunity to work with other labour leaders to connect with Premiers in both a formal and an informal way and to press them on a variety of issues. Our focus was on health care, and specifically the need for a new health accord and a national pharmacare program.

World Social Forum - Montréal, Quebec

A number of CUPE representatives made the trip to Montréal this summer to participate in the march that opened the World Social Forum (WSF), the first ever to take place in a country of the "Global North". Under the theme "Another world is needed. Together, it is possible!", I met with activists from across Canada, and sisters and brothers from all over the world, who, like us, are struggling to maintain quality public services and a decent standard of living for working people. In Montréal, we had the opportunity to welcome Margarita Lopez, the President of the Water Workers Union, SINTRACUAVALLE, in Colombia.

CUPE and CUPE-Quebec organized and participated in several workshops dealing with collective bargaining, energy as a fundamental right, trade agreements, and the privatization of essential public services, including water and health care.

National Sector Council Conference

I am very much looking forward to CUPE's second National Sector Council Conference in Winnipeg next month, where close to 1,000 of our local leaders will meet to share ideas and information about trends within their sectors.

After hearing from Sarita Gupta, Executive Director of the US organization Jobs with Justice, members will also delve into a conversation about organizing in their sector.

The conference will provide members with a national perspective on the work our members do, the challenges we face, and the opportunities that exist within each sector. Our sector co-chairs have worked hard to develop agendas that will ensure members can gain experience, knowledge, and insights from each other.

Collective Bargaining/Strikes/Lockouts

There were four disputes involving job action in this reporting period. Three have been concluded and one is on-going.

PROVINCE	LOCAL	EMPLOYER	# OF MEMBERS	STRIKE BEGAN	DURATION (days)
Ontario	2974	County of Essex Library Board	58	June 25, 2016	On-going
Ontario	1989	Mississauga Library Board	400	July 4, 2016	23 days
Ontario	926	Wilfred Laurier University	99	July 10, 2016	7 days
Ontario	2204	McTaggart Family YMCA Day Care	40	July 12, 2016	1 day

Local 2974 – County of Essex Library Board (Ontario)

Members of Local 2974 were forced to take strike action when their employer proposed to remove current sick leave provisions in the collective agreement to be replaced by a sub-standard plan. The employer can give no justification for this concession and have agreed publicly that sick leave is not abused and there are no immediate savings to be gained by the employer.

At day 40 of the strike, the employer did not understand their own proposal and received clarification from the insurance carrier. In a leaked e-mail between the Chief Librarian and the insurance carrier, the local found out that the proposed sick leave plan would only apply to those members working more than 15 hours per week. In effect, a large number of bargaining unit members would be excluded from enjoying a benefit they now receive.

Spirits are high and morale strong with strong community support. CUPE Ontario has been instrumental in bringing support to the picket line with rallies and providing care baskets to members.

Local 1989 – Mississauga Library Board (Ontario)

This 23-day strike was as a result of the employer failing to take the local's bargaining demands in support of precarious workers seriously. After taking strike action, the local was able to settle an agreement that provides for a four-year agreement with increases of 1.75% in each year of the agreement.

The precarious work of part-time employees and Pages was front and center in this dispute. For part-time employees, the local was able to secure a much better scheduling provision for all part-timers. This will go a long way in relieving the pressures that these employees face.

Local 1989 was able to make huge gains for the poorly-paid Pages. The employer resisted at first any adjustments to the Pages' wages and then tried to limit the adjustment to a one-time increase over the life of the agreement. In the end, the Pages have a rate at \$15.00 per hour effective and retroactive to October 1, 2015 with increases of 1.75% on each of the following three April 1 dates.

It is clear the local achieved its goal of addressing precarious work and we are hopeful this sets the bar for other library workers in Ontario.

Local 926 – Wilfred Laurier University (Plants, Maintenance, and Housekeeping) (Ontario)

By far the most difficult strike that CUPE has faced in some time was this job action at Wilfred Laurier University. At stake was the best anti-contracting out language in the

sector. Language that allowed for contracting out, however only if no position in the local union was lost due to contracting out.

The employer used tactics such as advising that terms and conditions of employment would be changed if the local did not accept the deal. The employer held meetings with bargaining unit members where bargaining was discussed in the absence of union representatives. Labour Board complaints are outstanding.

The employer pitted trades workers against custodial staff.

In the end, over 80 members of Local 926 crossed their own picket line bringing about a collective agreement whereby the strong contracting out language was lost. This loss will be felt by all in the bargaining unit in the future.

Despite the difficulty of the dispute, 16 members saw the importance of the struggle and held firm on the line, and I congratulate them on their efforts and their solidarity. Congratulations and a big thank you also to CUPE Ontario and the Ontario University Workers' Coordinating Committee who were on the line and brought support out every day of this strike.

Local 2204 – McTaggart Family YMCA – YWCA Day Care (Ontario)

Members of Local 2204 are the lowest paid not-for-profit day care workers in Ottawa. They took strike action in an attempt to close the gap between themselves and other day care workers represented by Local 2204. After one day on the picket line, they were able to obtain, in addition to general wage increases, a special adjustment of \$1.00 per hour. This adjustment is a step in the right direction.

The employer was poised to use scabs during the strike, however we received information that many hired to scab would not do so for a variety of reasons, including promised wages the employer could not meet.

Regional Services Division Updates

ATLANTIC REGION

Newfoundland and Labrador

In Newfoundland and Labrador, following the announcement of the closure of half of the province's libraries, CUPE members and citizens from the affected communities mobilized against the closures. Public pressure was such that the Ball government was compelled to backtrack; the closures have been suspended. However, to justify its about-face, the government appointed an accounting firm to review the situation of the libraries, which appears to be a very costly and scarcely transparent exercise.

Nova Scotia

This summer, Nova Scotia CUPE members put up information picket lines in several communities in order to inform residents about the consequences of provincial budget cuts that will affect long term care.

Halifax Regional Municipality employees (Local 108) rejected the employer's final offer, notwithstanding the employer's clear threat of a lockout. The members voted clearly to fight the major concessions contained in the final offer. Those offers included major concessions that the members elected to resist. The members held a demonstration after Labour Day to pressure the employer to get back to the bargaining table.

While there were many Pride celebrations held across Nova Scotia, I want to highlight the enthusiastic participation of CUPE members in the first ever Pride Parade in Truro.

MARITIMES REGION

New Brunswick

In New Brunswick, we've made some progress in the pay equity file. In the education sector, significant wage adjustments will be paid out to education assistants and administrative staff. These adjustments will rectify the effects of the systemic discrimination affecting the salaries of several predominantly female jobs. Adjustments will also be made to the jobs of judicial stenographers.

The mobilization against austerity measures also bore fruit in New Brunswick, notably with regard to maintaining hospital services in St. Stephen. Local 1252 participated in a coalition with several community groups, which was a key to the success of the endeavour.

Prince Edward Island

The island that makes CUPE members so happy held its "2016 Gold Cup Parade" on August 19. The event, in which several of our members participated, was a resounding success.

Workers at Canadian Blood Services (members of the Nova Scotia Union of Public and Private Employees) finally reached a collective agreement and returned to work on August 30 after nearly a year on the picket line. CUPE PEI and our locals on the island provided significant support to these workers over the last year, and I congratulate them for the solidarity they showed.

Quebec

In the province of Quebec, mobilization continues against Bill 110, which seeks to modify the bargaining framework covering the province's municipalities and public transit corporations. CUPE presented a position paper and testified at the parliamentary commission to refute several myths concerning these sectors – amongst other things, the Mayors who claim that there is an imbalance in power between the government and the unions that must be rectified. They also claim that the remuneration of municipal employees is too high in comparison to what exists elsewhere in the public sector. With lots of numbers to back up our arguments, CUPE re-established the facts and demonstrated that these allegations are inaccurate.

CUPE is preparing for representation votes in the health care sector. After the Quebec government adopted Bill 1 last year, an important reorganization of the sector took place: 182 health care facilities were merged into 34 “Integrated Health and Social Services Centres” (CISSS). This means that there are now only 34 employers in the health sector and the 800 existing bargaining units must be consolidated. CUPE currently represents 20,000 members in the sector.

Health and social services sector workers will be voting in January and February of 2017. The campaign will begin this fall, with all major unions in Quebec competing to represent these workers. CUPE has been proactive and this campaign is ready to go, but the task is enormous and will require all our energy and resources.

Ontario

The summer of 2016 has been quite busy for CUPE members in Ontario and CUPE Ontario. Strike support has been on the forefront of CUPE Ontario activities. The support given by the division and leadership of Brother Fred and Sister Candace has provided valuable assistance in supporting members on the picket line to achieve their goals.

The Time to Care Act (Long-Term Care Homes Amendment, Minimum Standard of Daily Care) 2016 was introduced in the Ontario Legislature on April 20, 2016. The bill would amend the Long-Term Care Homes Act so that long-term care homes will have to provide each resident with at least four hours a day of hands-on nursing and personal support services.

The bill is being supported by the Ontario Health Care Workers' Coordinating Committee (HCWCC) and CUPE Ontario. I would ask all CUPE members to sign the petition on the CUPE Ontario website.

The Ontario Council of Hospital Unions (OCHU) has released the “Fewer Hands, Less Hospital Care” report to communities throughout Ontario. The report examines hospital funding in Ontario compared to other jurisdictions and concludes that Ontarians are short-changed by the Wynne government to the tune of \$4.8 billion yearly. The result

of this underfunding is citizens turned away from hospitals, patients sent home early, less care, and more readmissions. Clearly a system in crisis.

I had the opportunity to visit with CUPE members at Pride Day in Toronto. Unfortunately, I had to leave before our group started moving in the parade but I was proud to be with the large CUPE contingent who participated.

Manitoba

CUPE Manitoba, and our members there, are gearing up for a fight with the new Progressive Conservative government.

In their first legislative session in June, the government introduced regressive changes to the labour code, removing provisions for automatic and interim certifications and replacing them with a secret ballot vote. And in their first budget, they signaled a move to social impact bonds to fund provincial social services.

Plans are afoot to build solidarity with other unions and allies in the community to protect the vital public services we expect will come under attack, including education, health care, and social services.

Saskatchewan

Our members in Saskatchewan continue to battle a conservative Saskatchewan Party Government that is bent on crippling public services. Their June budget cut services to Saskatchewan's most vulnerable people, and provided no real increase in funding for core public services.

We continue to fight to retain our supervisory members, following changes to the *Saskatchewan Employment Act* last spring. Several employers have now applied to remove supervisors from our bargaining units, and our locals will be fighting these applications at the labour board.

In mid-August, the government appointed a three-member advisory panel tasked with exploring the reorganization of health care in the province. They are mandated to "recommend a structure with fewer regional health authorities to achieve administrative efficiencies", "consider opportunities to consolidate clinical or health system support services", and identify services "that may be more effectively delivered on a province-wide basis".

There is no doubt the recommendations arising will have an impact on our members in the health care sector, and a strategy is being developed now to ensure we are able to respond swiftly and effectively when the panel reports out.

Alberta

I want to recognize the incredible efforts of our members in Fort McMurray as that community strives to return to some sense of normalcy. Many CUPE members remained in the community through part or all of the evacuation period, ensuring that key infrastructure was protected and remained operational. Many others have worked to ensure that necessary social services are in place for returning residents, and that students can return to clean, safe schools and a supportive learning environment. They have done this while themselves coping with their own displacement and loss. We are all proud of their dedication to their community.

The Alberta government is expected to commence a review of labour and employment legislation, including the Occupational Health and Safety Code, this fall.

The Alberta economy continues to struggle, a result of the unfortunate combination of low oil prices, job losses, and the wildfire in Fort McMurray. This will be a challenge for our many locals entering into collective bargaining this fall.

British Columbia

The British Columbia Executive Board has endorsed Mohamed Fahmy's Protection Charter developed with Amnesty International. The Charter would enshrine in law the right of Canadians to be protected by the Federal government from serious human rights violations while in foreign countries. While wrongfully imprisoned for over a year in an Egyptian prison, the Harper government failed to take any action whatsoever in support of Fahmy.

The British Columbia Nurses (BCN) went in camera and ruled out of order a resolution that would see BCN stop its raiding practices. This decision is a signal that they will continue to raid CLC affiliates. This move is a large concern for CUPE members in British Columbia and our allies.

CUPE British Columbia officers, HEU officers, senior staff from British Columbia and Ottawa along with myself met in late July to discuss the on-going threat of raiding. The region will participate in the British Columbia Federation of Labour "Talk to a Nurse" campaign and take more aggressive action as deemed necessary. The BCN needs to be stopped and the rank and file of their association needs to understand the damage that the continuous raiding is doing to all of the labour movement.

Despite being almost ten months away from a provincial election, CUPE British Columbia is ramping up its plans to help defeat the Christy Clark government. Sixteen years of Liberal government in the province has had devastating effects on workers who have not shared in the wealth. Four more years of Liberal government will see the gap between the rich and affluent and the working class become so large that it will take a lifetime to close. That is why CUPE British Columbia is actively pursuing its goal of returning the NDP to power – to support working women and men.

Airlines

With a strike mandate in their back pocket, the Air Transat Component bargaining committee returned to the bargaining table after their members rejected an initial agreement reached with their employer. This new round of bargaining paid off and an improved agreement in principle was reached at the end of June, based upon recommendations made by a federal mediator. The members ratified the new agreement in July. This agreement notably includes a 12% salary increase over six years, a significant signing bonus, a profit-sharing formula, and an increase in the employer's contribution to the pension plan and the preventive leave program.

A meeting was held at the end of June between union representatives and the Federal Minister of Transport, Marc Garneau. I participated in this meeting and presented to the Minister our arguments in favour of re-establishing the 1:40 ratio for flight attendants. Other subjects were also addressed, including the security control procedures that apply to airport and port employees.

Hospital Employees' Union (HEU)

After nearly 15 years of fighting to have workers' compensation benefits, two members of the Health Sciences Association (HSA) and a CUPE HEU member were victorious in the Supreme Court of Canada. The workers, who worked in the laboratory at Mission Memorial Hospital in the Fraser, were diagnosed with breast cancer. Work Safe British Columbia initially declined the claims, however an appeals tribunal overturned that decision. The employer, the Fraser Health Authority, appealed this decision to the British Columbia Supreme Court and the British Columbia Court of Appeal.

Finally, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that the Appeal Tribunal has the authority to make decisions about causation of disease to a less stringent standard than scientific proof. A tribunal is able to consider all of the evidence before it, including circumstantial evidence, and approve workers' compensation coverage.

HEU co-sponsored a special pride event entitled "Unions and the Pride Movement". The event included Martin Boyce sharing his experiences of over four decades advocating for LGBTQ rights. Martin Boyce participated in the 1969 Stonewall Rights in New York. They are widely considered to constitute the single most important event leading to the gay liberation movement and the modern fight for LGBTQ rights. The riots were a result of police raids at the Stonewall Inn against the patrons who were known to be among the poorest and most marginalized people in the gay community. On June 28, 1970, the first gay pride marches took place in New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Chicago commemorating the anniversary of the riots.

Organizing Report

During the period of June 1, 2016 to August 31, 2016 CUPE organized 821 new members in 19 bargaining units. Across the country we organized 279 members in long term care, 206 members in social services, 198 members in municipalities, 18 members in the post-secondary sector, 56 members in K-12, and 64 members employed in child care. We welcome all of our new members into the CUPE family.

We are currently involved in 66 active campaigns that if successful would bring 10,032 new members into CUPE. At Labour Boards across the country we have 19 projects representing 418 new members waiting for certification votes to be conducted. There are 5 restructuring projects on-going that will result in representation votes affecting 1,055 CUPE members. We also have bargaining units representing 364 members who are under threat of raid or decertification.

In keeping with Strategic Directions adopted by National Convention in Vancouver the National Executive Board received an update on the 2016 organizing plan. Staff and Divisions have been busy across the country involved in mapping developing organizing targets. Organizing will be discussed at the Sector Council Conference.

In Memoriam/Personal

Messages of Condolences

I offer my sincere condolences to the families of the following CUPE members, staff, and retirees who have passed away or lost a loved one in the reporting period.

Members

- Art Kingsnorth Member of Local 1858 – British Columbia
- Owen Dykstra Former President – CUPE British Columbia
- Richard Gates Retired former President of CUPE Local 15
– British Columbia
- Barry Sacerty Retired 23-year member of Local 1858 – British Columbia
- Bill Doherty Retired former President of Local 50 – British Columbia
- Richard Hare Member of Local 2950 – British Columbia
- Ruth Shymka President of Local 2550 – Alberta

- Karen Stout-Smith Member of Local 650 – Saskatchewan
- Cindy Kuzek Member of Local 4875 – Saskatchewan

Staff

- Sharon Graham Secretary – Sault Ste. Marie Area Office – Ontario
- Alistair Mackenzie Servicing Representative – Saskatchewan
Regional Office
- Michael Stokes Servicing Representative – Niagara Area Office – Ontario

Retired Staff

- Neil Bradbury Retired Servicing Representative – British Columbia
Regional Office
- Gordon Allan Retired Servicing Representative – London Area Office
– Ontario
- Norma Labonté Retired staff – Accounting Branch – National Office

CONCLUSION

The fall and winter will be busy months for our locals across the country.

I know that CUPE members and staff are up to any challenge that comes our way. Always remember that you are not facing these challenges alone. CUPE has shown time and again that when an employer or a government picks a fight with us, they face more than just that one member or one local – there are 2,100 locals, with 639,000 members, that will respond.

Have a great fall, and please be safe out there.

In solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MH' followed by a stylized flourish.

MARK HANCOCK
National President

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Revised – September 29, 2016